

**Religious Acculturation and Assimilation**  
**in**  
*Belgic Gaul and Aquitania*  
**from**  
**the Roman Conquest**  
**until**  
**the End of the Second Century CE:**  
**selected aspects.**

Volume I: Text

Alasdair John Malcolm Watson

A thesis submitted to  
The University of Edinburgh  
for the Degree of PhD

November 2004

## Abstract

The prevailing opinion regarding Gallo-Roman religion, expressed by Jullian, Hubert, Thévenot, Duval, Hatt and Wightman, is that it was a fusion between the two religions. Scholars who dissent from this view can be divided into two different groups. On the one hand, Woolf contends that, during a formative period of Gallo-Roman civilisation, there was a partial abandonment of the Gallic rites, that Roman religion came to be understood to be better as well as different, and that Gallo-Roman religion offered more spiritually as well as materially. On the other hand, Vendryes, Le Roux, Guyonvarc'h and Benoît hold that the Gallic deities continued to be worshipped, some under a Roman guise, others in their original pre-Roman form; however, they accept aniconism, atectonism and the reports that the Romans stopped human sacrifice and headhunting.

It will be argued not only that the worship of Gallic deities continued, but also that Gallic religion already used man-made sanctuaries and anthropomorphic images before the Roman Conquest, that the disappearance of human sacrifice was wrongly attributed to the Romans and that the Romans never suppressed headhunting.

In chapter one some conceptual problems that need clarification before the subject can be properly addressed is discussed. They include problems regarding terminology, presuppositions and errors. In the second chapter the archaeological and literary sources of information about Gallic religion and their reliability are examined. Using these sources, in the third chapter, Gallic deities are identified and the enigma of the pantheon set out by Caesar is decoded. In the fourth chapter the use of formal structures of worship and ritual by the Gauls is confirmed and the essential elements of such structures are analysed, with the argument being supported by a comparison of pre-Roman Celtic sanctuaries from both inside and outside the Roman Empire. In the fifth chapter the concept of sacrifice is examined from an anthropological perspective and this approach is applied to all Gallic sacrifices; the Gallic rituals of divination and circumambulation are also examined. The basis for the magico-religious significance and popularity of headhunting is established in the sixth chapter. Finally, in the seventh chapter, the Celtic belief in an Afterlife is defined and its attraction is demonstrated. In each chapter, the number of these Gallic beliefs and customs, which continued after the Roman Conquest is examined and it is demonstrated that Gallic religion was not abandoned, that the Celtic sanctuary design was the basis for Gallo-Roman temple design and that Gallo-Roman religion continued to be Gallic as well as Roman.

# Declaration

I declare that this PhD thesis, submitted to

The University of Edinburgh,

is all my own work and has not been submitted to any other University or for any other qualification.

signed

A J M Watson

30<sup>th</sup> of *November* 2004

## **Dedication**

*Fionae,*

*per quam solam haec potui,  
qua absente omnia inutilia.*

## **In Memoriam**

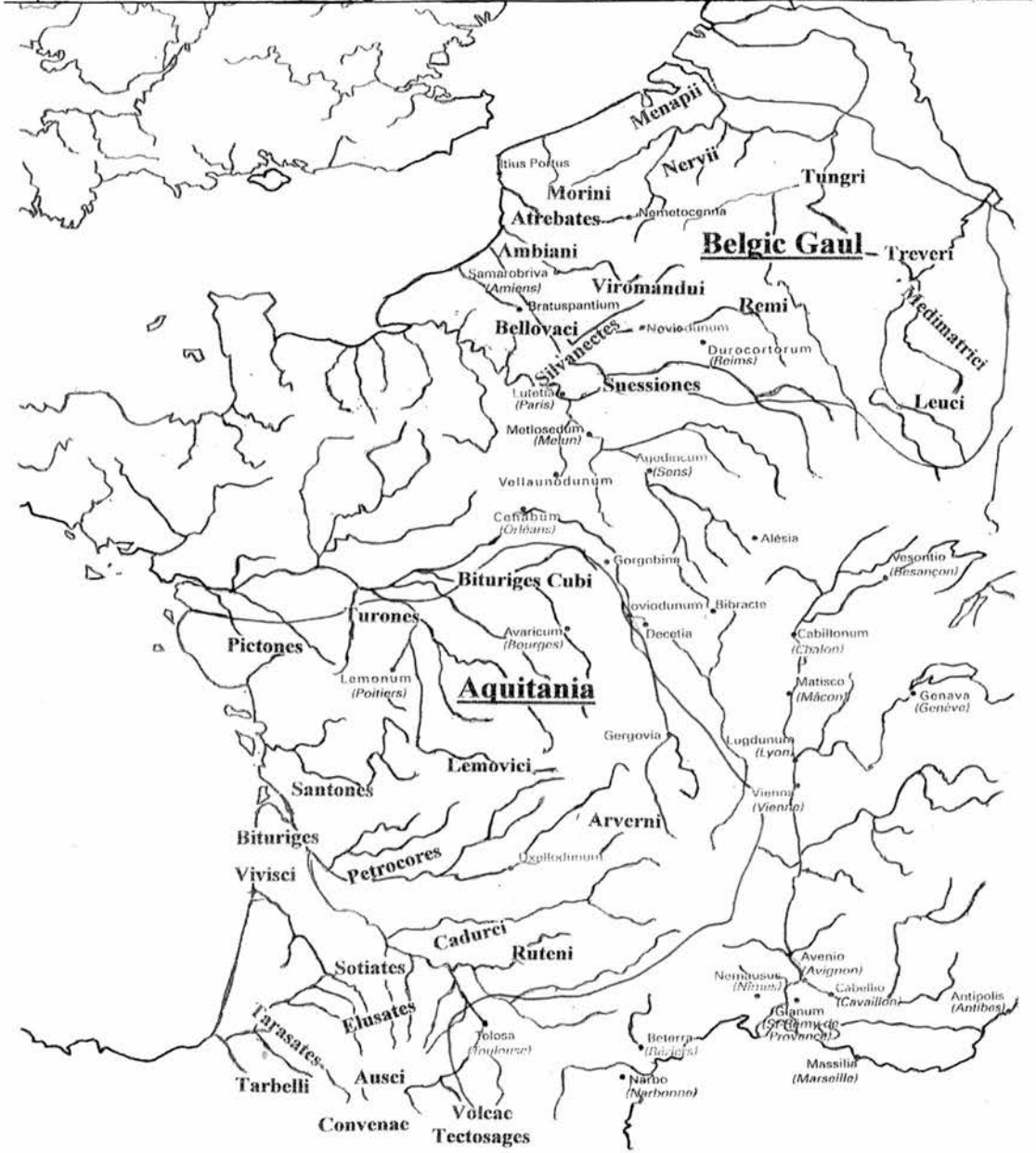
Mhairi McAughtrie  
8 October 1957 – 3 March 2004

Charles Jamieson  
22 August 1933 – 7 August 2004

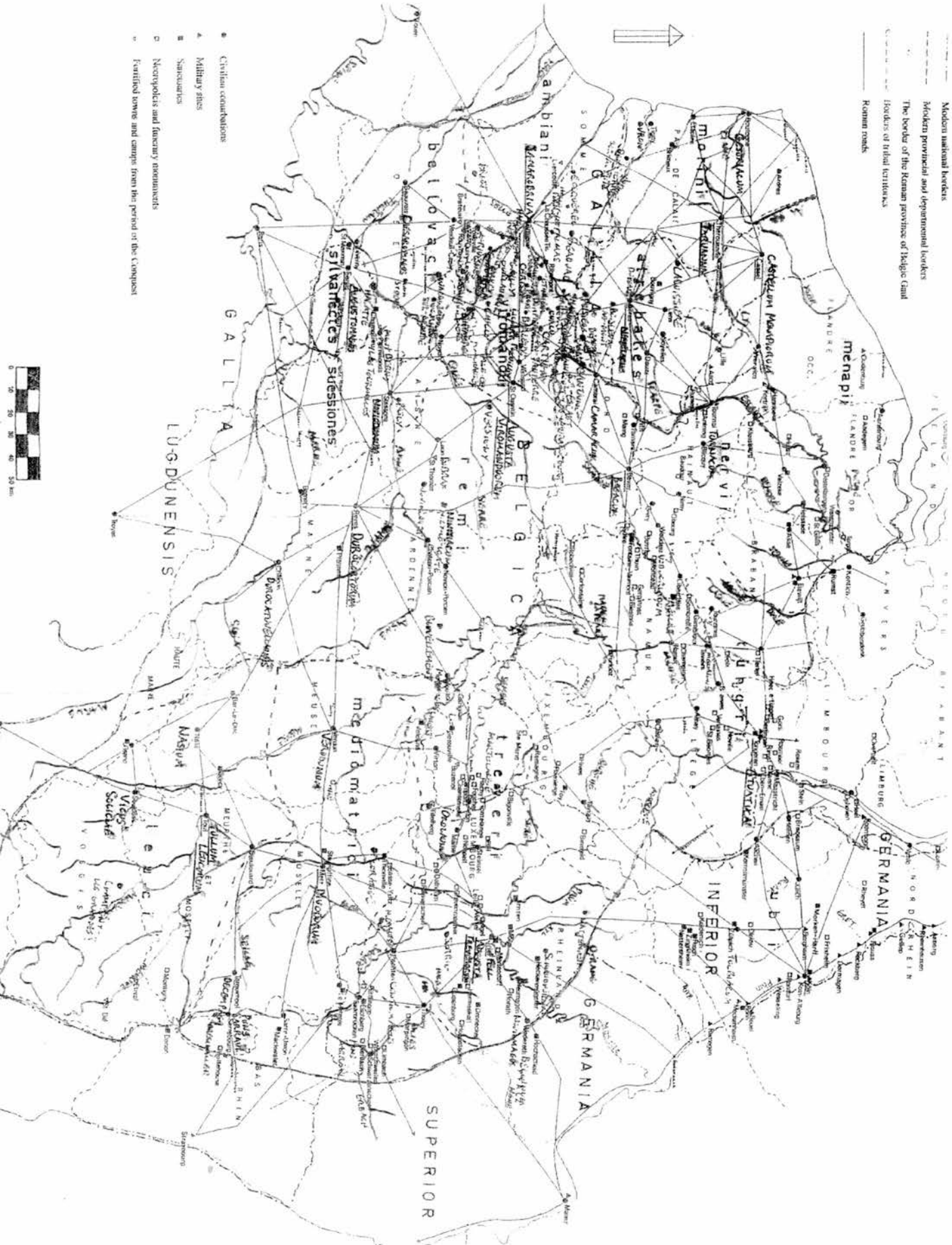
# Contents

<b>Volume I: Maps</b>	
The Geographical positions of the tribes of Belgic Gaul and Aquitania	i
The Province of Belgic Gaul	ii
Belgic Gaul (West). Tribal territories of the Ambiani, Atrebates, Bellovaci, Menapii, Morini, Nervii, Remi, Silvanectes, Suessiones and Viromandui.	iii
Belgic Gaul (East). Tribal territories of the Leuci, Mediomatrici, Treveri and Tungri	iv
<b>Preface</b>	v
<b>Chapter One</b>	
Problems and Presuppositions	1
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
Sources and Methods	10
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
Gallic Deities	39
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
Gallic Sanctuaries, especially in Picardy	103
<b>Chapter Five</b>	
Gallic Religious Rituals	145
<b>Chapter Six</b>	
Headhunting	218
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	
The Celtic Afterlife	246
<b>Conclusion</b>	262
<b>Volume II: Appendix One</b>	
Notes	I
<b>Appendix Two</b>	
Relevant Sources	LXXVIII
<b>Appendix Three</b>	
The Presuppositions of Aniconism and Atectionism	CL
<b>Appendix Four</b>	
Etymology of the Names of Celtic Deities	CLXXIX
<b>Appendix Five</b>	
Details of Gallo-Roman temples	CXCI
<b>Appendix Six</b>	
Bibliography	CCXI

The Geographical positions  
of  
the tribes  
of  
Belgic Gaul and Aquitania



# The Province of Belgic Gaul



- Christian concentrations
- ▲ Military sites
- Sanctuaries
- Necropolises and funerary monuments
- Fortified towns and camps from the period of the conquest



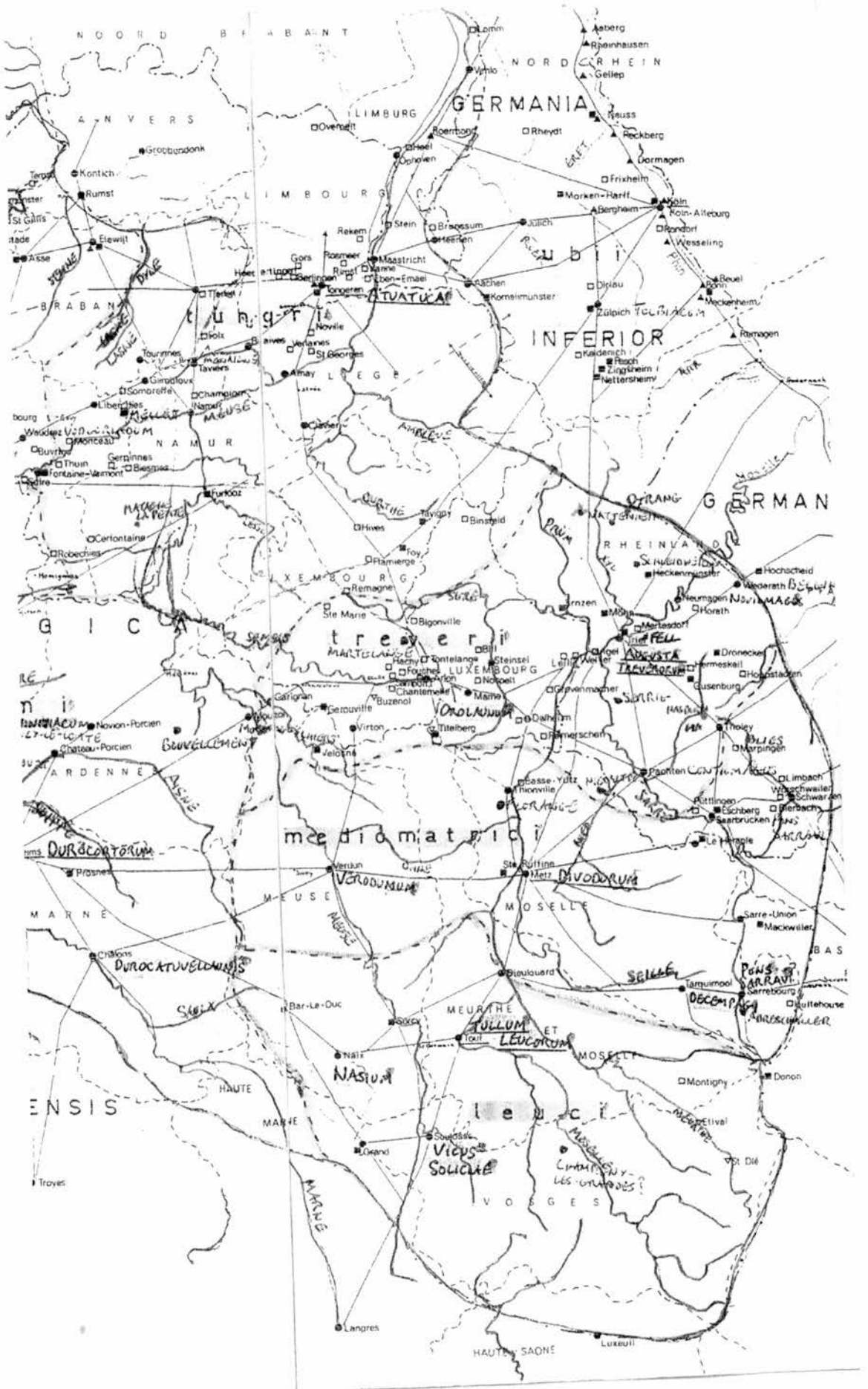
- Modern national borders
- - - Modern provincial and departmental borders
- The border of the Roman province of Belgic Gaul
- Leaders of tribal territories
- Roman roads

# Belgic Gaul (West)

Tribal territories of the Ambiani, Atrebatés, Bellovaci, Menapii, Morini, Nervii, Remi, Silvanectes, Suessiones and Viromandui.



# Tribal territories of the Leuci, Mediomatrici, Treveri and Tungri.



## Preface

The geographical scope of the research is the two Roman provinces of Belgic Gaul and Aquitania; these two provinces have been chosen because of the contrasts, which they present. Temporally, the scope of the thesis extends from the Conquest of Gaul by Caesar up to the end of the 2nd century CE. After which the introduction of monotheistic Christianity interferes with the analysis of the relationship of two polytheistic religions and the administrative changes of Diocletian affect the geographical scope of the study.

The thesis examines the aspects of Gallo-Roman religion which demonstrate continuity of Gallic beliefs, practice or custom, although affected by acculturation from Roman religion.

In view of this the research will not be concerned with Christianity, Oriental salvation religions, such as the worship of Mithras and Cybele, or the cults of the Emperor, Augustus or the Divine House, unless directly relevant. There is also no examination of the Druids, because of the absence of any archaeological evidence and the controversial and contradictory character of the literary sources.

Further information on many of the topics, views and archaeological sources mentioned will be found in Appendix One in the sections pertinent to the chapters. Primary literary sources for each chapter will be found in Appendix Two.

All the colour photographs are mine, obtained on personal visits to different parts of *Belgic Gaul*; I would like to thank the staff of the Museums of Mariemont and the Provincial Museum of East Flanders at Velzeke in Belgium and the Rheinisches Landesmuseum at Trier, Germany, for allowing me to take them. The visits were taken to make personal contact with academics in those areas and to make direct, personal observation of archaeological material.

I would like to thank Professors Greg Woolf, Professor of Ancient History and Head of the School of Classics at the University of St Andrews, and the staff of the Department of Klassische Archäologie at the University of Trier; I would like to give special thanks to Dr Kurt Braeckman at the Provincial Museum of East Flanders at Velzeke for giving me a personal tour of the Museum and to Dr Sabine Faust of the Rheinisches Landesmuseum at Trier for making an inscription from Möhn of

debatable interpretation available to me and for obtaining a photograph of it. I have also contacted Ms Abigail Burnyeats of the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies in the School of Literature, Language and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh.

## Chapter One

# Problems and Presuppositions

### Problems

It very soon becomes apparent that one of the biggest problems is interpretation, of literature but especially of iconography. This will be examined in detail later<sup>1</sup>. The area of terminology also contains problems. There are certain terms, which, while previously perfectly applicable or acceptable, are now either misleading or have become unacceptable. These terms are 'Romanization', 'native', 'primitive' and 'progress'.

When the Roman world and culture met and affected a different, usually indigenous, culture, either by commerce or by conquest, the resultant process of cultural influence is usually referred to as 'Romanization'<sup>1</sup>. However, modern historians have objected to the term 'Romanization'<sup>2</sup>; this term conveys two misleading impressions. The first, due to the 'Roman-' part of the word, is that it "suggests a unilateral and complete absorption of Roman culture by the indigenous population"<sup>3</sup>; secondly, the term "Romanization", since it resembles other processes which are intentional and the result of a policy, such as 'computerisation', 'detrribalisation' and 'democratization', has the connotation of deliberate policy, constructed at the centre of power and exercised in every province with the intention of converting the provincials into Romans. The statement by Tacitus that Agricola privately encouraged urban development and assisted it with public money (*Tac.Agr.XXI.2*) has been taken to suggest a definite policy by the Romans to reconstruct the indigenous people's culture and society, as well as the physical surroundings, in a Roman image<sup>4</sup>. While Agricola does seem to be exhibiting a missionary attitude as regards the spread and adoption of Roman culture, strictly speaking, it is *only* Agricola who is doing this and one cannot extrapolate an official policy from the practice of one man, albeit a governor. Indeed, it may be that the very fact that Tacitus considers it worthy of comment means that it is unusual. Moreover, these are probably *τόποι* and need not be taken at face value. In view of the fact that the Romans avoided more expense than was necessary in a province by administering through whatever social organisation existed in the province at the time<sup>5</sup> and that any increase in Rome's involvement, such as a province-wide social reform and reorganisation, would increase the costs and render the provinces economically non-viable, it was cheaper to avoid involvement and "any suggestion of a more

---

<sup>1</sup> See pages 18-35 (literature) and 13-18 (iconography).

comprehensive Romanization policy must present some cogent justification for its existence”<sup>6</sup>. Romanisation was not only not a policy from the Palatine<sup>7</sup>, it was not even an active force<sup>8</sup>. Finally, “it implies that the process involved making someone or something Roman”, when it was actually “the creation of novel cultural amalgams”<sup>9</sup>; “Romanisation was not a single process”<sup>10</sup>. However, although Romanisation is an umbrella term used to conceal a multitude of ill-understood processes<sup>11</sup>, the term is convenient<sup>12</sup>.

Even if one overlooks the criticism of the term ‘Romanisation’, the process has been defined in a number of ways, all with their limitations, which eliminate them from use<sup>13</sup>. It should be noted that Haselgrove’s view does not exclude Millett’s ideas of reciprocity. Haselgrove, using the word “local” to mean provincial, not indigenous, is stating that it was not a planned policy directed and motivated from Rome outwards, but was rather a natural and unco-ordinated process, which happened between the Roman and native cultures in close proximity in each province, not by imposition from above, but by the consent of the peoples at the provincial level and, as such, the degree of exchange varies from province to province.

In order to avoid any misconceptions and any reference to a particular culture or group, it is better to use the term ‘acculturation’. The term acculturation was defined in the Memorandum of the Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar in 1954 as “culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems”<sup>14</sup>. This definition may be expanded as the transference, conscious or unconscious, of aspects of one culture to another and the reciprocal reception of aspects of the other culture, though not necessarily the same aspects, to the same degree or at the same social level, and the process or processes by which this is affected. Therefore, “when two culture systems meet, acculturation can occur.”<sup>15</sup>. Technically one can divide acculturation into two separate forms. The process in which one culture transfers aspects to another may be referred to as active acculturation and the reception of aspects of that culture may be termed passive acculturation. This may be what Haselgrove meant when he says that culture “is at once an active and passive ingredient in change”<sup>16</sup>.

Acculturation “comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups”<sup>17</sup> and “focusses on the transmission of specific cultural traits or perhaps of traits from one

society to another”<sup>18</sup>.

For the analysis of the process of acculturation, one must ascertain and specify: the peoples or cultures involved in the process; the aspect of the culture (eg society, commerce, religion etc); and the temporal and spatial limits. Finally, one must distinguish between form and content<sup>19</sup>. The last point is problematic in that it raises questions regarding the need for a distinction between form and content and the relationship between the two, both of which must be answered.

Two further terms, which must be avoided, are ‘native’ and ‘primitive’. These terms have acquired pejorative connotations derived from their use in the colonial period. The word ‘native’ was used, principally in Africa, to refer to those peoples conquered by the colonial powers<sup>20</sup>. Due to the fact that the conquered peoples were usually of a different race group from the colonialists, ‘native’ has acquired both racial and, indeed, racist overtones. As a result, it is best to eschew the use of this word, not only to avoid any allegations of racism, but also because, in Gaul, the principal difference between the conquered and the conquerors was not racial, but cultural. It is best if the term ‘indigenous’ is used and those inhabitants of territory conquered by Romans were referred to as indigenous rather than ‘native’<sup>21</sup>. The term ‘primitive’, like ‘native’, was frequently used with reference to the behaviour, society and culture as a whole of those peoples, with whom the colonial settlers came into contact. It very soon became used in a derogatory sense and for this reason alone it should not be used. Moreover, the use of the word with reference to a society or culture is very much subjective, a value judgement based on one’s opinion and personal viewpoint. This is also the case with the use of the term ‘progress’. However, one context in which the terms ‘primitive’ and ‘progress’ may be used on an objective basis is that of technology, such as the use of stone tools being primitive in comparison with the use of iron ones.

An important problem is in the area of acculturation. Can acculturation be only productive or can it be divided into productive and non-productive? The difference arises from deletion. The process of acculturation brings about cultural change<sup>22</sup>, but the problem is how. Is it a case that only a process, which brings about cultural change by a synthesis, can be called acculturation? Or, since cultural change can take place even when the result of the process is the disappearance of a part of a culture, is acculturation a process, which brings about cultural change just by the interaction of two cultures, with no synthesis and possibly even by the deletion of an aspect of a

culture? A possible solution is to designate the process which results in a full combination, with neither culture losing anything, as productive acculturation and the process which involves deletion, but still results in cultural change, as non-productive or even destructive.

### **Presuppositions**

Woolf states that “religion in all societies operates to make sense of the world and of human experience”<sup>23</sup>, applies it directly to Gallic religion and the beliefs of the Romans in Gaul<sup>24</sup> and uses the phrase ‘make sense of the world’ with reference to the religion of the Gallo-Romans<sup>25</sup>. It may at first appear that these are presuppositions on the grounds that the phrase ‘makes sense of the world’ means religion explains how the world came into being and, if so, the idea that every religion provides the reason for the existence of the world and the purpose of life is alien to polytheistic religion and is a post-Judaeo-Christian concept. However, in making this claim regarding religion, Woolf is adopting the meaning of ‘make sense’ which Geertz<sup>26</sup> promotes, that is that “a set of religious beliefs renders the world of social relationships and psychological events comprehensible”. Religion explains the ordinary and makes the extraordinary comprehensible and, therefore, acceptable. The phrase ‘make sense’ is not concerned with cosmic explanations for Life, the Universe and Everything, but with mundane explanations of natural events, accidents, misfortunes and oddities. It can, therefore, be seen that Woolf’s statements are valid.

Having identified the groups involved, there must be no presuppositions about the groups. One must avoid the rather ethnocentric presupposition that an object of good quality production or advanced architectural technique or (in the case of intellectual concepts) an idea displaying abstraction or sophistication can automatically be designated as ‘Roman’, or, at the very least, influenced by the Romans, and cannot possibly be ‘native’ or ‘Celtic’; naturally, the converse is also true. A form of this presupposition is that the Celts produced nothing by themselves and acquired all their ideas from other cultures; although the Celts, Romans, Greeks, the Scythians and Slavs are all branches of the Indo-European culture whose languages have many similarities, this presupposition is reinforced by the tendency to view any similarities between the Celts and any other Indo-European people as the result of diffusion to the Celts from anyone else and the refusal to consider that, like their languages, such similarities are due to their common Indo-European source.

The following are examples of this presupposition in modern scholarship: A new

sacred enclosure in the Celtic site of the Acropolis of Zavist, with right angles and a single entrance, surrounded by its own fortifications and a ditch, in short all the attributes of a Celtic sacred space<sup>ii</sup>, is interpreted as the manifestation of a Mediterranean element<sup>27</sup>; the Gallic enclosure and the Gallic practice of depositing weapons as trophies are claimed to have a Mediterranean origin<sup>28</sup>; the shape and plan of the Celtic temple is ascribed to the Greeks and Romans<sup>29</sup>, and even the Iranians and Slavs<sup>30</sup>, anyone but the Celts; the very concept of erecting a temple is attributed to Etruscan influence<sup>31</sup>; and even the typically Celtic custom of headhunting is claimed to be due to the influence of the Scythians<sup>32</sup>.

Perceiving and describing a society and reaching a conclusion despite the facts and because of presuppositions and philosophical prejudices is a potential danger for any investigator, but particularly an ethnographer. A modern example of this is the anthropologist Margaret Mead's work *Coming of Age in Western Samoa*, which demonstrates that not even modern academics are immune. In her, until recently, seminal work, published in 1928, she described Samoan society as idyllic and free of the, primarily sexual, problems of Western American and European society, due to the Samoan liberal sexual attitudes. However, her conclusions have been disproved and shown to be motivated by politics<sup>33</sup>. It has been shown not only that rape, sexual jealousy and sex-based murder were actually as common on supposedly sexually liberal Samoa as in supposedly sexually repressed Europe and America, but also that the reason Mead reached her erroneous conclusions was that she had gone to Samoa to find her ideal society and to discover in the Samoans the living examples of the concept of the Noble Savage and consequently she had done so.

This tells us that, before any cultural change can be judged to have taken place or the extent of that change be gauged, not only, as has been said, must one avoid any presuppositions about the cultures, one must also have full information about the pertinent aspects of both cultures. Relevant to this is the lack of reliability of the literary evidence supplied by Classical authors and the dependence a study of religious acculturation should have on the material remains.

#### The Core/Periphery model

An accepted model for the examination of the process of acculturation between the dominant, imperial culture and the subject culture is the Core/Periphery model, which has been used with interesting results "in analysis of European colonialism

---

<sup>ii</sup> See pages 104-107.

and of the relationships between western and the non-western world”<sup>34</sup>. This model is principally concerned with economics<sup>35</sup> and the economic interaction between the dominant core of the empire and the subject periphery in which the core is seen as the source of commercial products and the subject periphery as the captive market for these products. But the very application of a model based on the relationship between the European post-Capitalist imperial powers and their colonies, with a deliberate policy of under-development, to Rome and the provinces may give cause for hesitation, not only because it is an abstracted model<sup>36</sup>, but because it assumes certain facts that have a questionable basis.

The first is that Rome remained the centre for production, when from the 2nd and perhaps 1st century CE the city of Rome had lost commercial dominance and the provinces had become producers; and that Rome was the only centre, when, for Belgic Gaul for example, *Lugdunum* [Lyons] or *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Tréves] might be a centre. The remaining two problems can be seen in the statement “the core has a relatively high degree of development, with a high degree of socio-economic differentiation; the periphery, in contrast, is less developed and has a simple economic and political structure”<sup>37</sup>. The idea that the periphery is less developed than the core seems to be a necessary part of the model and so it can be seen, in this point at least, that the model is dependent on the presupposition that ‘native’ is synonymous with primitive, a presupposition which, as has been said, should be avoided. The second necessary part of the model is the idea that the periphery has a simple economic and political structure and a part of the model which can be applicable to the Celts only if one accepts only the literary evidence of Caesar. Archaeological evidence, however, has shown that Celtic social structure was more complicated than Caesar indicated; this can be seen in the diagram<sup>38</sup> comparing Crumley’s interpretations of Celtic society, based on archaeology, with those of Nash<sup>39</sup>. While the Core/ Periphery model is interesting for the analysis of an economic relationship, can it apply to the religious sphere, as has been proposed?<sup>40</sup>

Having set out the core-periphery model, King<sup>41</sup> asks “how does religion fit into this model?”. The model has not been applied to religion “as much of the core-periphery model is conceived in economic terms only”<sup>42</sup> and religion may not be subject to the same principles as economics. At this point instead of using the most common definition of religion of the Roman period, that is a substantive one, King adopts a functionalist definition of religion, a definition “couched in social and also materialist terms, rather than in terms of individuals and their beliefs (the most

common current approach to the religions of the period)”<sup>43</sup>; while this is not problematic in itself, the reason he does this, specifically so that religion will fit the core-periphery model<sup>44</sup>, casts doubt on the use of the model, since it raises the idea that he takes a Procrustean approach to the data, that is instead of the model being adapted to take facts into account, the model is regarded as unchanging and the subjects being examined are redefined to fit it.

Moreover, throughout the article, King demonstrates that his concept of Romanisation is the false, narrow one which holds that any acculturation, before or after the Conquest, was purely one-way, from the Romans to the Celts, and that, not only did nothing Celtic affect the Romans, but Celtic culture was absorbed by Roman culture and changed to Romano-Celtic: “the core-periphery model for the north-west European Iron Age would predict that the ‘Celtic’ element would be partially or completely subsumed by the ‘Roman’”<sup>45</sup>; he states that one approach would be to assess the data to see “whether and how far ‘Romanisation’ of the Celtic religious form took place”<sup>46</sup>, but does not suggest that the reverse might have taken place. It seems strange that King should accept that in southern Gaul both Celtic and Greek cultures affected each other and blended, but that in the rest of Gaul the Roman culture dominated with no influence being exercised by the Celtic. As Webster<sup>47</sup> says, King wrongly assumes that a periphery can be read only in terms of the role it plays in reproducing the culture of the centre. According to Webster<sup>48</sup>, because of King’s approach, “the core-periphery dynamic is reduced to diffusionism”.

#### Conception of the Celtic religion and deities

Still on the subject of pre-Conquest acculturation, it has been thought that there was a pure, Celtic religion, unchanged until contact with Rome, by which Celtic religion was influenced prior to the Conquest and changed by the direct effect of the Conquest. King<sup>49</sup> has constructed the different stages of change in the three geographical areas of Celtic culture and the periods of time in which the change took place, from a pure, Celtic religion to a religion with the ‘Roman’ element dominant, passing through stages Romano-Celtic and proto-Romano-Celtic; it is well-thought out and methodical and, as such, mechanical, artificial and unconnected with the fluid, unsystematic process characteristic of human relations. Religion is dynamic and changes under influence from inside and outside. Even religions based on a fixed canon, for which there is no evidence in Celtic religion, can change<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, King’s attempt to distil a pure, Celtic, religion and his analysis of the traits of Celtic

and Roman religions is based on Classical literary evidence and the resulting presuppositions of atectonism and aniconism<sup>51</sup>. Once these presuppositions are removed and King's theory is adjusted, the differences between the Celtic and Roman religions and, therefore, the amount of change, are reduced to the point where the only real difference and change is the introduction of epigraphy and, perhaps, the increase in anthropomorphic portrayal of deities. In addition, King displays the presupposition that, if there is change, it must have come from Rome, as if the Celtic religion were a blank piece of paper and anything written upon it originated in Rome.

It has been thought that a fundamental difference exists between Graeco-Roman deities and Celtic ones. According to some scholars the former divinities have distinct and limited functions<sup>52</sup>, while the latter are polyvalent or multifaceted<sup>53</sup> to the point of universalism<sup>54</sup> or even of monotheism<sup>55</sup>. According to Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux-Guyonvarc'h<sup>56</sup>, this presupposition of polyvalence for Celtic deities alone is an error due to a literal interpretation of the iconography. However, the very idea that Graeco-Roman deities each have only one distinct, limited and narrow function is illusory and Derks<sup>57</sup> provides a good argument against this. A brief look at five of those Roman deities Caesar equates to Gallic ones for example.

Mars was the war-god and a god of warriors, but he was also the centre of a hymn of the Arval Brothers<sup>58</sup>, a College of Priests concerned with the promotion of fertility, and, according to Cato the Elder (*Cato.De Agri*.141.2-3), Mars seems to have been concerned with fertility of crops as a god of vegetation and health<sup>59</sup>. Mercury, as far as the Romans were concerned, was principally the god of trade, but, having become identified with Hermes (*Macr.Sat*.I.17.5) and having acquired his attributes, mythology and, more importantly, functions, he became multi-functional in that he became the herald of the gods, escort of the dead and the patron deity of thieves, businessmen, travellers and roads<sup>60</sup>. Mercury's central concern seems to be liminality<sup>61</sup> or intermediariness. Finally, from Hermes, he acquired a certain fertility aspect. Apollo was brought into Rome as a healing god<sup>62</sup>. He was almost exclusively a god of healing (*Livy*.IV.25.3)<sup>63</sup> and was invoked as such by the Vestal Virgins<sup>64</sup> with the title *Apollo Paeon* [Apollo healer] (*Juv.Sat*.VI.172; *Macr.Sat*.I.17.15)<sup>65</sup>. However, he was also connected with the sun and divination (*Macr.Sat*.I.17.5) as well as the performing arts, such as poetry, music and dance. The name Jupiter was derived from *dyew-pater*, related to *dyaus-pater* of the Ṛg Veda. The first part is etymologically identical to Zeus and to *dies* meaning "day", as opposed to "night", referring to day, luminous sky, clear sky, and the two parts together mean Sky

Father. Therefore Jupiter, the one unquestionably Indo-European deity and known to all Italic peoples was associated with the sky, storms and lightning. As *Jupiter Lapis* he was also concerned with oaths. Moreover, he also had the third function of sovereignty, because of his supreme rank. Jupiter's sovereignty meant that he was the patron of violence, such as lightning and the Triumph, and a political god, who exercises his power according to the law. Law, oaths and treaties fall under his patronage. Minerva, an Italic name<sup>66</sup>, was originally a Sabine goddess (**Varr.***De Ling.Lat.V.74*). Representations of Minerva, such as the *Umbro-Sabellian* bronze figurines, easily identifiable with Athena,<sup>67</sup> and a 1m high clay statue from Pratica di Mare, portraying her with Athena's attributes<sup>68</sup>, indicate that she was modelled on Pallas Athene. Minerva had only one plant associated with her, the olive<sup>69</sup>, Athena's plant. Moreover, her functions were also modelled on those of Athena; consequently, in the cities of Central Italy, Minerva had the two different functions, that of handicrafts (**Ov.***Fasti.III.176*)<sup>70</sup> and of protectress of the city<sup>71</sup>.

It can be seen, therefore, that they are as multi-functional and as polyvalent as the Celtic deities are alleged to be. Dillon<sup>72</sup> says that the tendency to departmentalise gods is partly the legacy of Greece and is not of general application. Perhaps the basis of this idea is Plato's vision of one man-one occupation in his ideal republic (**Pl.Leg.VIII.847A**) or "the bureaucratic needs of the Roman administrative mind" giving each deity a single job-description<sup>73</sup>.

## Chapter Two **Sources and Method**

Following Vendryes' injunction that "l'indication des sources doit toujours en bonne méthode servir d'introduction à un exposé historique"<sup>1</sup>, the sources for the study of Gallic and Gallo-Roman religion, and the attendant problems regarding them, should now be stated. There are different ways of categorising the evidence. The arrangement chosen for this thesis is determined by the fact that the study is of a dual nature. It will attempt to estimate the amount of acculturation in the Gallo-Roman religion and, consequently, requires the identification and separation of the Gallic aspects of the Gallo-Roman religion and representations in so far as this is an attainable goal; King<sup>2</sup> says, "we can only hope to understand it [Romano-Celtic religion] by going back to the Iron Age" and Brunaux<sup>3</sup> agrees saying that "avant de déterminer les influences, les apports, voire les réformes, il importe de connaître ce qui existait déjà". As a result, the sources used will be appropriate to each focus of research.

The attempt to ascertain the religion of pre-Roman Gaul will principally make use of archaeology, primarily the analysis of excavated Gallic sanctuaries, in certain circumstances the examination of Celtic artwork and decorated weaponry and, with the provisos and warnings already mentioned, draw on literature, both Classical and Irish vernacular. The use of material from the Gallo-Roman period as evidence about pre-Roman worship is problematic<sup>4</sup>. Although Bober<sup>5</sup> considers the study of the monuments of the Roman period to be most reliable and rewarding, many writers<sup>6</sup> concerned with the ascertainment of the religious beliefs of the Celts or of the Gauls prior to the Roman Conquest avoid using Gallo-Roman sources; therefore, due to the problems involved in its use, such as the possibility of unknown acculturation, Gallo-Roman iconography will not be used as a source of information on pre-Roman Gallic religion. The examination of Gallo-Roman religion will, however, depend almost entirely on archaeology, in this case Gallo-Roman temples, statuary, reliefs and inscriptions, with only a few literary references from Classical authors. Although this study will make use of ethnography and comparative religion, such writings will not be regarded as primary sources.

### **Archaeology as a source of evidence**

The analysis of a religion is problematic. This can be seen from two approaches to the

study of religion. Functionalism defines religion in terms of how a people believe in it and specifies the role religion plays in a society<sup>7</sup>; so a functionalist definition of religion is “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with...problems of human life”<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, the substantive definition identifies religion through the content of the beliefs, usually theistic. “Having belief of a theistic sort is then a necessary condition at least of something’s counting as a religion”<sup>9</sup>. A substantive definition would hold that religion is “an institution consisting of culturally postulated interaction with culturally postulated super-human beings”<sup>10</sup>. One may summarise the difference as being that the substantive approach focuses on what is believed, while the functionalism focuses on how it is believed; the substantive deals with non-physical attitudes, while the functionalist deals with the visible expression and display of such attitudes.

The substantive approach is not possible in the case of proto-historic cultures<sup>11</sup>, such as the Celts, because the people who believed left no record of their beliefs and nearly all written information about Celtic religion and beliefs is derived from Classical sources. As a result, as will be seen, this information suffers from the interpretation and transmission of the authors, which is itself affected by ignorance, bias and cultural separation. In essence, the beliefs are represented as what the Classical authors believed the beliefs to be. Therefore, not only is it unwise to rely entirely on the reports of Classical authors, but such information may be considered so unreliable that it requires confirmation by archaeology. The problem with the substantive approach is that, as long as we pursue the line that, by its very nature, religion is a set of incorporeal things, beliefs, ideas, principles, rituals and practices<sup>12</sup> and that we can only understand a religion when we understand what was actually believed, it is impossible to analyse the change in Celtic religion, because such analysis needs corporeal, material evidence. Therefore, if we follow the substantive approach to religion, we can never really know the beliefs of the Celts.

It is clear that, when examining the religion of proto-historic peoples, one must adopt a functionalist approach to religion, to concentrate on material sources and to construct religious beliefs by interpretation, “a process which very much depends upon an individual’s perspective and the scale of the analysis”<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, the first source, and the most important in everyone’s opinion, is archaeology. But, although all modern

academics and authors agree that archaeology is the primary source and, as Ross<sup>14</sup> says, “the most reliable”, even archaeology must be used with caution and advisement.

One should not consider archaeology as a perfect process. As Ross<sup>15</sup> says, archaeology does not produce everything. Only certain materials survive to act as evidence, but many, unless the conditions are right, fail to do so. It should, therefore, be remembered that, although one cannot propose a theory without evidence, it is dangerous to have the absence of evidence as the basis of a theory and that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Ignorance of this principle can produce the presuppositions of aniconism and atectonism<sup>i</sup>. It must not be assumed that the lack of archaeological evidence for a literary report means that the latter is false. Moreover, archaeology can only uncover material objects and material objects are only a part, a lesser, visible, part of religion. Finally, those rituals exposed by archaeology are rarely concerned with everyday matters; domestic or mundane rituals, because they are not exceptional, are not easily identifiable by archaeology<sup>16</sup>.

Secondly, it is important to remember that an artefact the date, origin and place of manufacture of which is unknown cannot really supply information. An example of such an artefact is the Gundestrup cauldron. Although considered by many Celtic scholars as an important source of information, its date, function and origin, both cultural and geographical, are unknown, but have been the object of many theories<sup>17</sup>. It is generally agreed, however, that it is pre-Roman and has a religious function. As a result, far from being a source of information, it is really a source of controversy and speculation.

A third point of caution is that certain archaeological sources, such as inscriptions, coins, statues and reliefs, can only serve as evidence if subjected to interpretation. The interpretation of iconography can be a source of problems. A symbol can have a number of meanings, for example a bunch of grapes can represent both fertility and, from that, abundance and wine and, from that, blood; while meaning is derived from the symbol itself, the context of the symbols and attributes focuses their meaning. Caution must be taken to ensure that interpretation does not vary from context to context to such an extent that it is meaningless or, at least, unreliable. Another point worth mentioning is that not all symbols present in Gallo-Roman and Roman iconography are derived purely

---

<sup>i</sup> See pages CL-CLXV (Aniconism) and CLXV-CLXXVIII (Atectionism).

from Roman culture; certain aspects and symbols may be common to both cultures because they are either Indo-European symbols, such as the wheel denoting the sun, or are common to all cultures, such as the imagery of fruit and corn indicating fertility and abundance. Thirdly, one must not forget that one is interpreting something belonging to a different time, place and culture and that the iconography is, in effect, a code to which one has no ready key. "C'est toujours le fond de la religion qui nous échappe; il plonge dans une mythologie dont nous n'avons pas le secret"<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the value of archaeology as a source may be reduced if the interpretation is either tenuous or influenced by presupposition or personal prejudice or derived more from the interpreter's imagination than the data.

An example of such an interpretation is the suggestion that the Celtic goddess Sirona, was concerned with menstruation. The theory is based on the fact that her name means "star", which certainly suggests night and light penetrating darkness<sup>19</sup>; from this it has been posited that, since a star is linked to the night, and the moon is linked to the night, the star is linked to those subjects governed by the moon<sup>20</sup> and therefore Sirona is concerned with those subjects concerning lunar goddesses, such as Diana, who was linked to menstruation and childbirth<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, Duval<sup>22</sup> feels that, as she is associated with solar Apollo, who is Grannus, she was an astral goddess, perhaps the Moon personified. However, the application of the functions of a lunar goddess to a goddess named "star" merely because both are nocturnal astronomical bodies is untenable.

The following are two examples when an interpretation of iconography may arise more from the prejudices or psychology of the interpreter than the interpreted item of iconography and, consequently, may reveal more about the interpreter than about the item.

The first is Krüger's theory regarding the Gallic Divine Twins. Krüger contends that the concept of Divine Twins was not naturally Gallic and was imported into Gaul from Germany<sup>23</sup>. He points out that the Dioscuri were particularly popular among the Ambiani<sup>24</sup> and that the name Ambiani may be related to the Latin *ambo*, meaning "both"<sup>25</sup> and claims that the worship of the Divine Twins was introduced either by sea<sup>26</sup> to the Ambiani<sup>27</sup> and, from them, to the rest of Gaul<sup>28</sup>, or by immigrating Germans<sup>29</sup> to the Treveri and then to the tribes north of the Ambiani. Therefore, according to Krüger,

the cult of the Divine Twins came into France from Germany over the sea and through the Ardennes, almost in a pincer movement. De Vries<sup>30</sup> disagrees with this pointing out that the cult can be traced back to Indo-European times. Indeed, in view of the date of the two articles, 1940 and 1941, a time when more than just a cult was coming into France from Germany in a pincer movement through the Ardennes, Krüger's theory seems to be inspired more by European politics.

The second is the interpretation of a type of statuette of Arvernian origin, produced in the 2nd century CE<sup>31</sup>, showing a woman with small breasts nursing an infant aged, Vertet<sup>32</sup> calculates, at 40 to 60 days. The statuettes are of clay, made in rural potteries and were cheap to produce and, presumably, cheap to buy, since they have been found not just in the Arverni region, but throughout modern France, Britain, Germany and Switzerland<sup>33</sup>. The statuette may resemble a woman in the performance of a normal, household function, but, due to the presence of a diadem on her head and the importance of the head to the Celts, Vertet<sup>34</sup> claims that she should be interpreted as an earth- or mother-goddess. Vertet<sup>35</sup> claims that these statuettes represent the common people's attitudes and opinion of the conditions under Rome in the 2nd century CE. The statuette contrasts with similar statuettes of the 1st century CE. In the course of the 2nd century CE the breasts are no longer in existence and the babies have shrunk in relation to the nurse<sup>36</sup>, the nurselings are tiny under-nourished and ignored while the nurse looks into the distance<sup>37</sup> (**Fig.2.1**). The absence of the typical attributes of a Celtic deity, weapons,



**Fig.2.1**  
Arvernian statuettes of women breast feeding babies

the means of revolt, and a torc, combined with the establishment of Roman imperial hairstyle as a divine attribute indicate that the “goddess” represents Rome<sup>38</sup> and the indigenous people’s impression of Rome’s attitude and relationship to them in the 2nd century CE<sup>39</sup>, which is “une soumission impuissante et une admiration religieuse pour la pouvoir installé”<sup>40</sup>.

An interesting interpretation, but one which has problems. First, there is the problem of identification of the subject matter and whether it is religious or not. Despite the fact that Vertet had more confidence in the interpretation of the woman as a deity than as a human, the statuette of a woman nursing an infant may represent nothing more than a nursing mother or wet-nurse (one thinks of the remark by Freud that “sometimes a cigar is just a cigar”); indeed, according to Reinach<sup>41</sup>, “à l’époque gallo-romaine, le torque est exclusivement un attribut des divinités”. For his interpretation to work Vertet has to say “sa disparition signifie-t-elle que les productions de Vichy et de Toulon-sur-Alleir ne représentent que des mortelles? Ce n’est pas certain”. Secondly, the small and oddly-positioned breast and the small size of the babies in relation to the nurse may be intended to be interpreted as implying mean and reluctant feeding, but, bearing in mind the fact that the statuettes were cheap and produced in large numbers, the process of manufacture being shown (**Fig.2.2**), it is equally possible that the size and position of the breasts and the size of the babies are due more to bad or cheap and barely competent

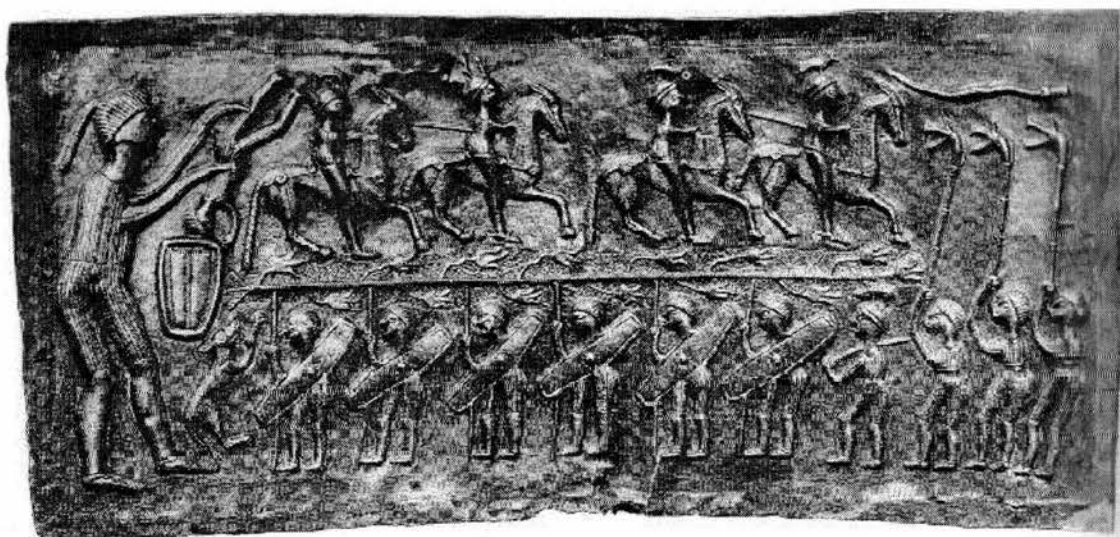


**Fig.2.2**  
The manufacturing process  
of the Arvernian statuettes

artistry rather than an intention to criticise Rome. This may also explain the fact that the nurses are depicted as staring in front of them and not looking at the babies; this was probably easier to depict in a mass-produced item than a nurse with her head turned down looking at the babies. Vertet appears to have decided what the statuette should represent and interpreted it in a way that would support this theory.

The following are three examples of interpretations owing more to the imagination of the interpreter than the iconography. They all concern the archaeological artefact known as the Gundestrup cauldron, which Vendryes<sup>42</sup> considers as a typical example of the difficulties of interpreting iconography.

An interior plate (**Fig.2.3**) has been interpreted as depicting a human sacrifice. On the left side of the plate, a human figure three times larger than the others appears to plunge a smaller human figure headfirst into what could be a cauldron, underneath which there seems to be a dog; a row of four horsemen ride from left to right and below them a line of six soldiers with narrow oblong shields and carrying a tree-like object march in the opposite direction, followed or spurred on by a soldier with a sword. On the right of the plate there are three carynx-players in a row; floating above them and to the right of the horsemen is a ram-headed serpent. Many scholars<sup>43</sup>, presumably inspired by the statement by the Berne Scholiasts that victims were sacrificed to Teutates by being drowned (*Comm. Schol. Bern. ad Luc. ad I.445*), interpret the immersion as a representation of the human sacrifice to Teutates, the figure about to be immersed presumably being the victim, and the larger figure as Teutates. But de Vries<sup>44</sup> rejects this



**Fig.2.3**  
Interior plate of the Gundestrup cauldron

interpretation, as does Le Roux<sup>45</sup>, who asks how does one know it was a sacrifice and not a lustration and is the larger figure a god, a druid or a divine druid?<sup>46</sup> It is possible that the scene portrays not a sacrifice, but rather the opposite, a revival of dead warriors<sup>47</sup>.

The second and the “most imaginative rendering”<sup>48</sup> of the images on the cauldron is that of Hatt<sup>49</sup>. Hatt proposes that the images and scenes depict the deities Esus, Taranis, Apollo Belenus, Mars Loucetius, a quest for bulls by the *Dioscuri*, Cernunnus, the god of the Dead giving access to the Celtic paradise to a dead soul and, the most imaginative part, a story about the successive marriages of the Mother-Goddess to the celestial Taranis and then the chthonic Esus, the descent into the underworld by the goddess to be with Esus-Cernunnus, the vengeance by Taranis and the defence of the Mother-Goddess by Teutates and Apollo Belenus. Although York<sup>50</sup> accepts it enthusiastically, not only is there no evidence that Esus is connected to Cernunnus, whose Gallo-Roman images are quite distinct, or that Cernunnus is god of the Dead, but the entire story, which conveniently contains the best known Gallic deities, is based more on Lucan, Gallo-Roman epigraphy and iconography and Graeco-Roman myths than Celtic myth, assumes a pan-Celtic nature for all the deities, for which there is no evidence, indeed quite the opposite, and seems to arise more from the vivid imagination of Hatt than from the iconography on the cauldron.

The third example is the interesting theory by Olmsted<sup>51</sup> that the images on the cauldron represent the characters and events found in the Irish vernacular myth “the Cattle-raid of Cooley”, [*Táin Bó Cúailgne*]. While the proposal is more inspired by Celtic myth than Hatt’s interpretation, there is still no objective connection between the scenes on the cauldron and the Irish myth other than in the mind of the interpreter and the interpretation seems to be an extrapolation from a similarity, which Olmsted alleges exists, between one scene on the cauldron and an event in the Irish epic<sup>52</sup>. From these interpretations it is obviously no coincidence that Vendryes<sup>53</sup> warning regarding the interpretation of images is in the context of the Gundestrup cauldron.

Finally, not all the sub-divisions of archaeology are as applicable to an inquiry into Gallic religion before the Roman Conquest. Gallo-Roman coinage and religious statuary; religious epigraphy, although an ideal source for an examination of Gallo-

Roman religious beliefs, apart from a few exceptions, which will be looked at in a later chapter, are unsuitable for any attempt to reconstruct Gallic religion before the Romans. It is potentially misleading to attempt to discern a belief system prior to acculturation by examining images produced by the acculturation<sup>54</sup>.

It must be said that written information about Celtic religion supplied by the ancient Celts themselves, which would have been the principal source, is absent<sup>55</sup> and the religious literature of the Druids escapes us<sup>56</sup> due either to a possible belief that once the sacred is reduced to writing it ceases to be sacred and becomes profane or to a belief that only the spoken word has power, according to Caesar (*Caes.B.G.VI.14.4*), either to keep the religious knowledge secret and a privilege of the Druids or to prevent their students from being dependent on writing. As a result the textual evidence is from Classical literature, either contemporary with or later than the Gauls and written by authors to whom Celtic culture was foreign, or from Irish and Welsh literature, written by Celts but much later and after the arrival of Christianity.

### **Classical Literature as a source of evidence**

While Green<sup>57</sup> considers the Classical sources to be “of very little use in establishing the identity of Celtic gods” and Bober<sup>58</sup> is sceptical, Champion<sup>59</sup> says that “despite all the problems of access, assessment and interpretation, they [the literary sources] represent a worthwhile body of data, the true value of which has not yet been realised”. However, one risks grave errors of interpretation if one takes all that the Latin authors have transmitted about the Continental Celts as completely trustworthy<sup>60</sup>; as Vendryes<sup>61</sup> says about the evidence from Caesar, “on n’ait aucun moyen d’en vérifier l’exactitude” and Le Roux<sup>62</sup> reminds one that Caesar did not speak the Gallic language and must have relied on the services of an interpreter, that his attitude hardly lent itself to a profound understanding of Celtic matters and that he may see the external events, but miss the motivations. There are a number of points to be taken into account in using Classical authors for ascertaining Gallic religion.

First, the ethnographic information is not composed out of scientific interest, with the intention of presenting an unadorned, objective description and analysis of a non-Roman culture, but is gathered and included merely as a section of a much larger work, usually a history, out of obedience to a literary tradition<sup>63</sup>, which goes back as far as Herodotus.

As far as the sources on the Celts are concerned, the information from Polybius is from Book II of his *Histories* and that of Posidonius is from Book XXIII of his *Histories*, just as Book VI of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* supplies the bulk of information about Celts and their religion<sup>64</sup>. Passages on Celts were put by Diodorus Siculus into his *World History* to provide background and Strabo embarks on ethnography in his *Geography* as part of this tradition<sup>65</sup>.

Secondly, the main sources, Polybius, Posidonius, Caesar, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, have a limited ethnic and temporal range. They usually refer only to the Gauls and, even then, possibly only the Gauls of southern Gaul<sup>66</sup> and they cover material and events from between 150 BCE to 100 CE, during which the Gallic world was undergoing social change<sup>67</sup>; even many of the authors who used them as sources wrote within this period. Nash<sup>68</sup> points out that the changing social environment may be the reason for different observations in the sources. Therefore, the Classical authors were describing social and religious matters during unprecedented conditions and consequently may not reflect Celtic religion during conditions of normal, social stability<sup>69</sup>; therefore, it cannot be assumed that what is described as happening in Caesar's time is relevant to earlier times or that what was observed in one part of Gaul is applicable to another<sup>70</sup>.

Thirdly, of all the Classical authors writing about the Celts only two, Posidonius and Caesar, had actually been to Gaul, and only Caesar is known to have been to non-Mediterranean Gaul. The others, even Strabo, who seems to have travelled to parts of the Mediterranean, did not obtain their information by direct, first-hand experience, but merely extracted it from previous sources by earlier writers, either, like Strabo and Athenaeus, crediting the source, or, like Diodorus Siculus, plagiarising. Wait<sup>71</sup> points out that one aspect of this reliance of later authors on earlier works, rather than on first-hand experience, is the gradual abbreviation by later writers of comments or information by earlier sources and that the reason for this is that the later writers assume that their readers had access to the full works of the earlier authors.

Finally, while many of the Classical texts are contemporaneous with the Celtic period in question, they are problematic because they suffer from the fact that they are the products of non-Celtic minds and report their observations from a Graeco-Roman perspective<sup>72</sup>. As a result of their cultural division from their subject matter, Classical

authors, even the most objective and scientific, lapse into certain modes of conventional thought, such as ethnocentricity and cultural primitivism.

### **Ethnocentricity**

In the portrayal of barbarian societies and cultures, Classical authors reveal their ethnocentric attitude in varying degrees. Ethnocentrism, as has been seen in Chapter One, is “the interpretation of the behaviour of others in terms of one’s own cultural values and traditions”<sup>73</sup>, so that one considers one’s own society to be normal and the standard by which all others are measured and that any society or culture which deviates from this standard is strange or uncivilised to the extent that they deviate. Their ethnocentric attitude is revealed in a number of ways.

First, by the fact that Classical authors do not describe and chart the barbarian societies as a whole, but instead focus on and emphasise those parts which differed from their own society to point out either the unusual or the typically Celtic<sup>74</sup>. An example of this would be the statement by Strabo, who is the product of a patriarchal society, that the rule of women is contrary to civilised society (**Strab.III.4.18.**). It is interesting that Caesar, unlike Strabo and Diodorus, makes no value judgements regarding the customs and practices of the Gauls, even when dealing with the topic of human sacrifice<sup>75</sup>. They do not just focus on those things, which are different, possibly judging them as wrong, they also assume that, because the people are barbarians, they are different in every respect. Therefore, they automatically describe aspects of barbarian culture, particularly in those areas for which they have no information, as being the opposite of the circumstances in the Graeco-Roman world on the basis that, if they are barbarians, their culture must be the antithesis of civilisation. A possible example of this is Caesar’s statement that the Germans did not own land or any form of fixed property and land was rotated among the Germans by the decisions of the *magistratus ac principes* (**Caes.B.G. VI.22.2**). This may have been true, since a similar practice, called ‘periodic runrig’<sup>76</sup>, was present in Scotland up to the end of the 17th century CE. However, it may also be an example of ethnocentric reasoning: All civilised people have a concept of private ownership of fixed property; the Germans are the antithesis of civilised people; therefore, they have no such concept. Another example is Diodorus’ account of Brennus, King of the Gauls, at the temple of Delphi in 279 BCE; according to Diodorus (**Diod. XXII.9.4**), Brennus, after entering the temple and seeing the statues, laughed at the idea

that men believed in gods in human form and created images of them in wood and stone. However, Diodorus seems to be applying the same reasoning of inversion: Greeks are civilised and portray their deities anthropomorphically; Celts are obviously not civilised and therefore obviously do not portray their deities anthropomorphically. A final example is Strabo's statement that, among the Gauls, the tasks of men and women are contrary to that in the Graeco-Roman world; indeed, he says that this role reversal is typical of barbarian peoples (**Strab.**IV.4.3). This attitude colours all investigation by Greek and Roman writers.

The focus by Classical writers on the unusual aspects of Gallic society in general and Gallic religion in particular had the purpose of underlining the difference between the Romans and the Gauls. However, while Classical authors mention the unusual and contrasting to Mediterranean cultures, one cannot assume that the fact that a subject is mentioned means that the Greek or Roman author considered it unusual enough to mention. There is no doubt that headhunting and voluntary death are mentioned because of their value as customs foreign to Roman culture, but divination is mentioned by a number of Classical authors (**Strab.**IV.4-6; **Cic.***De Div.*I.15.25-26 and 41.90 and II.36.76; **Tert.***De Anim.*57.10) precisely because of its close resemblance to Roman practices. The frequent references, direct or, in the case of poetry, indirect, by many Greek and Roman authors, not just historians, but orators, poets and philosophers, to human sacrifice is problematic. The frequent mention may indicate a focus on the unusual, as Wait<sup>77</sup> states. Contrary to this, Webster says that human sacrifice had no oddity value for Classical authors<sup>78</sup> and the frequent references to it are explained both by the fact that the Gallic practice demonstrated that the Gauls were unfit for self-governance and justified Roman imperialism<sup>79</sup> and by the fact that the Romans had conducted a human sacrifice as recently as 216 BCE (**Livy.**XXII.57.6; **Dio.**XII.50.4; **Plut.***Quaest.Rom.*83; **Min.Fel.***Oct.*XXX.4.) and that Rome itself had only recently abolished human sacrifice in 97 BCE (**Pliny.***H.N.*XXVIII.12). Webster<sup>80</sup> believes that the references were a source of self-congratulation and reassurance of the newly-acquired achievement of an even higher stage of civilisation.

Another example of the ethnocentricity of Roman authors is the practice, which Tacitus later calls *interpretatio Romana* (**Tac.***Germ.*XLIII.4). This was the practice of identifying an indigenous deity with a deity or hero of the Roman pantheon<sup>81</sup> according

to an apparent or alleged similarity in function, appearance or attribute to help the reader understand the alien deity; the identification may be logical or, at least, comprehensible, but there is no guarantee of this and Hartog points out that the system had no explicit rules<sup>82</sup>. Henig<sup>83</sup> has defined *interpretatio* as “the identification of foreign ‘unknown’ gods with those of Italy and Greece” and *interpretatio Romana* as “the Roman interpretation of alien deities and of the rites associated with them”. *Interpretatio* is not a translation concerned with linguistics, but rather a translation of concepts<sup>84</sup>. Lambrechts<sup>85</sup> says that the process was frequently used by the Romans and Webster<sup>86</sup> also states that it is very rare for a Roman author to compare Gallic and Graeco-Roman religion without using *interpretatio Romana*. Such a process of identification did not originate with the Romans<sup>87</sup>.

*Interpretatio Romana*, as practised by Caesar and Tacitus and possibly Florus, involves the total absorption of the indigenous deity into the identity of the Roman one. Since, according to Webster<sup>88</sup>, *interpretatio* is actually an act of naming and naming, for Hartog<sup>89</sup>, an object is an act of mastery, Webster<sup>90</sup> suggests that *interpretatio Romana* is a process by which the individual author imposes his own culture by confirming the superiority of the deities of himself and his readers; Henig and Rankin<sup>91</sup> propose that by *interpretatio Romana* the Roman State could foster religious unity and, therefore, according to Webster<sup>92</sup>, *interpretatio Romana* is a policy of religious integration as well as cultural imperialism. From a less conspiracy-theorist and more common sense point of view, *interpretatio Romana* may also be viewed as the means by which ancient writers, unacquainted with attitudes, training and discipline of modern social anthropology, try to understand foreign cults and religions. Either way, as a result, those passages involving the use of *interpretatio Romana* are very difficult to evaluate<sup>93</sup> and *interpretatio Romana* references are problematic<sup>94</sup>.

Since the dangers in *interpretatio Romana* extend to sanctuaries, an understanding and clear picture of a Celtic sanctuary is practically impossible to obtain from Classical literature. There is no detailed description of the construction, form and procedure of Celtic sites. “*Interpretatio* and the almost total absence of any detail on construction and use make it difficult to determine the nature of Celtic cult sites”<sup>95</sup>. Only Strabo uses a word with Celtic associations, Δρυνέμετον, to describe a Celtic sanctuary (**Strab.**XII. 5.1), but this is a single instance and refers to a Galatian, not a Gallic, *locus cultus*.

Classical authors, who all, except Strabo, employ only Classical vocabulary<sup>96</sup>, may use it as an attempt to describe Celtic sanctuaries accurately; if so, their vocabulary can be relied on to convey the form and arrangement of the *loci*. More likely, after the experience of the distortion seen in Caesar's description of Gallic deities, it is the automatic transmission of terminology regardless of its correct application<sup>97</sup>. One thing Classical texts clearly indicate is that there was a demarcated sacred area with an enclosure<sup>98</sup>. The authors (**Polyb.**II.32.5-6; **Cic.***Pro Font.*XIII.30; **Livy.**XXII.28.9, XIII.24.11; **Strab.**IV.1.13. and 4.6; **Diod.**V.27.4.) use standard Classical vocabulary in connection with Gallic sanctuaries in areas long affected by Graeco-Roman/Classical influence, which may accurately reflect the nature of sanctuaries in these parts, but gives no information about Celtic sacred sites in the rest of Gaul, affected to a lesser extent by Classical culture. Although nearly all authors refer to Gaul outside the area of direct Classical influence, some employ vocabulary which is not standard, but this also fails to provide understanding. A term used by Posidonius merely refers to a demarcated space with no indication that it is sacred, τετράγωνον (**Ath.**IV.152), and the phrase used by Caesar, *locus consecratus* (**Caes.***B.G.*VI.13.10 and 17.4.), is too vague to convey any idea of what is being described.

### **Cultural Primitivism**

Primitivism is an attitude towards history and past cultures. There are two basic types, chronological and cultural<sup>99</sup>, and it is the latter which is relevant to the teaching of the Druids, and to the subject of the Druids in general. Cultural primitivism has been defined as a discontent with civilisation, or some conspicuous part of it, by the civilised. It is the belief of men in a highly evolved and complex cultural condition that the simpler, less sophisticated life, in some or all respects, was better and more desirable<sup>100</sup>. This form of primitivism may be divided further. Lovejoy and Boas have devised two terms to describe these types of cultural primitivism. There is 'soft' cultural primitivism, which views primitive life as having been good because it was simple and unencumbered by the trappings of civilisation, such as the myriad restraining rules and conventions; it was exempt from social constraints, a view held by those ignorant of the extremely tight bonds of taboo and primitive superstition. The self-expression of the primitive man is supposedly not yet hide-bound by social pressures and he can do what he wants. Moreover, without civilisation, he has time for infinite leisure<sup>101</sup>. The opposite

type, 'hard' cultural primitivism, views primitive life as hard and those who live there as hardy and rough, as Noble Savages; consequently, without the morally-subverting pleasures of civilisation, they are morally pure. They live in poverty, but, because they have no knowledge of civilised goods, they want little and are therefore content with little<sup>102</sup>. Examples of each from ancient literature would be, respectively, the men of the Golden Age of Saturn and Tacitus' Germans<sup>103</sup>.

Chadwick divides the Greek and Roman literary sources about Druids and their teachings, beliefs, practices, and reputation into two groups, the 'Posidonian' Tradition<sup>104</sup> and the 'Alexandrian' Tradition<sup>105</sup> but these divisions can also be applied to reports of the Celts in general. The 'Posidonian' Tradition is based on and derived from information obtained by Posidonius, who is known to have visited Gaul<sup>106</sup> and may be regarded as a witness of the things which he reports. The authors regarded as belonging to the 'Posidonian' Tradition<sup>107</sup> either drew on Posidonius or had been to Gaul or both. Although all the writers in the 'Alexandrian' Tradition<sup>108</sup> were responsible researchers of their time, they not only had not witnessed Celtic culture first-hand, but also used the research and compilations made by other people who had not witnessed it. The 'Posidonian' Tradition is more reserved than the 'Alexandrian' Tradition<sup>109</sup>, is often unfavourable to the Celts, mentioning their barbarism<sup>110</sup>, and has a more balanced attitude towards the Druids, mentioning, among other things, their juridical functions and their more unpleasant aspects, such as their presiding at human sacrifice and divination by the death of a man, as well as the philosophical features capable of comparison with those of other philosophies<sup>111</sup>. In the 'Alexandrian' Tradition Druids are described and referred to with respect and emphasis is laid on their beliefs and teachings, rather than on their practices. Consequently, on the one hand there is little mention of their juridical function and no mention at all of their participation in human sacrifice, while on the other they are classified as philosophers of equal status to the great philosophical schools of the Graeco-Roman world. The great esteem with which the 'Alexandrian' Tradition held Druids has been exaggerated greatly by some modern authors, who have either attributed the origin of Classical philosophy to the barbarians races or have exaggerated the relationship of the teachings of the Druids and the doctrines of Pythagoras<sup>112</sup>. Piggott<sup>113</sup> claims that this is the precise distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' primitivism, the terms coined by Lovejoy and Boas.

In fact, Piggott's use of the terminology, while identical to that of Chadwick, differs from that of Lovejoy and Boas. For Piggott, and possibly Chadwick, the term 'soft' cultural primitivism is applied to any description in which there is great distance, spatial or temporal, between the writer and the culture, with time consequently lending enchantment, and the writer is looking for desirable qualities in the culture and finding them; contrary to this, the term 'hard' cultural primitivism is used for any description of a culture based on first-hand experience and knowledge, with a potentially unflattering description as a result, and the writer is unaffected by any preconceived notions<sup>114</sup>. In Piggott's use the primitive cultures are known to exist or to have existed and only the writers of 'soft' primitive descriptions have an agenda. In summary 'soft' primitivism is idealistic, 'hard' primitivism is realistic. In fact, only one Tradition, the 'Alexandrian', Tradition can be called primitivism, the 'Posidonian' Tradition being a factual account. Piggott<sup>115</sup> says that usually information about a culture moves from 'soft' primitivism to 'hard' primitivism as more information is acquired, from travellers' tales to first-hand knowledge. An example of this is Greek knowledge of the Black Sea peoples<sup>116</sup>. Ironically, it is the opposite in the case of the Celts<sup>117</sup>.

Each piece of information must be examined carefully in order to comprehend the author's focalisation<sup>118</sup>. First, no author can produce information on any subject pure and unaffected by his own interpretation, which is the product of his culture, his class, his philosophy, his attitude to other groups and a number of other factors. Second, there is further need for caution in relying on such information in view of the fact that each author and the objects of his description are from different cultures, which must affect his interpretation. In order to counter-balance the focalisation of each Classical author, Wait and Webster<sup>119</sup> have laid out methods of approach to each ethnographic section in an author's work. Moreover, the distortion in the interpretation is increased by his ignorance of the culture<sup>120</sup>. This is assuming that the author's intention is to be objective and not a few Classical authors had no such desire.

For example, Caesar's description of the society, customs and religion of the Gauls in the ethnographical section of his *Commentaries* must be read with the understanding that Caesar is a male Roman of the Senatorial class, ambitious, with a less than pious attitude towards his own religion, writing with the intention of promoting his generalship (*Caes. B.G.I.12.7*)<sup>121</sup>, justifying his military exploits<sup>122</sup> and covering up set-backs<sup>123</sup> and this

undermines his reliability as a source. One example of his bias is the fact that, being a general and a member of the Roman aristocracy, he only really came into contact with the nobility of the Gallic population, because, according to Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.15.1**), “the conduct of warfare in Gaul was dominated by the élite”<sup>124</sup> as one of the ways to express status<sup>125</sup>, and consequently he dismissed that section of society which was not part of the nobility as *plebs* and therefore of no account (**Caes.B.G.VI.13.1** and 3). However, archaeology has shown this division of Celtic society into important nobility and unimportant *plebs* to be a superficial analysis; “it is obvious from archaeological data that Celtic society was extensively stratified and that probably one other class existed, counting as members minor administrative officials, skilled tradesmen and merchants”<sup>126</sup> and “the archaeological evidence clearly indicates the presence of an aristocracy, a middle class of merchants and skilled specialists who were guildsmen and a lower class composed of rural agriculturalists”<sup>127</sup>. But the distortion of information is best seen in his description of Gallic religion, when he applies *interpretatio Romana* and associates Roman deities with Gallic deities which they appear, at least superficially, to resemble, using only the Roman names and failing to mention the names of the Gallic deities themselves. As a result not only is one still ignorant of even the names of the Gallic deities, but one cannot fully rely on Caesar’s association of deities without evidence from other sources. However, certain information, about headhunting (**Diod.V. 29.4-5**; **Strab.IV.4.5.**) and the collection of weapons for dedication to a deity (**Diod.V. 27.4**; **Caes.B.G.VI.17.4**; **Strab.IV.1.13.**), has been corroborated by archaeological evidence and this increases confidence in the rest of the body of literature as a whole.

### **The Berne Scholiasts**

Much of the examination of some of the Gallic deities and sacrifices and the arguments and conclusions are dependant on the reliability of the Commentary on Lucan by the Berne Scholiasts, dated to the 10th century AD by Deonna<sup>128</sup>, a date accepted by Sergent<sup>129</sup>. Those supporting their use say that “tous ces textes sont beaucoup plus importants et significatifs qu’on ne le croit”<sup>130</sup>, that the texts throw light on a difficult problem, that the Scholiasts “sont de la plus haute importance” and that any study using them is merely a long commentary<sup>131</sup>, that the sacrifices, although allocated arbitrarily, are described accurately, particularly the one to Teutates, and that the Scholiast describing the sacrifices offered to each deity gives precise information, which pleads in

their favour<sup>132</sup>. Duval believes that the sacrifice to Teutates is indeed depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron<sup>133</sup> and refers to the Scholiast describing the sacrifice to Esus as a good source<sup>134</sup>. Le Roux holds that the age of a document is not a criterion of its reliability and that the text does not need to be contemporaneous with its content<sup>135</sup>, states that the Scholiasts did not invent the material<sup>136</sup> and, using the mythology of the Insular Celts as the point of departure to inquire about the cauldron, the act of hanging and the holocaust<sup>137</sup>, seems to accept the Scholiasts as reliable as regards the description of the sacrifice to Teutates<sup>138</sup> and to Esus<sup>139</sup>.

Contrary to Le Roux, Deonna<sup>140</sup> says that the information provided by the Scholiasts would be precious, if the text was not so late and Green<sup>141</sup> raises the warning that one must consider the late date of the Commentary and the fact that the writers of the Commentary might not have had much understanding of Celtic mythology. Moreover, even Le Roux states that the equation by the Scholiasts of the Gallic deities with certain Roman deities is vague, contradictory and subject to caution<sup>142</sup> and admits that the Berne Scholiasts are the only text to attribute a sacrifice involving a cauldron to Teutates and to mention a rite connected with Esus and that it would be imprudent to rely on such slender data<sup>143</sup>. Their use is disputed all the more because of a similarity between two of the sacrifices, those to Teutates and to Esus, and the martyrdoms of two saints, St. Reine and St. Marcel respectively, has been noticed<sup>144</sup> and there are similar expressions<sup>145</sup> in each<sup>146</sup> and the fact that many<sup>147</sup> have noticed the similarity between the sacrifice to Taranis, people being burned *in alveo ligneo*, and the holocaust sacrifice described by Caesar and Strabo (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**; **Strab.IV.4.5**). Scepticism is increased when one realises that each of the sacrifices conveniently represent each general class to which human sacrifices can be assigned: death by suffocation (sacrifice to Teutates); blood sacrifice (sacrifice to Esus); fire sacrifice (sacrifice to Taranis).

According to Thévenot<sup>148</sup>, the Scholiasts of Berne did not copy the martyrdom of St Marcel, but instead, both descriptions go back to a source, now lost, older than and common to them both. Thévenot applies the same argument to the similarity between the sacrifice to Teutates and the martyrdom of St Reine. Duval points out that it is curious that, like the information about Esus from the Scholiasts, the relief depicting Esus from the altar at Paris shows him in connection with a tree<sup>149</sup> and states that the sacrifice to Teutates described by the Scholiasts and the method of martyrdom of St. Reine overlap

only in the idea of drowning in a cauldron, but differ in a fundamental way, that is in the specific method of drowning; in the sacrifice to Teutates the head only was submerged<sup>150</sup>, while the saint was drowned by total immersion with hands and feet tied<sup>151</sup> and the passive voice implies that the saint was held under. Duval<sup>152</sup> also says that the verbal coincidences between the texts are merely terms of current usage, for which there were no substitutes.

Deonna not only states that dismemberment by a tree was unknown among the Celts as a mode of execution<sup>153</sup>, but also points out that the similarity between the sacrifice to Esus and the martyrdom of St Marcel is heightened by the fact that St Marcel was killed for refusing to venerate statues to Mars and Esus was identified with Mars<sup>154</sup>. A flaw with this last argument is the fact that another Commentary identifies Esus with Mercury. Deonna<sup>155</sup> says that, due to the absence among the Celts of a written tradition and other causes for the rupture of the transmission by writing, the theoretical common source of the hagiography and the Berne Scholiasts is problematic. Deonna<sup>156</sup> proposes that the Scholiast used the description of St Marcel's death for the sacrifice to Esus, because of the reason St Marcel was martyred, it was a frequent form of punishment and the fact that Esus was identified with Mars, who was the deity connected with the St Marcel's martyrdom and whose reputation as one of the most important deities would have lasted until the time of the Scholiasts. Deonna<sup>157</sup> posits that this correct reading of the Commentary eliminates not only the problem that dismemberment was not a Celtic custom, but also the possibility of a source common to the hagiography and to the Commentary. Deonna<sup>158</sup> refers to the similar expressions in each description, saying that the similarity does not seem to be by chance and states that, despite the distinction between the sacrifice to Teutates and the martyrdom of St Reine made by Duval, not only do both descriptions resort to the same source, a Celtic tradition preserved up to later periods, but there is also no good reason to prevent one from supposing that the description in the Commentary, being later than the hagiography of St Reine, was inspired by it. Deonna<sup>159</sup> states that the description of the sacrifice to Taranis in the Commentary was inspired by Caesar's report.

Despite this Le Roux<sup>160</sup> restores the value of the Berne Scholiasts, King<sup>161</sup> accepts them and Sergent, contending that archaeological discoveries confirm the existence of the practice described in the Commentary as a Celtic custom and, therefore, the validity of

the description<sup>162</sup> and declares that the Berne Scholiasts “sont d’excellente qualité documentaire”<sup>163</sup>.

### **Celtic Vernacular Literature as a Source of Evidence**

The second literary source is Irish vernacular literature, the source of legend and mythology<sup>164</sup>. These have the advantage of being produced and preserved by Celtic people with little influence and pollution of an alien culture, except, later in the 5th century CE, by Christianity.

The collected texts of Irish myths and stories, written in the vernacular, Old Irish, date from the Medieval period and were themselves copies of previous manuscripts. The earliest written versions, which no longer exist, were merely the reduction to writing of Oral Tradition transmitted over a number of generations<sup>165</sup>. It is accepted that the actual reduction to writing and transmission was probably done by Christian monks<sup>166</sup>. Olmsted and Wait point out that, although all these manuscripts date to the 11th century CE or later, much of the material is older, having been copied from earlier sources<sup>167</sup> and that many of the stories in these and other manuscripts are listed in the “table of contents” of the *Book of Druimm Snechtai*, which is dated to the early 8th century CE, thus proving that the reduction of the Irish stories into Irish vernacular literature had begun by the 8th century CE and verifying the process of transmission<sup>168</sup>. Although the Irish story-tellers arranged the myths in triads thematically<sup>169</sup>, modern scholars have grouped them according to four cycles: the Mythological Cycle; the Ulster Cycle; the Finian Cycle; and the Kings Cycle<sup>170</sup>. Although the first cycle obviously contains an abundance of myths, MacCana<sup>171</sup> points out that the other three cycles contain a great deal of mythic material. Indeed, it is thought that the Ulster Cycle is older than the changes brought about by Christianity<sup>172</sup>; Green<sup>173</sup> says it is the most useful group of tales, according to Piggott<sup>174</sup>, it reflects a pagan world before the introduction of Christianity and Aldhouse-Green<sup>175</sup> accepts that it contains resonances of pre-Christian material. This is alleged to be the primitive Oral Tradition of a pre-Christian Ireland, relating to epic and mythology, heroic exploits of the barbaric Iron Age Irish Celts and their society, contemporaneous with Roman dominated Britain and Gaul<sup>176</sup> and reduced to writing in the 7th century CE<sup>177</sup>, the 8th century CE<sup>178</sup> or from the 8th century to the 15th century CE<sup>179</sup>. While the Ulster Cycle may relate to a period not later than the 4th century CE<sup>180</sup>, the stories must certainly be earlier than the 5th century CE, when

Christianity was introduced to Ireland. At the other end, Jackson believes that the tales definitely related to Ireland of the Iron Age<sup>181</sup> and sets the 2nd century BCE as the earliest limit of their formation<sup>182</sup>; however, Champion<sup>183</sup> feels that the correct date could be centuries earlier than this.

While all scholars accept the use of Classical works as sources, provided they are not accepted unquestioningly and without circumspection, the opinion of scholars and writers is divided regarding the use and reliability of Irish vernacular literature; this was the case at the beginning of the last century, as Loth<sup>184</sup> states, and it still is. The use of this literature is supported by many authors<sup>185</sup>. Other modern writers either accept their status as a source, but express reservations<sup>186</sup> or appear sceptical<sup>187</sup>, or reject their use<sup>188</sup>.

There are five bases for scepticism regarding the use of Celtic vernacular literature as a source of evidence. Three are common to most writers who either reject or, at least, have reservations regarding the use of this literature; they may be termed spatial, temporal and stylistic<sup>189</sup>.

#### Spatial reason

The spatial reason for scepticism is that the stories in Irish vernacular literature are specific to Ireland, concern Ireland, the Irish people and Irish society and the traditions and events are pertinent to Ireland<sup>190</sup> and that Celtic religion was not necessarily immutable and the source, being from Ireland, is Insular and unconnected with Gaul<sup>191</sup>, that caution must be exercised in any application to Britain, let alone Gaul<sup>192</sup>. Bober<sup>193</sup> says that such comparisons are acceptable if one can be assured of a uniform pan-Celtic culture and that there is no reason to assume this. Even enthusiastic advocates of the use of Irish vernacular literature express caution. Duval and Sjoestedt<sup>194</sup> prefer to adhere to the principle of “equivalence”, that is that the Gallic deities have equivalents in the Irish myths, and Guyonvarc’h and Le Roux-Guyonvarc’h<sup>195</sup> state that it is a simplistic and erroneous use of the comparison of Gallo-Roman iconography and Irish texts merely to say that the deities in the texts and those portrayed in the iconography are the same. Even Wait<sup>196</sup> says that, while the application of the study of Irish mythology to Gaul is undoubtedly possible, it “must be done by careful analogy based on extensive parallels”. However, this spatial difference is not grounds for disqualification of the literature as a source, only that it is grounds for caution in its use. The correct application of the

comparative method demonstrates that there are similarities between the two Celtic worlds of Ireland and Gaul; Hubert<sup>197</sup> demonstrates the identification of the Gallic goddess Epona with the British/Welsh goddess Rhiannon and Lambrechts<sup>198</sup> shows that the epithets applied to Romano-Celtic deities Apollo Maponus and Mars Nodens are related to the Irish deities Mabon and Nuadu respectively, a point accepted by de Vries<sup>199</sup> and granted even by Green<sup>200</sup>.

### Temporal reason

This reason for scepticism is based on the fact that between the archaeological evidence for Gallo-Roman religion and literary evidence for Irish Celtic religion, there is a temporal difference of at least eight hundred years, between the 1st century BCE, the period, which the vernacular sources are thought to be able to illuminate, and the 8th century CE, in which the Irish legends were recorded. There have been “many centuries of independent evolution”<sup>201</sup>, the archaeological sources and vernacular sources “are separated by at least several centuries”<sup>202</sup> and the length of time between their origin and reduction to writing is too long<sup>203</sup>. Green states that there “is a wide spatial and temporal chasm” and, as such, “it is important to recognise the impossibility of making direct links” between the deities in the myths and those in the Gallo-Roman iconography<sup>204</sup> and holds that these sources cannot be used to illuminate subjects essentially pre-Christian and a part of prehistoric Europe<sup>205</sup>. However, Guyonvarc’h and Le Roux-Guyonvarc’h<sup>206</sup> state that it is an error to dismiss the Irish documents because they are medieval. Le Roux<sup>207</sup> says that such an argument seems, at first sight, indisputable, but, if one sees the fact that the structure of Irish society in the Middle Ages was unbelievably archaic and still containing paganism, this argument loses its value. Wait<sup>208</sup> says that the stories were ancient before even being written down and it is accepted that, until their reduction to writing, the stories were transmitted orally for a long period<sup>209</sup> of 300 years<sup>210</sup> or more<sup>211</sup>.

Indeed, there is evidence that, although the stories were recorded from the 8th century CE onwards, they refer to a much earlier period of history. The events described are all typical of a heroic, warlike society, aristocratic and hierarchical, Iron Age Ireland<sup>212</sup>. In Wait’s<sup>213</sup> opinion, the religious and political contexts of the stories support the argument that this cycle of tales relates to a period before the arrival of Christianity in Ireland in the 5th century CE. There is no mention of Christianity, some characters are obviously

supernatural beings or gods, various non-Christian beliefs and practices are accepted without condemnation and the favourite oath of a hero in the cycle is to swear by the god of his tribe (*LL* 1629-1632), which must refer to a period when each tribe had a god, that is a polytheistic period; each of these would have been anathema to Christianity and would not have been present in a post-Christianity society. Moreover, the Ulster depicted in the Ulster Cycle is great, powerful and capable of fighting the rest of Ireland together<sup>214</sup> with its capital at Emain Mach<sup>215</sup>; but from the 5th century CE, Ulster, smashed by the family of Niall<sup>216</sup>, was merely a rump of its original and was a small kingdom, forming a small part of north-east Ireland<sup>217</sup> and Emain Macha was not even in Ulster<sup>218</sup>. These prove that the tales all refer to a time before the break-up of Ulster in the 5th century CE and must refer to a prehistoric political arrangement<sup>219</sup>.

### Stylistic reason

Webster<sup>220</sup> proposes that the use of Irish vernacular literature is put in doubt by the role of composition in oral transmission and the integrity of the oral transmission before codification. Webster's point is based on the idea that accretion, deletion or contraction automatically take place in oral transmission. Yet Vedic verses were preserved orally for nearly 3,000 years prior to their reduction to writing; it is perfectly possible that the Irish myths and stories were transmitted orally without alteration over a much shorter time by the Irish professional poets<sup>221</sup>, who existed to perform this very function<sup>222</sup>. Moreover, since there is no knowledge of what was orally transmitted, one has no idea of what was added or subtracted before it was written down and, therefore, not only is there no knowledge that any accretion, deletion or contraction took place in the oral transmission, but there is no reason even to suggest that it was not transmitted properly, let alone that bits were added or left out. It is asserted that the very reduction to writing of an oral tradition act of writing results in changes to the stories<sup>223</sup>; but this is an assumption, because it is impossible to say whether the reduction to writing has actually altered anything, since there is no knowledge of the original oral version. Moreover, although some Classical references are abbreviations of earlier works<sup>224</sup>, they have not been disqualified as acceptable sources; therefore, even if the Irish written stories are abbreviations of the oral tradition, why should this disqualify them as a source?

There are three categories of possible alterations to the written text: anachronisms, additions arising from the temporal context of the transmission of the text<sup>225</sup>;

Christianisms, additions and subtractions arising from the religious context of the transmitters of the text<sup>226</sup>; and Classicisms, conscious imitations of heroic societies in Classical literature<sup>227</sup>. Jackson<sup>228</sup> identifies an 11th century CE interpolation and Mallory<sup>229</sup> demonstrates that the technical details of swords in the Ulster Cycle are more appropriate to the Christian rather than the pagan period. But their presence merely shows that the Ulster Cycle is not the unalloyed reflection of pagan Irish society during the Iron Age, but does not warrant the total rejection even of the Ulster Cycle, let alone the entire Irish literature.

The potential for alteration, accretion or deletion, by the Christian monks transmitting the texts over the years, is considered great, even by those supporting the use of Irish vernacular literature<sup>230</sup>. It is probably to this that Le Roux<sup>231</sup> refers when she says that the manner in which the texts have been received obliges one to use prudence and even scepticism. However, additions made by the monks are few and are easy to identify<sup>232</sup>. There is no easy way to identify and quantify deletions from the text<sup>233</sup> and if any pagan concept was omitted from all the texts, it would be impossible to retrieve it<sup>234</sup>. However, Wait<sup>235</sup> points out that the clerical transmitters of the texts were rarely consistent and a comparison of parallel stories can help identify a gap or an overlay of Christian concepts. Webster<sup>236</sup> claims that tenets contrary to Christian doctrine “are likely to have been suppressed”<sup>237</sup>, yet the Christian monks showed themselves to be very liberal in their attitude to the pagan text by the fact that they allowed polytheistic oaths to remain and merely reduced obvious deities to powerful people; therefore, actual omissions of pagan features must have been few and only for extremely great reasons. It can be seen that this argument is insufficient to justify a rejection of the use of Irish vernacular literature. It should be noted that, as in the case of archaeology, one should not let an absence of information in the text indicate an absence in the Celtic belief system, especially if such an absence is typical of Christian interference. Chadwick<sup>238</sup> claimed that Celtic religion was devoid of conceptual organisation because it was absent from the text; MacCana<sup>239</sup> pointed out that this is exactly the kind of feature which Christian monks would censor and so one cannot draw any conclusions from its absence.

There is the suggestion that the heroic imagery of the Ulster Cycle is a conscious imitation of Homer by the highly educated Christian monks. However, this category is open to charges of being contrary to the behaviour of the monks, open to abuse, illogical

and based on double standards. The argument is based on the assumption that Irish Christian monks, who had such reverence for their own indigenous culture that they left various pagan features untouched, should either decide to adulterate the stories with foreign imitations or consider their stories inferior enough to warrant Classical imitations. It is an easy to allege that, if there is anything resembling a heroic society, one merely categorises it as a Classical insertion by a monk. It is illogical to dismiss as late insertions not just those parts alien to the heroic period, but even those parts, which are actually compatible with the heroic period precisely because they *are* compatible. One of the factors supporting the image of a 'heroic' society is that the Irish heroes ride into battle on chariots, dismounting to fight in single combat with another hero. It is suggested that this is an imitation of the fights between heroes in Homer. In view of the fact that that the British, on the fringes of Europe, still practised military tactics, which had disappeared from the rest of the Indo-European peoples,<sup>240</sup> it is consistent with their position even farther on the geographical and cultural extreme of Europe, that the Irish Celts also retained those same tactics. Moreover, such a suggestion demonstrates double-standards. Despite its resemblance to Homeric warfare, no one suggests that Caesar's description of the ancient British nobles riding into battle on their chariots, dismounting and, while their charioteers withdraw, fighting on foot (*Caes.B.G.IV.33.1-2*) is an imitation of Homer.

It is reasonable to ask why there should be an attitude of such scepticism towards Irish vernacular literature. Classical sources are also limited by a spatial factor, with only two authors ever having been to Gaul, and a temporal factor, with many of the authors are describing events and topics from decades or centuries before, yet Classical literature is regarded without hesitation as a source by almost all modern writers.

It can be seen, as the advocates of their use have said, that Irish vernacular literature should not be rejected in its entirety and that objections to the use of Irish vernacular literature are insufficient to stop its use; but it is also evident that the objections are enough to raise the point that, just like Classical literature, Irish vernacular literature must be treated with caution and not accepted unquestioningly and that, as such, it should, at least, be considered useful as corroboration<sup>241</sup>. Indeed, provided the reservations and provisos regarding the literature are followed, it can also act either as a source of identification of or, at least, illumination on, the possible identity of Gallic

deities obscured by *interpretatio Romana* in literature or as a means of confirmation either of the identity of deities already divined from the etymology or interpretation of their names or of the function or functions of a deity or both.

#### *The absence of an analytical element*

This basis for caution is unique to Piggott<sup>242</sup>. Piggott states that a problem is the fact that the society depicted is accepted with no investigation, no examination of its history, no explanation of its composition and no analysis, which would help the reader to understand the society and contrasts this with the Classical ethnographies, which were written by people to whom the society described was alien and, consequently, contained explanations and analyses to make the information more accessible. While Piggott may be correct that a form of objective analysis by an outsider would have made the society and events portrayed in Irish literature more comprehensible to other outsiders, this does not disqualify Irish literature as a source; indeed, it is possible to see double-standards in this reason for scepticism as regards Irish literature. Although Graeco-Roman ethnographic literature has no objective analysis, ignores the ordinary and focusses on the extraordinary, is distorted by ignorance, political interest, ethnocentricity and ethnic stereotype and is subjected to ethnocentric value judgements precisely because the writers were outsiders of the society, it is considered as an acceptable primary source. Even before Piggott expressed this argument, Le Roux<sup>243</sup> raised the point that it was paradoxical that the mistrust so often laid against Irish sources has often not been charged regarding ancient sources of their antagonists.

#### *Purely Hibernian bovine references*

This reason for scepticism, expressed only by Green<sup>244</sup>, is that many of the tales refer to cattle and would have been “not necessarily relevant” to lowland Britain and Gaul. Not only are cattle found more often in lowland areas, but there is also evidence in Classical literature that cattle were an important part of the economy of Gallic tribes in the lowland areas of north Gaul (**Caes.B.G.** VI.35.6; **Tac.Ann.** IV.72.1-2). The herding of cattle, as well as of sheep and goats, has taken place since the Bronze Age<sup>245</sup> and the continental Celts may have had parallels to the tales of cattle-snatching by Hercules<sup>246</sup>; indeed, Green<sup>247</sup> herself states that “cattle were crucial to the Celtic economy”.

## **Method and Controversy**

### **Method**

This study of the specific impact and extent of the acculturation between the Gallic and Roman religions and the amount of influence each had in Gallo-Roman religion requires a comparison of the concepts and practices of Gallic religion before the Roman Conquest and those of Gallo-Roman religion. This itself, as has been said<sup>ii</sup>, requires either the identification of or the attempt to identify aspects of Gallic religion prior to the Roman Conquest and acculturation. The themes of deities, sanctuaries, the afterlife, headhunting and rituals, the latter incorporating sacrifice, anthropomancy and circumambulation, have been chosen for three reasons. First, since deities, sanctuaries, sacrifice and the afterlife are concepts common to almost all religions, one is able to examine the effect of acculturation on concepts common to both the Gallic and Roman religions. Secondly, the themes of anthropomancy, circumambulation and headhunting enable us to examine the effect of acculturation on aspects of Gallic religion alien to the Romans and where there is no corresponding concept to affect it. The final, more practical, reason is that these themes are the concepts and practices of Gallic religion for which we have the most literary or archaeological evidence.

### **Controversy**

Contrasting with his statement in his thesis that religion is an example of an element of Romanisation with slow penetration<sup>248</sup>, Woolf states that the remodelling of Gallic religion, in which both the Romans and the Gauls actively participated, began at the end of the 1st century BCE<sup>249</sup> and that Gallic identity, after an early, brief formative period, was replaced by a Roman one<sup>250</sup>. When these are taken together Woolf is saying that, by the end of the 1st century CE Roman religion in its Gallo-Roman form had supplanted Gallic religion; this claim by Woolf, that the Gauls replaced their indigenous religion with the Roman one within less than a century will be examined at the end of this study. Woolf<sup>251</sup> holds up as an example of the supplanting of Gallic religion the fact that the sanctuary at Ribemont-sur-Ancre continued the Gallic rites until the first decades of the 1st century CE when it was replaced by a Gallo-Roman temple. However, the latest interpretation by Brunaux<sup>252</sup>, that the site was a war monument, one part a trophy, the other a ἔρῳον, indicates that the site was extraordinary and cannot be used as evidence of a typical Gallic sanctuary.

---

<sup>ii</sup> Page 10.

Woolf<sup>253</sup> also states that in the 1st century CE the rapidity with which private cults changed “strongly suggests that...Roman religion came to be understood to be better as well as different”. It may be thought, when he says that “acculturation involves members of one group selecting from the other’s contact culture elements which those individuals perceive as useful for the furtherance of their personal goals”<sup>254</sup>, that, by ‘better’ Woolf means ‘socially and politically advantageous’. However, not only would this apply only to the elite and would, therefore, contradict his idea that it was not only the elite who replaced the indigenous religion with the Roman, but Woolf himself indicates that this is not what is meant by ‘better’<sup>255</sup> when he says that “it is evident that the partial abandonment of those rites entailed a cost and that Gallo-Roman religion must have offered more in return than the perfunctory approval of a distant governor, perhaps spiritual as well as material goods”<sup>256</sup>. Even if one overlooks not only the fact that Woolf seems to consider religion to be a utility to be subjected to “abandonment” when the consumer finds a better product which “offered more”, but also that this abandonment is contrary to the inclusive nature of polytheistic religions, the very idea that the Gallic and Roman religions are different, upon which the idea that the latter is better depends, is open to question, as Brunaux<sup>257</sup> shows when he points out that the Gallic religion presents similarities in its material form with the Greek and Roman ones. This will also be the subject of examination.

Woolf<sup>258</sup> refers twice to Goudineau’s statement “ne concluons pas en énonçant un jugement qui évaluerait, en quelque sorte, la romanisation de Vaison (très, assez, plutôt, peu romanisé)... D’autre part, dressant une liste artificielle de pseudo-“traite romains” et de prétendues “survivances celtiques”, additionnant ou opposant des réalités disparates - il n’y a pas d’*atrium* mais on trouve des édiles, il n’est pas de *duumvir* mais les latrines ressemblent à celles de Timgad - nous nous livrerions à un jeu intellectuel factice dépourvu de toute signification et, au fond, d’intérêt”<sup>259</sup> showing that he approves and agrees. Thus any data or arguments to the contrary are dismissed *a priori* in a pre-emptive strike as “prétendues ‘survivances celtiques’” and as an intellectual waste of time. He says that Romanisation was total within a few years and dismisses any attempt to counter this hypothesis by examining the impact of Roman culture and the survival of aspects of Gallic culture as a misleading, intellectually pointless exercise.

Goudineau’s point, that the measurement of Romanisation on a grade of various levels

based on the presence or absence of a few *minor* elements of Roman culture is indeed “un jeu intellectuel factice dépourvu de toute signification et... d'intérêt”. But Goudineau's statement should not be taken as a reason not to measure Romanisation at all. There are major elements, which we can state are Roman, such as, *inter alia*, centuriation, permanent building materials, good roads, the banning of human sacrifice, the presence or absence of which are criteria for measuring Romanisation and for determining the continued presence of pre-Roman indigenous culture.

Although Woolf<sup>260</sup> accepts that it is possible to identify common cult practices, such as the deposit of weapons and valuable objects, variations of which go back to the Bronze Age all over Europe, in a paper delivered at Glasgow University in 1998 he expressed the view that it is impossible to determine pre-Roman Gallic beliefs. He also says<sup>261</sup> that it is impossible to define or describe a pure Roman culture. Yet he says that Gallic religion was partially abandoned and replaced by Roman religion<sup>262</sup>. If we cannot say what Roman was, how can one say how much of Gallo-Roman religion was Roman and, therefore, how quickly it replaced Gallic religion or whether it replaced it at all? It seems that the essence of what Woolf is saying is that Roman culture cannot be defined and Celtic religion cannot be known, but one is certain that the indefinable totally replaced the unknowable. King and Brunaux<sup>263</sup> point out the need to understand pre-Roman religion to understand post-Roman Conquest religion. To state that Roman religion was different to and better than Gallic religion, without any attempt to reconstruct Gallic religion in order to demonstrate the contrast, is methodologically unsound.

Extensive discussion will also be directed at the work of Bayet, Benoît, Brunaux, Duval, Green, Hatt, Lambrechts, Le Roux, Reinach, Thévenot, Vendryes and de Vries. The principal reason is that the majority of the themes<sup>264</sup> examined by these scholars has produced much controversy and such controversy has generated an abundance of theorising and speculation. These scholars have been at the forefront of this and the merits of their work must be assessed. In addition some of these scholars are divided regarding acculturation and the extent to which Gallo-Roman religion contained Gallic beliefs and practices; some, Duval, Hatt and Thévenot, consider it to have been a fusion of the Gallic and Roman religions, while others, Benoît, Le Roux and Vendryes, contend that Gallic beliefs, particularly the worship of the deities, persisted for some while. A decision regarding these two views will be made at the end of the study.

## Chapter Three **Gallic Deities**

In order to evaluate the effect of acculturation during the Gallo-Roman period on the worship of pre-Roman Gallic deities, one must first identify the Gallic deities. It is customary in an examination of Gallic religion and deities to begin by quoting and analysing Caesar's reference to six Gallic deities which he claims were worshipped by the Gauls (**Caes.B.G.** VI.17.1-2, 18.1). However, despite the statement by Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h<sup>1</sup>, that the best definition of the gods of Gaul is given by Caesar, the list is so contaminated by *interpretatio Romana*<sup>2</sup>, that it is not only misleading, but it may be regarded, not as a source of understanding and an aid to the interpretation of Gallic religion, but rather as a passage which itself needs to be interpreted to be understood. Brunaux, although saying that it perhaps came from first-hand information supplied by either Roman merchants or Gallic nobles, rightly says "cette évocation des dieux gaulois n'est guère utilisable, elle nous renseigne plus sur l'idée que se faisait César de la religion gauloise que sur la religion gauloise elle-même"<sup>3</sup> and that "il ne semble pas que la fameuse description du panthéon au Livre VI, 17, nous soit d'une aide quelconque"<sup>4</sup>. Cunliffe<sup>5</sup> calls it a rationalisation and one, which is an obvious over-simplification as a means of introducing Celtic religion to Roman readers.

As regards the identification of pre-Roman Gallic deities, some are known from Greek and, primarily, Latin literature and some images on pre-Roman Celtic art, which can be identified as portraying Celtic deities, contrary to the presupposition of aniconism<sup>1</sup>. In addition to iconography and literature, this chapter will also use the analysis by many modern authors of Irish vernacular literature to propose the identification of Gallic deities; according to these authors this analysis reveals both the identity of the Gallic deities to whom Caesar refers obscurely and the basis of Caesar's attempt at the construction of a pantheon.

Therefore, Gallic deities can be divided into three categories: deities, which are mentioned in Classical literature under a Gallic name; deities, which are found in Gallic iconography; finally, and controversially, deities, which may be inferred from and equated with deities mentioned in Irish vernacular literature.

---

<sup>1</sup> See pages CL-CLXV.

### Gallic deities in Classical literature under a Gallic name

Owing to *interpretatio Romana* and other forms of ethnocentrism, there are very few instances in Classical literature of Gallic deities being mentioned by their indigenous name. These few are Poeninus, mentioned by Livy (**Livy**.XXI.38.9) in the 1st century BCE, Teutates, Esus and Taranis, mentioned by Lucan (**Luc**.I.444-446) in the 1st century CE, by the Commentary on Lucan's epic poem composed by some Scholiasts at Berne (*Comm.Schol.Bern.ad Luc.* ad I.445) from the 4th to the 9th centuries CE<sup>6</sup>, by the *Adnotationes super Lucanum* (*Adnot.super Luc.* ad I.445 and I.446), written before the 10th century CE<sup>7</sup> and by the *Glossae Lucani*, written in the 11th or 12th century<sup>8</sup> (*Gloss.Lucan.* ad I.445 and I.446), and Epona, mentioned by Juvenal in the 1st century CE and by the Commentaries of Juvenal, the *Apparatus criticus ad Juvenalem* and *Commentarius ad Juvenalem e codice Coloniensi*.

Poeninus is included in an examination of Gallic deities because the source, Livy Book XXI, was not only probably written during the 1st century BCE when Roman culture still had had little effect on the Gauls, but was also probably derived from a source written prior to the Roman Conquest. Although Lucan wrote in the mid-1st century CE and, therefore, during the early period of acculturation when the Gallic deities would be beginning to be affected by the influx of Roman culture, it is probable that he obtained the three deities from an ethnographical account, written in the either the 2nd or 1st centuries BCE, which is now missing; it has been suggested<sup>9</sup> that this was Posidonius. The Commentary and the *Adnotationes super Lucanum*, although written much later, seem to preserve information from the pre-Roman, Gallic period<sup>ii</sup>. A work by Lactantius (**Lactant**.*Div.Inst.*I.21.4) in the 4th century CE also refers to Esus, but merely seems, as Deonna<sup>10</sup> says, to be a paraphrase or précis of the line by Lucan. It certainly gives no added information.

Teutates, Esus and Taranis deserve a special mention. As regards the context, they are mentioned at the end of a list of Gallic tribes rejoicing at the departure of Caesar from Gaul as he leaves to invade Italy, possibly Lucan's emulation of the list of ships by Homer (**Hom**.*Il.*II.446-877). The choice and position of the deities in the poem have been claimed to be significant; certain ideas, not just about the deities, but also about Gallic religion in general, have been based entirely on these three lines. Some<sup>11</sup> claim that Lucan chose these specific deities because they formed a special, distinct triad. Others<sup>12</sup> claim that the position of these deities at the end of the list of Gallic

---

<sup>ii</sup> The arguments regarding the reliability of the Commentary of the Berne Scholiasts have already been examined on pages 26-29.

tribes signifies that they were worshipped by all the tribes in Gaul and were, therefore, pan-Celtic.

However, the majority of academics do not hold these opinions. These deities do not necessarily have a link between them<sup>13</sup> except that they were appeased by human sacrifice<sup>14</sup>. Nothing proves that they had formed a triad; despite Dillon's<sup>15</sup> statement, nothing in Lucan's text suggests that they form a definite triad of major deities<sup>16</sup> and Lucan specifically does not say that the Gauls offer human sacrifices to them as a triad<sup>17</sup>. It is possible to construct the basis for Lucan's collection of these three deities together, particularly if he is stressing the aspect of human sacrifice<sup>18</sup>. Quite apart from the fact that, as Bober<sup>19</sup> observes, "there is no reason to assume a uniform pan-Celtic religion in pre-Roman times"

Not only is there no evidence to suggest that Lucan placed the gods at the end of his list because he wanted to indicate that the three deities were worshipped throughout Gaul, but there is no evidence that Lucan knew or could have known of such a status. Reinach<sup>20</sup> points out that Lucan "ne dit pas non plus que ces trois divinités reçussent le culte d'un même peuple" and Duval<sup>21</sup> says that the three gods are not attributed to the whole of Gaul in its entirety. Indeed, according to MacCulloch<sup>22</sup>, Lucan is stressing that they were, more or less, well-known local gods. Even Lambrechts<sup>23</sup>, who believes that the three gods were great gods worshipped by all Gauls, concedes that there are only a small number of inscriptions, which mention them, and that this would lead one to suppose that they are only local deities; MacCulloch and Powell<sup>24</sup> say that this small number proves they were only local deities and quite obscure. Teutates is mentioned in only four inscriptions, all outside Gaul and only two in areas of Celtic culture<sup>25</sup>. From the four instances of the use of the name of Esus in post-Conquest inscriptions from Gaul and Switzerland<sup>26</sup>, there is no evidence that he was a member of a pan-Celtic triad<sup>27</sup>. As regards Taranis, Green<sup>28</sup> states that there is little archaeological evidence to support the idea that Taranis is a major Celtic deity; indeed, not only is there little epigraphical evidence, seven inscriptions and one relief<sup>29</sup>, but most are from areas outside Gaul<sup>30</sup>, although still possibly in the area of Celtic culture. Vendryes<sup>31</sup> points out that it is hardly enough to consider Taranis a major Gallic deity. Finally, if such a triad existed and was so important to all Celts, surely at least one example of an inscription of all three names would have been found<sup>32</sup>, but they are not found together<sup>33</sup>.

The main argument against both ideas is that they are dependent not only on the

assumption that Lucan knew about precise details of Gallic religion, for which there is no evidence, but also, more to the point, on the assumption that a product of ethnocentric education of the Roman ruling class such as he was even cared. He may have wished to include some Gallic deities to give the list a more genuinely Gallic aspect. He possibly knew that the number three had a special significance for the Celts<sup>34</sup> and grouped the three deities together to supply a Celtic atmosphere. He probably wanted both to inject an element of sensationalism into the poem<sup>35</sup> and to appeal to the old Roman fear of the Gauls. In short “il a choisi trois divinités particulièrement à ses intentions littéraires” and “ses vers n’ont qu’une maigre valeur descriptive”<sup>36</sup>. The list of all the Gallic tribes in Lucan’s poem was probably merely a comprehensive list to show that the whole of Gaul was rejoicing at Caesar’s departure; a summary of this idea is expressed by Lucan’s reference to the Treveri, who were at the north of *Long-Haired Gaul*, (**Luc.I.441**) and then, in the next line, to the Ligurians (**Luc.I.442**), who were in the south near the Mediterranean. Vendryes<sup>37</sup> sums up the argument by saying that the idea of finding a trinity of great Celtic gods in the verse of Lucan is the result of an abusive interpretation of information which itself is scarcely well established.

In the section dealing with the three lines in which the three deities are mentioned (*Comm.Schol.Bern.ad Luc. ad I.445*), the Commentary on Lucan also provides information about them. Indeed, Lambrechts<sup>38</sup> says “ces scholies sont de la plus haute importance”. Unfortunately, the usefulness of the information cannot be accepted without question because the section of the Commentary dealing with the three gods seems to consist of information from two different sources, the division being indicated by the sentence *item aliter exinde in aliis invenimus* in the middle of the section; the first source seems to supply details of the sacrifices offered up to each deity, while the second seems to attempt to supply motivation for the sacrifices. The usefulness of the section is undermined by the fact that each source contradicts the other concerning the Roman gods with whom the Gallic deities were identified. The Scholiasts aggravate the situation by not showing any preference for or criticism of either group. It is interesting that, contrary to normal practice, the Berne Scholiasts, in their identification of the Gallic deities with Roman ones, place the Roman god after the Gallic one, as if the Roman god was the epithet. However, it will be seen that the second group of Scholiasts is more accurate regarding the identity of the Roman equivalent to Taranis and both groups are probably correct regarding the Roman gods equated with Teutates and Esus.

## Poeninus

According to Livy (**Livy**.XXI.38.9) Poeninus was a deity, possibly of the Seduni Veragri, an alpine tribe; an Iron Age sanctuary was dedicated to him in the Great St Bernard Pass<sup>39</sup>. Poeninus was a geographical epithet<sup>40</sup> and he was identified by *interpretatio Romana* with Jupiter<sup>41</sup>.

## Teutates

The name of this pre-Roman Gallic deity is supplied by Lucan (**Luc**.I.444-445). The Scholiasts of Berne confuse an understanding of this god by supplying two conflicting pieces of *interpretatio Romana*. One group identifies Teutates with Mercury and the other with Mars. Le Roux contends that Teutates is not Mars and has never been and never could be Mercury<sup>42</sup> and states that neither should be believed<sup>43</sup>. Lambrechts<sup>44</sup> supports the identification of Teutates with Mercury and this seems to be confirmed by the *Adnotationes super Lucanum* and the *Glossae Lucani*; but these works may just be repeating one part of the Commentary and may have no foundation for their statements. Although Le Roux<sup>45</sup> warns that Teutates is not Mars and Lambrechts<sup>46</sup> rejects the proposal, the identification of Teutates with Mars has been accepted by some academics<sup>47</sup>. It is noted in the section dealing with the deity Esus that it is not impossible for the same Gallic deity to be identified with both Mars and Mercury. The solution to this problem is the function or functions, which Teutates fulfils; however, while information is given about the human sacrifice to him<sup>iii</sup>, nothing is actually said about his function or functions or his attributes. This must be ascertained by an analysis of the god's name<sup>iv</sup>.

Ward<sup>48</sup>, following a hypothesis, which assigns sacrifice by drowning to deities with a food production function, considers Teutates to be a deity concerned purely with fertility. Clarus<sup>49</sup> says that he is not a cosmic deity and the majority of opinions accepts that the name Teutates is clear<sup>50</sup> and expresses the tribal character of the god<sup>51</sup> and the idea that Teutates is the name for the tribal god<sup>52</sup>. Birkhan<sup>53</sup> compares him to the Umbrian Vofione and the Roman Quirinus. Some scholars have ascribed to him a national status<sup>54</sup>. This seems excessive and once again to be an example of a desire to see evidence of pan-Celticism; Thévenot<sup>55</sup> considers Jullian's hypothesis to be "bien fragile" and Reinach, van Hamel and Duval<sup>56</sup> assert that Teutates had only local significance. It was probably the case that each Gallic tribe had its own Teutates, each giving him a different name<sup>57</sup>, similar to Ba'al in the Syrian religion.

---

<sup>iii</sup> See page 165.

<sup>iv</sup> See pages CLXXXII-CLXXXIII.

As tribal god he takes care of his people in war and peace by supporting his people in war and by promoting the fertility in peace<sup>58</sup>. Clarus<sup>59</sup> agrees with this. This may supply the answer to the question should Teutates be identified with Mercury or Mars? Perhaps the answer is yes and, as Lambrechts<sup>60</sup> says, “aucun des scholiastes ne s’est trompé”. Perhaps Teutates can be identified with Mercury or Mars depending on the circumstances, material, geography etc. Although Birkhan<sup>61</sup> says that the cults of Mercury on Le Donon<sup>62</sup> and on the Puy-de-Dôme<sup>63</sup> suggest that the founding deity of some tribes had characteristics, which permitted an equation by *interpretatio Romana* with Mercury. However, Teutates, as the tribal god, oversaw the tribe’s needs not just in war, but also in peace<sup>64</sup>, he was therefore not limited only to military activity, but was concerned with all aspects of tribal affairs, including crops and commerce. Indeed, since crops and commerce are both as important during war as during peace, there is no contradiction in a deity being concerned with both war and prosperity; the Romans had this dichotomy in their god Mars<sup>v</sup>. He may even have been identified with both depending on whether the tribe was at war or at peace at the time. Teutates may be called a pan-Celtic deity in the sense that every Gallic tribe worshipped its own Teutates either under that name or another.

### **Esus**

The deity Esus is mentioned by Lucan (**Luc.I.445**). The name of the deity was possibly the basis of the name of the Gallic tribe the Esvii (**Caes.B.G.II.34, III.7, V.24**)<sup>65</sup> and of the names Esvius<sup>66</sup> and Esucius<sup>67</sup> and may have been found on a British coin<sup>68</sup>. Neither Lucan nor the works commenting on his poem give any information regarding Esus’ functions; the method of sacrifice<sup>vi</sup> gives little towards an interpretation of the deity<sup>69</sup>. Usually, etymology of the deity’s name may help with this, but not only is this not the case with Esus, but the etymology is actually the biggest obstacle<sup>70</sup>. While the name of Teutates is clear and that of Taranis almost as much, Esus resembles nothing<sup>71</sup>. There is disagreement about the actual derivation and meaning of the name<sup>vii</sup>. With the meaning of the god’s name being unclear, the god’s functions are also unclear. According to de Vries<sup>72</sup>, there is one point, which is important, and that is that the sacrifice was hung in a tree. There is also no information about Esus’ character; de Vries<sup>73</sup> ethnocentrically states that, because the sacrifice to him was “gräßlich”, Esus must have been “ein wenig freundlicher Gott”.

---

<sup>v</sup> Page 8.

<sup>vi</sup> See page 166.

<sup>vii</sup> See pages CLXXIX-CLXXXI.

Hatt claims that Esus is the god of the Earth and of the Dead<sup>74</sup> and is one of the spouses of the Mother-Goddess<sup>75</sup>.

The Berne Scholiasts identify the Gallic god with two different Roman deities, one with Mars and the other with Mercury; the *Adnotationes super Lucanum* and the *Glossae Lucani* agree with the identification with Mars. Duval<sup>76</sup> believes that the one nullifies the other. Although some scholars<sup>77</sup> reject one or both of the identifications, it is possible that both equations are correct. The decision to accept one only is based on the assumption that the Gauls identified Mars *or* Mercury with one specific Roman god and no other. However, this assumption can be seen to be false by the fact that at the site of Tholey there is an inscription to Mercury Iovantucarus<sup>78</sup>, yet at the Temple of Trier-'Irminenwingert there are inscriptions<sup>79</sup> to Mars as Iovantucarus<sup>80</sup>. It seems that it was possible for a Gallic deity both to be identified with and to be the epithet of two different Roman deities even within the same tribal territory.

Some modern scholars have proposed different identifications. Hatt<sup>81</sup> has identified Esus with the Antlered-god, a connection, which Clarus<sup>82</sup> finds incomprehensible. Duval<sup>83</sup> points out the association between the two elements of the ritual and the experience of Odin, who was voluntarily wounded and then suspended in a tree for nine days, a connection with which York<sup>84</sup> agrees; de Vries, Ward and Clarus<sup>85</sup> go further with de Vries concluding that Esus represents an Odinic deity, Ward thinking that Esus moved into the Odinic function and Clarus considering that Esus may be related to Odin. Although emphasising that Odin does not equate to Esus, Le Roux<sup>86</sup> admits that there is a striking parallelism, seen also by Powell and Sergent<sup>87</sup>, between the act of hanging in both; indeed, Sergent<sup>88</sup> points out that Odin was the god of the Hanged<sup>89</sup> and was the deity to whom people were sacrificed by hanging. Powell<sup>90</sup> says that Odin may have been Celtic in origin.

Sergent compares the three-fold composition of the sacrifice to Esus - suspension of the victim in a tree; loss of blood caused by the deliberate infliction of a wound; the dislocation of the limbs, not due to either the suspension or to the loss of blood, but to the rotting of the body left in the tree<sup>91</sup> - with the Welsh myth of Llew Llaw Gyffes, the Welsh form of Lug, in which Llew is immediately killed by a wound, an installation, though not a suspension, in a tree and a rotting, which must have begun immediately after the lethal blow<sup>92</sup>. Although there is no mention in the Welsh text of a ritual suspension and a dismemberment, Sergent<sup>93</sup> believes that the presence of

the elements of a rotting in a tree after a lethal blow with a lance is enough to conclude that all the elements of the human sacrifice to Esus were transposed into a myth and that Esus is Lug and Lug is the Gallic deity equated by the Romans with Mercury.

### **Taranis**

As with Teutates, the first mention of Taranis is in the epic poem by Lucan (**Luc.I. 446**). Once again, as with Teutates, the Commentary on the poem of Lucan by the Scholiasts of Berne supplies information about the mode and type of victim of the sacrifice to Taranis, but there is no information about Taranis himself, such as his importance and his function. However, as with Teutates, such details may be divined by an examination of the deity's name<sup>viii</sup>, which indicates that Taranis was a god of thunder. The fire-sacrifice<sup>ix</sup> to him described by the Berne Scholiasts should also be considered. Duval<sup>94</sup> points out that, according to Pausanias (**Paus.X.23.3**), the Celts were paralysed with fear at Delphi by the roll of thunder and, according to Ptolemy Lagus (**Strab.VII.3.8**), the Celts told Alexander the Great that they feared nothing except that the sky might fall; it is not unreasonable to think that sound of thunder can be imagined to be the sky falling and this would explain the fear the Gauls had. Finally, as the god of thunder he must have been the god of lightning<sup>95</sup>, since thunder is closely connected to lightning. Therefore, as Vendryes<sup>96</sup> says, it is natural that they should look for a way to appease the god whose presence is manifested by lightning. Duval<sup>97</sup> claims that Taranis is the master of the celestial fire, meaning lightning, and that it is lightning, which inspired the use of fire in the sacrifice.

A Treviran stater, modelled very faithfully on the Macedonian Phillipic, was discovered at Hespérance in Luxemburg<sup>98</sup>; according to Sterckx<sup>99</sup>, it is distinguished from its model by the fact that one of the horses drawing the chariot of the sky god places its hoof on a head emerging from the ground and it represents a Celtic deity (cf the discussion of Taranis on page 73).

As is the case with Teutates and Esus, the Commentary confuses a study of Taranis and the understanding of Taranis' identification with any Roman deities by identifying him with two different Roman deities. One group, interestingly the one which usually supplies the motive for the sacrifice, identifies Taranis with Jupiter, president of wars<sup>100</sup> and greatest of celestial gods. Although rejected by Cerquand,

---

<sup>viii</sup> See page CLXXXI.

<sup>ix</sup> See page 166.

only partially accepted by Green and accepted by Wait with reservations<sup>101</sup>, this interpretation is accepted by a number of modern authors<sup>102</sup>. The *Adnotationes super Lucanum* says *Taranis Juppiter dictus a Gallis*; but, since this work both describes the human sacrifices with the phrase *diro sanguine*, which seems to be an imitation of the phrase *sanguine diro* which Lucan uses to describe the sacrifice to Teutates, and, in the clause *laetantur hic converti proelia*, claims a connection between Taranis and battles, the identification of Jupiter and Taranis may be equally trustworthy. Duval<sup>103</sup> explains this by stating that while Mars governs battles, Jupiter governs wars. De Vries<sup>104</sup> proposes that Taranis, as his name indicates, was a god of thunder, but became a god of war and points out this has happened before among Indo-European deities; both the Germanic god Donar, a good comparison for Taranis as regards being a god of thunder, and the Vedic god Indra were thunder gods who became war-gods and were connected with the warrior-aristocracy. De Vries suggests that Taranis can be categorised the same way. Support for de Vries' proposal may be found in the fact that there are no inscriptions mentioning Taranis within Gaul, where, with the *pax Romana*, peace was established, and that the inscriptions are found on the borders, where military action was common, or, in the case of the inscription found at Chester, in a fort. The identification of Taranis with Jupiter is followed by the *Glossae Lucani*. This identification finds support in a report in the 1st century AD by Maximus of Tyre (**Maxim.Dialexeis.VIII.8**) that the Celts used to worship Zeus in the form of an oak tree; for the *interpretatio Graeca* to make sense the Celtic deity must be either the supreme deity or the deity concerned with celestial matters. The only Gallic deity, which has these qualities, is Taranis. As Jupiter is the Roman equivalent of Zeus, this reinforces the identification of Taranis with Jupiter. The connection between the celestial deity Taranis and oak trees is supported by the statement that the Druids consider anything growing on oak trees to be *e caelo missum* (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.249**). This connection may explain the veneration for and most sacred nature of mistletoe and need for oak leaves in rituals (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.249**) as products of the sky-god and the statement that the Druids practise a form of divination by eating acorns (*Comm. Schol.Bern. ad Luc. ad I.451*).

Duval<sup>105</sup> claims that the only image of Taranis from the Gallic, pre-Roman period is the image on the outside plate of the Gundestrup cauldron (**Fig.3.1**). The image is of the torso of a bearded man with both arms raised. The right hand is touching either a half-wheel or a whole wheel with the right half obscured by the raised right arm; the left half of the wheel is held by a warrior, who is either floating or jumping. On either side of these two is what seems to be the stylised representation of a leopard



**Fig.3.1**  
Plate from the Gundestrup cauldron

and beneath them two fantastical creatures caper; they have the heads of birds of prey, the body and legs of a predatory animal and wings. Between them is a ram-headed serpent. The identification of this image as that of Taranis is accepted by Krause, Lambrechts, Benoît and Hatt<sup>106</sup> and has been taken as the basis for connecting Taranis with the image of the wheel<sup>107</sup>. Contrary to this, de Vries<sup>108</sup> sees no need to connect Taranis with the god represented with a wheel just because the wheel is symbolic of the sun, a celestial phenomenon, and the thunderbolt is also a celestial phenomenon and the thunderbolt is a symbol with different meaning from the sun. Bergquist and Taylor<sup>109</sup> state that the identification of the figure with the wheel with Taranis is no longer certain. Certainly, there is no independent basis for the belief that the identity of this image is Taranis or a deity or even of Celtic origin.

Contradicting the identification with Jupiter, the first group, which supplies the details of the sacrifices, states that Taranis is identified with another deity, Dispater, an identification accepted by MacCulloch, Lambrechts, Hatt, Le Roux and Duval<sup>110</sup>. This is based on the text in the Commentary, which, according to Zwicker<sup>111</sup>, actually says *Taranis Ditis pater*, not *Taranis Dis pater*. Duval<sup>112</sup> explains this by saying that here *Ditis* is a Genitive analogous to a Nominative, similar to a use by Servius (*Serv.Aen. VI.273*). Consequently, if Dispater is identified with Sucellus<sup>113</sup>, Taranis is also identified with Sucellus and, from him, Silvanus<sup>114</sup>. The identification of Sucellus with Taranis is considered as supported because Sucellus has a hammer, which is linked to the aspect of thunder, but, as MacCulloch<sup>115</sup> says, there is no

evidence that Sucellus is Taranis. Clarus seems to accept that Taranis may be identified with both Jupiter<sup>116</sup> and with Dispater<sup>117</sup>.

## **Epona**

Epona is mentioned in ancient literature (**Juv.Sat.**VIII.155-157; **Plut.Parallela Graec.Rom.**XXIX; **Min.Oct.**XXVII.7). Her name is entirely Celtic and it is accepted by all scholars that she is Gallic in origin; her function, as horse-goddess, can be seen from her name<sup>x</sup>. This is confirmed by the context of the reference in Juvenal and the various commentaries on it (*Apparatus criticus ad Juvenalem* ad VIII.157; *Commentarius ad Juvenalem e codice Coloniensi*). The Gauls had skilled cavalry, demonstrated by the fact that Gauls were employed as cavalry for both the Roman and the Carthaginian armies. Therefore, the concept of a deity dedicated to horses would have been natural for Gauls. Although Lambrechts<sup>118</sup> points out that it is impossible to prove that theriomorphic concepts pre-dated anthropomorphic ones, Epona was probably the Gallic version of the ancient Indo-European horse-goddess in humanised form. The concept of a goddess who is hippomorphic or, at least, horse-related is a common Indo-European one<sup>119</sup>, since the horse was important for all Indo-European peoples, warriors in particular,<sup>120</sup> as either for cavalry or for chariots. Therefore, these peoples developed a horse-god<sup>121</sup>, possibly a form of the war-god, for whom the horse-goddess was originally simply a consort<sup>122</sup>, before acquiring greater independence and greater individuality.

Dexter<sup>123</sup> lists three forms of the goddess. One form is a goddess who is a simple personification of a horse and has the function of protectress of horses, but has no mythology. Another form is a goddess in human form, who is the focus of a legend, in which she takes on the form of a horse, is raped and subsequently gives birth to horses as a result of her equine form at the time of the conception. A final form is one in which the goddess is human, but displays equine qualities by being treated as a horse, in some way, and by giving birth either to a horse or to a human at the same time as a foal is born elsewhere. The horse-goddess is present in the myths of various branches of Indo-European peoples. The Vedic, Welsh and Irish myths deal with a horse-goddess or, in the Welsh and Irish versions, a woman who has equine qualities, thus indicating the vestiges of the concept of a horse-goddess connected with construction projects. The mythology of Epona probably also contained some of these elements. Sterckx<sup>124</sup> states that the details of the myth of Rhiannon correspond trait for trait with the iconography of Epona. Le Roux and Oaks<sup>125</sup> point out that

---

<sup>x</sup> See page CLXXXV.

Rhiannon, Macha and Medb are also all Celtic goddesses connected with 'sovereignty'.

There is the Vedic legend of *Saranyū*, the Vedic Horse-goddess, who, after changing into a horse and being raped by her husband also in the form of a horse, conceived and gave birth to the Vedic divine twins, the *Aśvins*, who appear as a pair of divine horses and had anthropomorphic equivalents<sup>126</sup>. Suranyu's father was the divine architect of the palace of the Vedic gods<sup>127</sup>.

Although a horse-goddess is not present in the Greek or Roman pantheon, a *Potnia Hippiā*, meaning 'Lady Horse' or 'Mistress of Horses', is found as early as the Mycenaean period<sup>128</sup>; among the goddesses with the epithet *Hippiā* mentioned by Pausanias is an example of the first type of horse-goddess, Athena of Colonus, who has the features of a horse (**Paus.I.30.4**) and of the second form, Demeter Hippiā, who changed into a mare in order to avoid the advances of Poseidon, who changed into a stallion and raped her (**Paus.VIII.25.5**), producing a foal, Arion, or the goddess Despoina or both (**Paus.VIII.25.7**). This is similar to the Vedic myth of the goddess *Saranyū*, who took on the form of a mare to avoid her husband, who changed into a stallion and raped her, producing the Divine Twins, the *Aśvins* (*RV.X.17.2*).

Examples of the third form of the horse-goddess are present in both Irish and Welsh vernacular literature. In Irish myth Macha, meaning the Rider<sup>129</sup>, is the pregnant wife of a man called Crund, who boasts that his wife could beat the King's best horses in a race; after remonstrating with her husband, Macha performs this feat, in order to prevent his death, and then, having given birth to twins, dies. Macha's ability to race successfully against the best horses is the first basis for her equine nature<sup>130</sup>. The second one is the fact that Macha's twins are horses; in a story about Cú Chulainn, the Ulster hero, the two horses, who were born on the same night as he was and draw his chariot are called the offspring of Macha. The Welsh equivalent of Macha is Rhiannon<sup>131</sup>, who, because of a careless promise by her chosen husband, Pwyll, was forced to ride in a race against the king's horses immediately after giving birth and, after winning, remonstrates with Pwyll. While Macha gave birth to hippomorphic twins, the birth of Rhiannon's son, Pryderi, simultaneously with a foal and their upbringing together is a subtle version of the birth of twin horses<sup>132</sup>. Additional evidence that these two goddesses are horse-goddesses is the fact that both are connected with construction projects. Macha compels the five sons of Dithorba to build the embankment and rampart around the citadel of the capital of Ulster, which

was then called Emain Macha<sup>133</sup> and Rhiannon was forced to wear a horse collar and act as a draft animal while Pwyll had to carry hammers, which suggests that both were involved in construction<sup>134</sup>. It has been proposed<sup>135</sup> that the Welsh Horse-goddess Rhiannon is identical to Epona<sup>136</sup>. This identification of Rhiannon with Epona is largely, if not unanimously, accepted<sup>137</sup> and both Rhiannon and Epona have been identified as identical to the Irish goddess Macha<sup>138</sup>.

In view of the fact that the Indo-European peoples as a whole had the concept of a Horse-goddess and that two Insular parts of the Celtic branch each had one, one would expect the Continental, Gallic, part also to have a form, particularly with the enormous use of the horse shown by the Gauls in warfare. The Gallic Horse-goddess is Epona, one of the few Gallic deities to be mentioned in Classical literature.

### **Divine Twins**

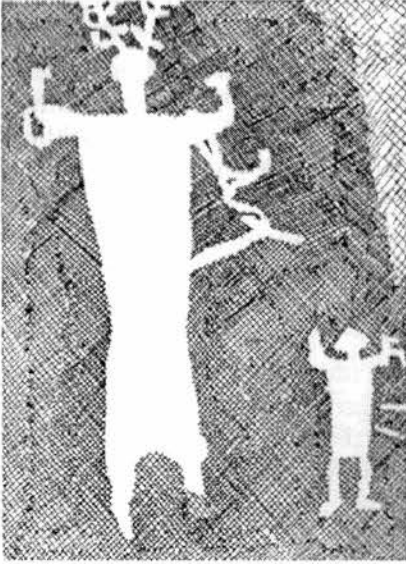
Diodorus Siculus records that, according to some historians, who include Timaeus of Tauromenium, the Celts dwelling *παρὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν*, not just the Insular Celts, as York<sup>139</sup> says, worshipped the Dioscuri above all gods (**Diod.IV.56.4**). The use of the name Dioscuri certainly demonstrates a certain element of *interpretatio* in the report suggesting that the reference should be viewed with scepticism and doubt has been cast on the validity of the passage<sup>140</sup>. However, many pre-industrial cultures, societies and peoples all over the world, whether in Africa or North and South America, have myths which ascribe the same details to twins, whether the twins are identical or fraternal and the branches of the Indo-European speaking people are not exempt from stories of Divine Twins<sup>141</sup>. One is usually divine and the other human<sup>142</sup> and, following Ward's adaptation of a scheme by Harris<sup>143</sup>; they are referred to by a single name or by similar names sometimes differentiated only by the length of a vowel<sup>144</sup>. Ward calls this pattern Dioscuric<sup>145</sup>, the Dioscuri being the most famous example<sup>146</sup>. The most important characteristic of the Indo-European Divine Twins is an association with horses<sup>147</sup>. Although, as de Vries<sup>148</sup> points out, there are few traces of the concept of Divine Twins in Gaul which show no sign of Graeco-Roman influence, the presence of Divine Twins in many cultures and in the various branches of the Indo-European people strongly suggests that Celtic mythology must certainly have had them<sup>149</sup>; indeed, if it is present even in Northern Europe among the Germans<sup>150</sup>, it is difficult to believe that the Celtic branch is the only one devoid of all trace of Dioscurism. Therefore, the report should not only not be dismissed, but may be regarded as evidence in Classical literature for Divine Twins in the Celtic branch. York<sup>151</sup> certainly believes that the concept of Divine twins is present in



Celtic mythology and can be seen in the Irish gods Iuchair and Iucharba and Ermit and Dermot (LG.112)<sup>152</sup>.

## Gallic deities in Gallic iconography

### The antlered-god



**Fig.3.2.**  
Rock carving of antlered figure  
from Val Camonica

The principal pre-Roman examples of this deity are the rock carving from Val Camonica in north Italy (**Fig.3.2**)<sup>153</sup>, a plate of the Gundestrup cauldron (**Fig.3.3**)<sup>154</sup> and images on coins<sup>155</sup>. The carving has been dated to the first La Tène period<sup>156</sup>, the middle of the 4th century BCE<sup>157</sup> or even before the 4th century<sup>158</sup>, during the Celtic presence in north Italy. This establishes it as the earliest example of unadulterated Celtic work<sup>159</sup> and the deity as Celtic and, therefore, is unique<sup>160</sup>. It depicts a tall, erect figure with horns on its head, draped and standing with raised arms; beside this figure is a much smaller one of a man also with upraised arms, who may be clothed or not. A

ring or torc hangs on the tall figure's left arm and something like tangled rope hangs from the right. Bober<sup>161</sup> considers the smaller figure to be nude and ithyphallic and to be standing in an *orans* pose; it has been interpreted as a worshipper<sup>162</sup>, which Bober<sup>163</sup> accepts as a reasonable interpretation, or as a devotee<sup>164</sup>. The carving is significant because of the antlers on the tall figure's head and the presence of the torcs; Bober considers a horned serpent also to be present.

The second pre-Roman example is one of the inner plates of the Gundestrup cauldron (**Fig.3.3**). Here there is a figure surrounded by four animals, a large stag with branch-like antlers and a small representation of a deer with smaller antlers to the left and two wolves to the right; the figure is beardless and cross-legged, has antlers like those of the stag and is holding a torc in his right hand and a snake, possibly horned, in his left. To the right of the wolves is a man riding a fish with the face of an animal with whiskers and another small representation of a deer with small antlers, beneath which there are two dogs fighting.



**Fig.3.3**

Inner plate of the Gundestrup cauldron depicting an antlered figure

Three distinct attributes, stag's antlers, torcs and horned snakes, are present. Although the date of the construction of the cauldron is much debated, it is agreed that it pre-dates the Roman Conquest; even the latest discussion<sup>165</sup>, which points out the similarities between the techniques and artistry of the cauldron and that of Thracian metalwork, accepts that there is no evidence of Roman influence and that, if it was made in Thracian areas, it must have been before Roman contact<sup>166</sup>. There are motifs on the Gundestrup cauldron, which are distinctly oriental, and these similarities have caused Vendryes<sup>167</sup> to suggest that the Celtic artists had predecessors who were from India, something which de Vries<sup>168</sup> considers to be not impossible. Krause<sup>169</sup> points out that the images on the cauldron, particularly the peripheral figures, are influenced by Pontic artwork. Despite Green's<sup>170</sup> statement that there is little doubt about the Celtic origin of the iconography and Krause's<sup>171</sup> description of the Antlered-deity as "eine weitere typisch keltische Gottheit", Bergquist and Taylor contend that it is not just the workmanship and skill which is Thracian<sup>172</sup>, but that many of the images on the cauldron are Thracian in origin too<sup>173</sup> and can no longer be attributed with certainty to the Celts alone<sup>174</sup>. Indeed, Taylor<sup>175</sup> goes so far as to say that the images on the cauldron came to the Danube area through Sarmatia and ultimately from India and Mohenjo-daro, the designs having been passed across the 4,000 miles from north India to the Balkans by a network of silversmiths, each passing a design on and, although each slightly changed the design, with the original meaning possibly being lost, the images remained similar because the craftsmen worked within similar ritual restrictions. The presence of apparently oriental motifs is understandable if the images are ultimately Indian in origin.

However, in view of the carving at Val Camonica, the presence on a plate of the cauldron of the antlered god, with almost the same appearance and attributes<sup>176</sup>, suggests that there is a definite Celtic element in the image on the plate, possibly at the request of Celtic sponsors of the cauldron or under the influence of the neighbouring Scordisci; Celtic elements may possibly be on the rest of the cauldron. The other possibilities are that the Thracians worshipped an antlered deity too, which is possible but unknown, or, not only did the Thracians worship an antlered-god, but the worship spread through the Celtic culture before the 4th century BCE, the date of the carving at Val Camonica, which is not only unproved, but unlikely. The fact that the worship of the antlered-god persisted well into the Roman period<sup>xi</sup> makes it all the less likely that he was of Thracian origin; it would mean that reverence for this imported deity was stronger and deeper than the worship of deities of Celtic origin.

It is possible that a third archaeological example of the antlered-god in the pre-Roman period may be found on coins of the Catalauni<sup>177</sup>, a tribe in Belgic Gaul (**Amm.Marc.XV.11.10**; **Eutrop.IX.13**). The coins were produced by the Catalauni and other tribes and pre-date the Romans. The figure is portrayed cross-legged on the obverse with a torc and a horned serpent on the reverse. Ironically, in this piece of evidence, there are no antlers. Bober<sup>178</sup> points out that this makes the use of the coins as evidence problematic, but suggests that the die-cutters, spurred by the constraints of space on a coin, left off the antlers in the belief that the deity would be identified by the cross-legged pose, the torc and the horned serpent, all of which Green<sup>179</sup> says are too idiosyncratic for an alternative interpretation.

De Vries<sup>180</sup> thinks that deities with animal qualities are not exactly Indo-European and attributes the antlered-deity to the Neolithic, pre-Celtic population of Europe. For support he refers to the Neolithic cave painting on the wall of the grotto of Les Trois Frères depicting a similar image of a man with antlers and points out that the motif of stag antlers is found among the Scythians, that horse-head decorations in the form of antlers, dated to the 5th century BCE, have been found at the east Altai and that small figures shaped like humans with antlers have been found in a group of graves in Hunan Province in China<sup>181</sup>. He specifically states that he is not suggesting that the deity is oriental in origin, but that it belongs to an ancient level, which spread from Western Europe to China<sup>182</sup>. But both the Celts and the Scythians are Indo-European in origin and, therefore, the image may indeed belong to an ancient level,

---

<sup>xi</sup> See pages 79-81.

but rather to the level of a common Indo-European origin, going back to the period before the dispersal of the various branches of the Indo-European peoples.

Much has been made of the cross-legged posture, which has led to theories of Buddhism being transferred to western Europe<sup>183</sup> and Taylor<sup>184</sup> claims that the position in which the antlered-deity is portrayed resembles a pose on a seal stone from Mohenjo-Daro and is a yogic one and alleges that the figure is partially levitated, balancing on one toe and has a heel allegedly pressed against the perineum, for the purpose of channelling energy. Bober<sup>185</sup> rejects India as a source for the posture, positing instead that the pose originated in the Near East and spread one way to India and the other to Egypt and survived as an oriental element in Phoenician-Ionic art<sup>186</sup>, travelling from the East Mediterranean to Gaul either through the Greek colonies or through the Celtic tribes of the Black Sea region<sup>187</sup>. A common sense explanation, based on Classical literature (**Strab.**IV.4.3; **Diod.**V.28.4; **Ath.**IV.152b), followed by Jacobsthal, Lambrechts and MacCana<sup>188</sup>, is that the posture is explained by the fact that the Gauls sat on the ground.

MacCulloch and Bober<sup>189</sup> say that the Antlered-god was probably the anthropomorphisation of an animal divinity, in this case the stag, although de Vries<sup>190</sup> finds this idea an unhappy choice; Bober<sup>191</sup> states that he had become independent of his zoolatrous background by the 4th century BCE. Krause<sup>192</sup> feels that the picture on the Gundestrup cauldron gives the impression that the deer is the totem animal and that the god was added later. The antlers may symbolise strength<sup>193</sup>, since the stag is as combative as a bull, an intrepid runner and the most prestigious of wild animals<sup>194</sup>, and, well-known for defending itself with its antlers<sup>195</sup>, or may have been the last vestiges of the original divine animal as the image of the deity became slowly more anthropomorphic<sup>196</sup>. De Vries<sup>197</sup> argues that all deities are powerful and, therefore, it is unnecessary to represent him as such. The antlers may have been deliberately left in because of, and to demonstrate, the Antlered-god's function, either as Lord of the animals or as god of fertility. His activity as Lord of the animals is seen on the Gundestrup cauldron<sup>198</sup>. His function as a god of fertility and abundance is seen by the Val Camonica carving<sup>199</sup> and by his emblems<sup>200</sup> and the stag's antlers; according to Bober<sup>201</sup>, no other animal is more suitable as a symbol of the generative forces of nature and is considered as such also by the Romans and Greeks. Duval<sup>202</sup> points out that, since the deer sheds antlers in autumn and grows new and bigger ones, this could be seen as representing the power of rejuvenation. It is possible that the Antlered-god performed both functions. For

Bober<sup>203</sup> the deity's primary function is fertility and fecundity. De Vries<sup>204</sup> posits that the deity, and the dances with animal masks, were originally connected with the fertility of the hunted game animals, so that there would continue to be some for hunting, and that, with the change of society from hunter-gatherer, through pastoralist to settled agriculture, the inspiration of fertility was redirected to crops.

He has been identified as the Celtic god of the night, death and evil<sup>205</sup>, as an infernal deity<sup>206</sup> and with Dispat<sup>207</sup>; de Vries<sup>208</sup> does not even want to consider these connections. The argument by MacCulloch is that, since it is possible to see an Under-earth god in a god of abundance<sup>209</sup>, a process accepted by Bober<sup>210</sup> as being paralleled in many religions, and his symbols are appropriate to an underworld god<sup>211</sup>, the horned snake having as much chthonic associations as fertility<sup>212</sup>, he is an underworld deity<sup>213</sup> and, therefore, another form of Dispat<sup>214</sup>. The argument seems to find support in the fact that the Antlered-god is not found in those areas where Sucellus, considered another form of Dispat, is numerous. But, while the Antlered-god can certainly be accepted as a fertility and nature deity, Dispat, as will be seen, can be identified with another deity. Le Roux<sup>215</sup> says that no amount of interpretation is able to assimilate this deity with any Insular Celtic deity.

### **The Ram-Headed Serpent**

There seems to be definite evidence that the image of a snake with the head in the form of a ram with curling horns was present in pre-Conquest Celtic iconography, particularly in north-west Europe<sup>216</sup>. Various scholars regard it as typically Gallic<sup>217</sup> and a creation of the Celtic mind<sup>218</sup>; Duval<sup>219</sup> has no doubt that "ce serpent cornu en une création des Celtes". Green<sup>220</sup> claims that it is possible to find a portrayal of the Ram-Horned Snake associated with the Antlered-god in the Val Camonica rock carving of the 4th century BCE, the first La Tène period. Moreover, if Schaeffer<sup>221</sup> is right, that brooches coming from funeral mounds and dated c.500 BCE, are decorated with the motif of the Ram-Horned Snake imagery, then the motif goes back to earliest Celtic antiquity<sup>222</sup>. Indeed, this image is found especially in those parts of Gaul where the Hallstatt civilisation once flourished<sup>223</sup>; it can therefore be deduced that the motif is very ancient and probably goes back to the religious beliefs of the Hallstatt epoch, first period of the Iron Age<sup>224</sup>.

A third source of evidence for placing the Ram-Headed Serpent within pre-Roman culture is Celtic coinage<sup>225</sup>; it appears on Celtic coins from Gaul to Bohemia and the Danubian regions<sup>226</sup>. Finally, the Ram-Horned Snake is one of the images on the

archaeological artefact called the Gundestrup Cauldron<sup>227</sup>; indeed, it is the best known appearance of this image<sup>228</sup>. It appears three times on the cauldron: once preceding a column or army of Gallic warriors<sup>229</sup> (**Fig.3.4**); once being held in the left hand of the



**Fig.3.4**

A plate of the Gundestrup cauldron depicting a Ram-Horned Snake preceding a column of horsemen



**Fig.3.5**

A plate of the Gundestrup cauldron depicting an Antlered figure holding a Ram-Horned Snake in his left hand



**Fig.3.6**

A plate of the Gundestrup cauldron depicting a Ram-Horned Snake

cross-legged Antlered-deity<sup>230</sup> (**Fig.3.5**), and once with a deity who is connected with a wheel, called the wheel-god by Green<sup>231</sup> (**Fig.3.6**). Although the Gundestrup Cauldron is the subject of a great deal of controversy<sup>xii</sup>, the archaeological evidence, particularly the carving at Val Camonica, indicates that, like the Antlered-god, the Ram-Headed Serpent is definitely a product of the Celtic mind.

It has fertility associations<sup>232</sup>. The serpentine qualities of the image may<sup>233</sup> or, according to Bober<sup>234</sup>, do indicate chthonic aspects, since the snake is the animal of the Underworld in a multitude of cultures<sup>235</sup>, or may indicate either regenerative<sup>236</sup> aspects, which may have been intended to be enhanced by the unnatural addition of the ram's head<sup>237</sup>, or guile<sup>238</sup>; the horns may have symbolised combative vigour<sup>239</sup>, as they did in other cultures, force<sup>240</sup> and, because of their use only by male animals and

<sup>xii</sup> See page III, endnote 17.

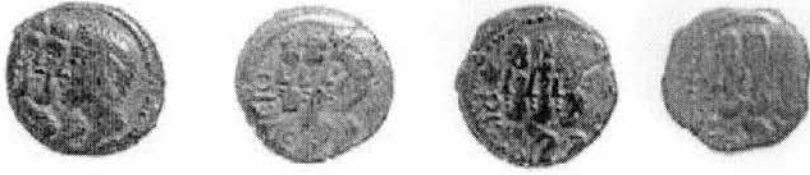
only in the mating season, fertility<sup>241</sup>. The aspect of fertility also lies in the fact that the ram itself symbolises fecundity<sup>242</sup> and in the alleged close association with the Antlered-god<sup>243</sup>, a god of nature and fruitfulness<sup>244</sup>, and his allegedly ithyphallic worshipper<sup>245</sup>.

It has been suggested that the ram's head also symbolises a function concerned with death<sup>246</sup>; this is based on the fact that the ram figures on a great number of terracotta andirons, found in the centre of Gaul, which furnished Gallic *atria*<sup>247</sup> and were of undoubted Celtic origin<sup>248</sup>, and the fact that the bust of a ram, which decorates them, always appears as the symbol of sacrifice offered to the ancestors<sup>249</sup>. "Victime immolée sur l'autel du foyer et symbole de ces immolations, le bélier, en raison de l'étroite relation qui unit le culte des morts à ces sacrifices, était appelé un emblème funéraire"<sup>250</sup> and "le rôle du bélier dans la religion des morts tend à faire assigner au serpent à tête de bélier une place parmi les divinités funéraires"<sup>251</sup>. Although the idea is accepted by MacCulloch, Lambrechts, Bober and Amand<sup>252</sup>, it seems terribly tenuous, particularly since it seems to be based primarily on the idea that since the Greeks had the custom of sacrificing rams to the ancestors<sup>253</sup>, therefore, the Celts, of course, must have done. The alleged connection between the Ram-Horned Snake and death finds better support in the interpretation that the hybrid animal has a chthonic aspect, based on the snake symbolism, and a fertility aspect, based on the ram symbolism, and that fertility and death are both being concerned with burying.

Although Lambrechts<sup>254</sup> holds that the Ram-Headed Serpent is the animal dedicated to the indigenous Mercury and Clarus<sup>255</sup> asserts that the Ram-Headed Serpent was the symbol of Teutates representing his two spheres of operation, the horns war and the snake fertility<sup>256</sup>, Bober says that, although it frequently accompanies the Antlered-god, it was not an attribute of that deity and cannot be placed exclusively within that deity's circle<sup>257</sup> and it was an independent Celtic deity, which may share the cult of other deities<sup>258</sup>.

### **The Tricephalic Deity**

A final, unusual deity is the Tricephalic deity. Archaeology provides evidence that triple heads occur on examples of La Tène metalwork<sup>259</sup>, Lambrechts and de Vries<sup>260</sup> are of the opinion that the tricephalic deity was pictured on the Gundestrup cauldron and, finally, in Allen's opinion, and one followed by Green<sup>261</sup>, pre-Roman coins from among the Remi (**Fig.3.7**) depict the tricephalic image.



**Fig.3.7**

Examples of coins from the Remi tribal region portraying three faces on the obverse.  
(Allen 1995:pl.II. 53-56)

But it has been posited that this image of a tricephalic deity does not have its origin among the Celts, but rather is an import from the Classical world. Certainly, the existence of Janus in the Roman pantheon may suggest a Roman origin for a multi-faced god with the number of faces being increased to three under Celtic preference for this number, but even in the Roman pantheon, Janus was an exception and it seems strange that a deity, which was exceptional even for its originators, should be taken up and assimilated into Celtic culture, religion and imagination so quickly. Heichelheim<sup>262</sup> states that the Gallic image of the tricephalic Mercury goes back to the tricephalic Hermes of archaic Greece and that this image was imported into Gaul during the pre-Roman period through *Massilia* [Marseilles]. Benoît<sup>263</sup> has also proposed that polyccephalism was Greek in origin, because it is typical of one of the forms of Mercury derived from the infernal aspect of Hermes in Greece, who is referred to as τριχέφαλος or τετραχέφαλος. Moreover, Hecate, goddess of the cross-roads and of magic, had three heads and three arms<sup>264</sup> and Geryon, localised from the coasts of Asia Minor and Crete to Sardinia and the regions of the West, was tricephalic<sup>265</sup>. Benoît<sup>266</sup> claims that “l’expression en Gaule reflète les croyances des pays de la Méditerranée antique”. However, not only are attempts to find a Mediterranean origin for Celtic imagery capable of being examples of cultural prejudice and a determination to consider every noteworthy aspect of Celtic culture as ultimately Mediterranean in origin, but triplism is recognised as having been typically Celtic, with triple images playing a great role in Celtic religion and art and the number three forming part of the very essence of Celtic thought<sup>267</sup>. The tricephalic image is only an expression of this<sup>268</sup>. Therefore, there is no need to search for an origin outside Gaul. Indeed, the concept of three-headed deities is present in Slavic and Hindu religions, such as Triglav and Śiva respectively,<sup>269</sup> as well as the Greek; therefore, there is no reason to think that the concept had only Greek origins. It seems to be common to all Indo-European branches. More definitely, there is archaeological evidence that these theories are not well founded. Lambrechts<sup>270</sup> points out that the geographical distribution of the tricephalic monuments argues against the idea of the introduction through *Massilia* [Marseilles];

there is not a single example of the tricephalic deity in the south of France, whereas examples of the image have been found in areas where one would not reasonably accept the influence of Greek colonists. This dispels any theory that it was introduced through contact with the Greeks. As regards any theory that it was acquired through contact with the Romans, the archaeological finds of coins and metalwork demonstrate that this concept existed in the north-east of Gaul before the Roman Conquest. De Vries<sup>271</sup> proposes that the three-headed deity was conceived among the Remi and spread.

The significance of the triplication of the head is not difficult to see. The very quality of being three-headed indicates the unnatural and therefore puts it outside the natural world<sup>272</sup>. Moreover, not only did the Celts consider the head to be of great importance and the source of power<sup>xiii</sup>, but also there seems to have been a universal concept, with examples from all peoples, but especially in the Celtic world, of enhancing and augmenting the intensity of the power of a person or animal or object by the replication of that person, animal or object or a part thereof, a concept which Deonna<sup>273</sup> calls “la répétition d’intensité”. Consequently, every deity whose omnipotence was to be stressed could be tripled<sup>274</sup> and the triplication of such a source of power as the head would multiply and intensify the power itself<sup>275</sup>; a tricephalic god was therefore synonymous with a very powerful god and the multiplication of a god’s limbs would symbolise his omnipotence<sup>276</sup>. De Vries<sup>277</sup>, following Toutain<sup>278</sup>, thinks that “die Dreiheit...bedeutet eine Totalität” and that “ein dreiköpfiger Gott ist eine Abkürzung für eine Dreizahl von Göttern”. The head, by a form of metonymy, may represent the body<sup>279</sup> and therefore, a three-headed god may represent several deities<sup>280</sup> or three persons<sup>281</sup>. According to Green<sup>282</sup> this means it can represent one deity at different stages of development or even various aspects of a particular belief. The fact that it has three faces means it can see in three directions<sup>283</sup> or into the Past, Present and Future<sup>284</sup>, which leads to the concept of omniscience<sup>285</sup>.

### **Gallic deities divined from deities mentioned in Irish vernacular literature**

In examining deities from Irish myth, it is not being suggested that the Gauls and the Irish Celts worshipped exactly the same deities with exactly the same names. Rather, the intention of the examination is to use the knowledge of the Irish deities to discern possible equivalent deities, which the Gauls might have worshipped. An exact one-

---

<sup>xiii</sup> See pages 235 and 238.

for-one equivalence should not be expected; sometimes a hypothetical Gallic deity is seen by the union of Irish deities.

## **Brigit**

Brigit, also called *Bríg*<sup>286</sup>, is sometimes described either as a triple goddess<sup>287</sup>, or as the principal member of a trio of sisters, all called Brigit<sup>288</sup>. The daughter of the Dagda (*CMT*.124; *LB*.VII.317, 344 and 369)<sup>289</sup>, the Celtic supreme god<sup>290</sup>, she was at the Battle of Mag Tured and was a Mother of gods<sup>291</sup>. According to Vendryes and Sjoestedt<sup>292</sup>, Brigit was merely like the other Mother-Goddesses, Anu, who was also the mother of gods<sup>293</sup>, and Dana, the latter being the progenitrix of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, which means the ‘Tribes of the goddess Dana’<sup>294</sup>; Anu even became confused with Dana<sup>295</sup>. According to Le Roux and Guyonvarc’h<sup>296</sup>, Anu and Dana were other names for Brigit. Birkhan<sup>297</sup> states that Brigit was identified with Danu, although he is not sure whether this can be taken seriously. De Vries<sup>298</sup> states that others believe she had a fertility function and that that function cannot be excluded; Briffault<sup>299</sup> says that in Irish legend Brigit was one of the usual names for the Great Goddess or Mother Goddess and Sjoestedt<sup>300</sup> seems to hint that Brigit was a fertility goddess. The name has been linked to the concepts of power and brightness<sup>xiv</sup>. As well as being a form of the Mother Goddess, Brigit was the patron goddess of accomplishments technical, spiritual and intellectual<sup>301</sup> and the arts<sup>302</sup> and, therefore, poets, doctors and blacksmiths<sup>303</sup>. According to Rhys and Olmsted<sup>304</sup> the patronage of these activities was divided among the three Brigits, one governing poets, one smiths and one healing. Brigit’s feast day was 1st February<sup>305</sup>. This has led Le Roux to state that she is the Irish Minerva<sup>306</sup>. Although Duval<sup>307</sup> does not accept the equivalence of the Irish Brigit with the Gallic ‘Minerva’, it is reasonable to accept, since a corresponding goddess called Brigantia is found in Britain<sup>308</sup>, that the Gauls had an equivalent to Brigit with all the functions and patronage which the Irish goddess had; in Rhys opinion<sup>309</sup>, this Gallic counterpart was probably called Brigindo.

## **The Dagda**

The Dagda<sup>xv</sup> was the supreme god<sup>310</sup>. Clarus<sup>311</sup> says that he is called ‘Good’ not just because of his kindness, but also because of all his abilities. Guyonvarc’h<sup>312</sup>, in saying “es ist sehr leicht zu bemerken, daß eine solche Benennung vollständig dem Namen des irischen Dagda entspricht, der auch ein ‘guter Gott’ ist”, seems to be

---

<sup>xiv</sup> See page CLXXXVIII.

<sup>xv</sup> See pages CLXXXVIII.

suggesting that Esus is the Gallic equivalent of Dagda. He was also called *Eochaid Ollathir* (LG.313, 333 and 365) and *Ruadh Rofhessa*<sup>xvi313</sup> or Eochu Ollathir Ruadrofessa<sup>314</sup>. For York<sup>315</sup> Dagda was a title and the deity's actual name was *Eochaid Ollathir*. Odin, the Norse supreme god, was also called All-Father<sup>316</sup>. De Vries<sup>317</sup> considers whether he should be called the Gallic Jupiter.

He had at least two attributes, a cauldron<sup>318</sup>, which always satisfied<sup>319</sup> and never ran out<sup>320</sup>, and a huge club<sup>321</sup>, which killed with one end and revived with the other<sup>322</sup>. De Vries<sup>323</sup> compares the club to the *vajra* of Indra and Thor's hammer, Mjolnir. De Vries, Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h<sup>324</sup> add a third attribute, a harp, called *Uaithna*<sup>325</sup>, which plays three types of song, a song which evokes joy, a lament and a lullaby<sup>326</sup>. Certainly, the three attributes and one of them having three abilities both agree with the Celtic penchant for triplism. He is the god of knowledge, friendship and contracts<sup>327</sup>, the latter being derived, presumably, from his responsibility, according to Clarus<sup>328</sup>, for justice, law and order in their broadest senses; Sterckx<sup>329</sup> says that *Eochaid Ollathir* is invested with the qualities of universal fatherhood, the government of the gods and the mastery of atmospheric phenomena and the rhythm of the seasons which sustain humanity. The cauldron indicates that he was a deity of abundance. Birkhan<sup>330</sup> says that the Dagda is a good example of fertility. The Dagda had two divine consorts, the *Mórrígan*<sup>331</sup> and *Boann*<sup>332</sup> (\*Bo Vinda meaning 'the White Cow')<sup>333</sup>, the personification of the river Boyne<sup>334</sup> and he was the father of Brigit<sup>335</sup>.

### **Dian Cecht**

Dian Cecht is mentioned in the *Book of the Invasions* as belonging to the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and was the god of healing (CMT.11, 64 and 98-99; LG.VII.368)<sup>336</sup>. Two stories demonstrate his healing and the first shows that he is also linked to the work of a smith. After the First battle of Mag Tured he healed Nuada, King of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*<sup>337</sup> and fitted him with a silver arm to replace the one he had lost (CMT.11) and, after the Second battle of Mag Tured, he and his three children, two sons, Miach (Bushel) and Oirmach<sup>338</sup> and a daughter, Airmed (Measure),<sup>339</sup> spoke incantations over a well so that dead warriors, when immersed, came back to life (CMT.123)<sup>340</sup>. He is also the father<sup>341</sup> or the grandfather<sup>342</sup> of Lug.

---

<sup>xvi</sup> See page CLXXXIX.

## Donn

Donn was the leader of the Sons of Mil, one of the many groups invading and inhabiting Ireland whose descendants are the people of Ireland, who defeated the Tuatha Dé Danann and drove them underground, was drowned by Ériu, one of the three goddesses of Ireland, whom he had insulted, and became god of the Dead<sup>343</sup>. He was the ruler of the Dead and Lord of *Tech Duinn*, meaning the House of Donn<sup>344</sup>. His position as chief of the ancestors of the Irish indicates that he was an ancestor-deity; York<sup>345</sup> claims that he corresponds with the chthonic Indian deity Yama, who was also the ancestor of all men. MacCana<sup>346</sup> suggests and York<sup>347</sup> states that Donn is identical with the Dagda.

## Lug

In Irish legend Lug was a major god of Ireland and the patron of all the arts<sup>348</sup>; he had the epithet *samildánach* (CMT.55-68)<sup>349</sup> covering the aspects of the technical skills, such as carpentry and ironfoundry, and the arts, such as harp-playing, poetry and history, as well as warfare and magic<sup>350</sup>. Even and Le Roux<sup>351</sup> say “Lug est l’artiste universel (étant bien entendu qu’ «artiste» est pris ici dans son sens étymologique)”. Although Clemen<sup>352</sup> contends that, as far as Lug is concerned, his presence cannot really be proved in Gaul, it is not unreasonable, in view of the similarities between the cultures and other deities of Ireland and Gaul, to accept that an equivalent to Lug was worshipped in Gaul. According to Gricourt<sup>353</sup>, the god named Lug/Lugus was adored in Ireland and Gaul and van Tassel Graves claims “there is no doubt about the existence of the Gaulish Lugus”<sup>354</sup>. Lug is found in Ireland<sup>355</sup> and is an Irish name<sup>356</sup> and, therefore, this name cannot be attributed to his hypothetical Gallic equivalent. Significantly, the name Lugus exists in the name *Lugdunum*, which means ‘fortress of the god Lugus’<sup>357</sup>, that is Lugu-dunum<sup>358</sup>, the name of fifteen towns in Gaul<sup>359</sup>, and in the tribal name Lugii<sup>360</sup>. A number of modern towns still exhibit their origin from Lugus<sup>361</sup>. This confirms the existence of a deity called Lugus and it is not unreasonable to think, because of the common cultural characteristics between the Irish and the Continental Celts, not only that Lugus is the Gallic equivalent of Lug, but also that the characteristics and functions of the Irish Lug were also those of the pre-Roman Gallic Lugus. If this is so, then Lugus, the Gallic equivalent to Lug, was also the god of many skills in the arts and technology, among other things. MacCana<sup>362</sup> claims that Lugus is analogous to the Germanic Odin and the Indian Varuna. The derivation of Lug’s name<sup>xvii</sup> may explain the close association of Lug, ravens and divination<sup>363</sup>. Birkhan<sup>364</sup> thinks that Lug(us)

---

<sup>xvii</sup> See pages CLXXXVIII-CXC.

was the Celtic god of craftsmanship, but rests his theory entirely on one inscription<sup>365</sup>.

### **Sovereignty/Fertility goddesses**

There is a practice and ritual clearly discernible from the Irish myths of the joining of the king with the goddess of the land<sup>366</sup> and by this, the right to the territory being vested in the king<sup>367</sup>. Sovereignty was conceived of as a female supernatural force or power<sup>368</sup> or a tutelary goddess<sup>369</sup> and the marriage of the king with this goddess ensured the continued success and prosperity of the region or kingdom<sup>370</sup>, since the fertility of the region or kingdom was dependant on the tutelary goddess<sup>371</sup>, and that his rule was sanctified<sup>372</sup>. Early Irish literature depicts the goddess of Sovereignty as a wife of a succession of rulers, the marriage validating the king's rule<sup>373</sup>. It was a sacred marriage and basically a fertility rite<sup>374</sup>. The concept of the sacred marriage seems to have arisen in agriculturally-based communities and to have been a reflection of the belief that the earth was not self-fertilising and required human intervention<sup>375</sup> involving the combination of the wild, untamed natural forces, represented by the female principle, and the civilised social forces of order, represented by the male principle<sup>376</sup>. Having originated in every agricultural community, over time the myth and ritual became associated specifically with royal rule<sup>377</sup>. The sovereignty-goddess is frequently associated with multiples, either of two or three<sup>378</sup> and appears to the future king as a *puella senilis*<sup>379</sup>.

The ritual for the marriage and validation was for the Sovereignty goddess to offer a cup of alcoholic drink to the divinely ordained ruler (*Baile in Scáil*). Medb of Leinster was serially married<sup>380</sup> and, since she was married to a long succession of kings<sup>381</sup> and she would allow no man to be king at Tara unless he was married to her<sup>382</sup>, she can be viewed as a goddesses of Sovereignty<sup>383</sup>; Medb of Cruachu not only had a series of husbands, but, while still married to her third husband, had her attention taken by a young man protecting her territory, dispensed with her third husband and installed the young man as king<sup>384</sup>. The serial marriage of these two goddesses of Sovereignty, both of whose names are that of the alcoholic drink<sup>385</sup>, and the ease of the dispensing of a husband by the latter should be interpreted, not as promiscuity, but as the goddess of Sovereignty choosing the person she feels most worthy of kingship<sup>386</sup>. Misfortune for the king, such as injury, a wound, sickness or just old age, meant that Sovereignty would leave him "comme une femme quitte un homme qui a cessé de lui plaire" and with her the prosperity and fertility of the kingdom<sup>387</sup>. A king, who has damaged the productivity of his kingdom by his unjust

actions, may be visited by a woman, who provokes his death<sup>388</sup>; Bhreatnach says that this woman, who acts as a form of death goddess and removes the right to rule, may be compared to the Sovereignty-goddess, who grants it,<sup>389</sup> a view supported by Mackey<sup>390</sup>, and, when the king has broken the agreement between him and the Sovereignty-goddess, she revolts and appears at the king's death to reclaim the right to rule<sup>391</sup>. This apparent paradox between the positive creative force of life and fertility and the negative, destructive force of death and the battlefield is resolved if one remembers that the goddess' primary responsibility is the best interest of the land and the promotion of its prosperity<sup>392</sup>.

The name of this tutelary goddess or earth goddess varied from region to region<sup>393</sup>. The divine level mirrored the human and the tribal god or ancestor god would be regarded as having the fertility goddess of the region as his consort<sup>394</sup>. One example is that the Dagda's divine consort was Boann, the personification of the river Boyne<sup>395</sup>. The fact that a Celtic god has a consort concerned with fertility led Cunliffe<sup>396</sup> to state that it is possible to see a simple structure of binary opposites, the coupling of which produces harmony and productivity and that these opposites are male/female; tribe/place; sky/earth; and war/fertility. The fact that the Celtic gods have various functions, while their divine consorts are all concerned with fertility, may ultimately reflect Celtic society, that, whereas the men perform different functions, women are concerned solely with reproduction and the family. Mackey disagrees and says that categorising a goddess as a goddess of fertility is an example of a narrow bureaucratic-like desire to pigeon-hole every deity within a single definable function<sup>397</sup> and can result in a very truncated image of a deity<sup>398</sup>; fertility is just one of the many concerns handled by a network of relationships at the centre of which is the goddess of Sovereignty<sup>399</sup>.

The Celtic Sovereignty myth can be seen from Classical literature to have existed in Gaul. Athenaeus (**Athen.**XIII.576.a-b), who admits to using Aristotle as a source, relates the myth of the foundation of *Massilia* [Marseilles], which told how Euxenus [Good stranger], the leader of the Phocaean traders, was invited to the marriage feast of Petta, the daughter of the Gallic king Nannus. The marriage ritual is described as consisting of the woman, after the meal, giving a bowl containing a drink she had mixed to the husband-to-be and the husband was the man, whoever it was, to whom she gave the drink. The myth states that Petta gave the drink to Euxenus and as a result he had the right to establish *Massilia* [Marseilles]. This legend is the Celtic Sovereignty myth with a human woman instead of the goddess and demonstrates the

intrusion of a foreign overlord being made more acceptable by the representation of his acceptance by the indigenous goddess of Sovereignty<sup>400</sup>.

The link between sovereignty and the horse is an old Indo-European one, comprehensible by the fact that sovereignty is established by conquest and the principal Indo-European instrument of conquest was the horse. An example of this link is the Vedic ritual of *Aśvamedha*<sup>401</sup>, by which a state releases a stallion and sovereignty of this state is extended over the states and areas through which the stallion wanders within a year of its release<sup>402</sup>. Since Gallic, indeed Celtic, kings and nobles relied on horses as a demonstration of their authority in their role as cavalry, just as the horse had a traditional function with the *Kshatriya* caste in Indian society<sup>403</sup>, and as a means of upholding and defending the sovereignty of their region, the concept of sovereignty and horses quickly became linked and the goddess of sovereignty acquired the status of a Horse-Goddess.

Woolf<sup>404</sup> states that “Roman religion came to be understood to be better as well as different”. As has been seen<sup>xviii</sup>, the Roman deities were as multi-faceted and as polyvalent as the Gallic deities are alleged to have been. Moreover, it is evident that the functions of the reconstructed Gallic deities correspond to those of certain Roman ones. Therefore, it is difficult to see how the Gauls could consider the Roman deities to be either different or better.

### **Interpretations of Caesar’s pantheon**

It was stated earlier<sup>xix</sup> that Caesar’s list of six deities worshipped by the pre-Conquest Gauls (*Caes.B.G.VI.17.1-2, 18.1*) was more obscure and misleading than helpful and revealing. It could be viewed, as Hatt<sup>405</sup> does, as a deliberate attempt to lay the foundation for the eventual assimilation and incorporation of the Gallic deities in anticipation of the reduction of Gaul to provincial status within the Roman Empire; such a concept is not beyond a man as far-sighted as Caesar. Although stating that Gallic religious conception may not have had the formal structure characteristic of the Roman religion, Brunaux<sup>406</sup> suggests that the pantheon may have been a systematic synthesis of multiple Gallic panthea. Cunliffe’s<sup>407</sup> interpretation of Caesar’s summary of the Gallic deities and their functions is that it is a useful typological index of the principal classes of deity which a traveller through Gaul in the 1st century BCE would expect to meet. At this point the above analysis of Gallic

---

<sup>xviii</sup> Pages 8-9.

<sup>xix</sup> Page 39.

deities may be used to interpret this passage of Caesar. All the interpretations are based on three theories: the Gallic deities can be established as the equivalents or composites of deities depicted in Irish legends; an examination of an Irish deity can reveal the possible Gallic equivalent; Caesar based the attribution of Roman nomenclature to the Gallic deities on the fact that the Gallic deity and the Roman deity, which he chose, had similar characteristics or functions. A possible identification of those Gallic deities to whom Caesar has given names of Roman deities can now be proposed.

### ‘Mercury’

*Hunc omnium inventorem artium (Caes.B.G.VI.17.1).*

D’Arbois de Jubainville<sup>408</sup> holds that Lugus, the Gallic equivalent to the Irish deity Lug, is the Gallic deity whom Caesar equated to Mercury. Loth, Krappe, Even, Le Roux, MacCana, Guyonvarc’h and Sterckx<sup>409</sup> support this; Even and Le Roux state that this means that the name of the Gallic deity called Mercury by Caesar was Lugus<sup>410</sup>. The explanation for this is that, while Lug remained the deity of the arts in ancient Ireland, in Gaul, which, unlike Ireland, had developed economically<sup>411</sup> to the point where one can almost speak of industry<sup>412</sup>, the Gallic ‘Lug’ had taken on a very specially “economic” image<sup>413</sup>, an image derived from the fact that Lug was patron of the technical skills as well as the fine arts<sup>414</sup>; “Lug est l’artiste universel (étant bien entendu qu’ «artiste» est pris ici dans son sens étymologique)”<sup>415</sup>. This patronage of commerce as a common factor helped Caesar identify him with Mercury<sup>416</sup>. It is stated that this would not have happened if the Gallic ‘Lug’ had kept his aspect as patron of the arts, as he had in Ireland, because Mercury had nothing to do with the arts<sup>417</sup>. In short, the Gallic ‘Lug’ had acquired an economic aspect and this made Caesar think it was Mercury. Van Tassel Graves<sup>418</sup> says that the worship of Lugus was propagated by both Roman merchants and Romanised Celts.

The process of acculturation probably began with the entry to and influence on the Celtic world of Greek culture, in the form of merchants from *Massilia* [Marseilles]; part of this influence was the introduction of Greek deities, one of whom was most likely Hermes, in view of his overview of all travellers. In view of the fact that Hermes was, among his other functions, the patron god of arts and inventions, it is probable that the Celts saw him as Lugus<sup>419</sup> and accepted him as such. MacCulloch, Even and Le Roux<sup>420</sup> refer to the equivalence or almost complete parallelism between the epithet Caesar gives to Mercury, *omnium inventor artium*, and *samildánach*, the term used of the Irish Lug and probably of Lugus, the Gallic Lug.

Having accepted Hermes, the Celts probably also accepted those other functions, which he did not have in common with Lugus, as well as the mythology and iconography of Hermes, just as the Romans had done, and ascribed them to Lugus/Hermes. So, in essence, having detected one point in common between Lugus and Hermes, the Celts appropriated the other aspects of Hermes and attributed them to Lugus so that although the Celts appeared to worship Hermes, they were actually worshipping Lugus with an expanded area of operation to include all that had applied to Hermes and was now being ascribed to Lugus. Various functions and attributes of Hermes appealed to different levels of Celtic society; his reputation as inventor appealed to tradesmen and workers, his connection with theft, particularly of cattle, would have appealed to the nobility and his psychopompic functions would have attracted the Druidic class, giving Lugus/Hermes pre-eminence. Roman traders would have followed from at least 200 BCE and the god Mercury may have become superimposed on Hermes, especially due to their common factors. Consequently, by Caesar's invasion, Mercury had replaced Hermes in the minds of the Gauls in being equated with Lugus. Then, when Caesar saw the worship of Lugus and recognised the functions and iconography used as being those of Hermes, he identified him as Mercury, Rome's equivalent.

#### 'Apollo'

*Apollinem morbos depellere* (Caes.B.G.VI.17.2.).

It has been suggested that the deity to whom Caesar equates the Roman god Apollo is the equivalent in each Gallic tribe to Dian Cecht, the Irish god of healing<sup>421</sup>. The fact that, during the Gallo-Roman period, Apollo is connected with a number of Gallic epithets concerned with healing and protection from disease, such as Anextiomarus, Bormo/Borvo and Virototus,<sup>422</sup> since hot springs are often thought to be beneficial to health, probably reflects the fact that different tribes and regions had their own versions of a god of healing; this supports Caesar's statement that the Gauls looked on Apollo as the deity who drives away disease. Apollo's solar function may be the reason for the association with the Roman god of Gallic deities connected with brightness or heat, such as Grannus<sup>423</sup>, who was also known to be a healing god (Dio. LXXVIII.15.6)<sup>424</sup>, and Belenus<sup>425</sup>. Caesar probably recognised the function of healing and protection from disease in a Gallic god of healing and, possibly encouraged by the connection with heat because of the hot springs, equated the god with Apollo, only one of whose functions is concerned with disease. Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h have equated Grannus with the Irish god Dian Cecht<sup>426</sup> and suggest that the Caesar's 'Apollo' was also composed of the Gallic equivalent of

either of the young Irish gods, Mac Oc or Oengus<sup>427</sup>, a view with which Cunliffe seems to agree<sup>428</sup>; but this is perhaps ascribing to Caesar too much of a desire for accuracy.

### ‘Mars’

*Martem bella regere* (**Caes.B.G.VI.17.2.**).

Various suggestions have been made regarding the identity of the Gallic deity whom Caesar equates to Mars by proposing the Irish god who was probably the hypothetical equivalent; Le Roux and Guyonvarc’h<sup>429</sup> posit that that it was a composite of the Irish deities Nuada and Ogmios and York<sup>430</sup> claims that Mars has been equated by *interpretatio Romana* with Nodons. However, on the basis of the derivation of the name, or rather title, and the functions, which that implies, it is more probable that the deity was the one called Teutates, a view accepted by various scholars<sup>431</sup>; as Brunaux says this seems to confirm the identification made by the Berne Scholiasts (*Comm. Schol.Bern. ad Luc. ad I.445*). This is supported by the large number of tribal deities equated with Mars, identified by Mars’ epithets, in the Gallo-Roman period in Belgic Gaul alone<sup>432</sup>, which illustrates that Caesar’s Gallic ‘Mars’ was probably actually hundreds of different tribal gods. Brunaux<sup>433</sup> points out that the fact that Mars and the many Gallic deities were masculine probably helped the *interpretatio Romana* and the closeness of the Celtic and Latin languages both supposes a similar closeness of concepts, contrary to Woolf’s idea that the religions are different, and “donne certainement des arguments à ce rapprochement”. Both Mars and Teutates are war gods, but are so because they are concerned with the protection of the people. Lambrechts disagrees with the identification of Teutates with Mars on the basis first that, since Mars was exclusively the god of war<sup>434</sup> and was always represented in armour<sup>435</sup> and the pre-Roman Gauls had no concept of representing a god of war distinct from a god of peace<sup>436</sup>, they preferred to identify Teutates with Mercury<sup>437</sup> and, second, that the Mars worshipped after the Conquest was a beneficent deity who bore no resemblance to a war god<sup>438</sup>. Indeed, Lambrechts<sup>439</sup> holds that there is no connection between Mars and any of the specifically Celtic gods.

Brunaux<sup>440</sup> points out that the Insubres seemed to have three deities concerned with warfare, identified, by *interpretatio Romana*, with Athene (**Polyb.II.32.6**), with Mars and with Vulcan (**Flor.I.ii.4.4 and 5**); Brunaux says that the first “fixe le peuple sur son territoire”<sup>441</sup> and is the guarantor of its defence, the second holds the position of

leader of the army and the last oversees the manufacture of the weapons. Therefore, it would be a mistake to believe that each of the Gallic tribes had only one war-god.

### **‘Jupiter’**

*Jovem imperium caelestium tenere (Caes.B.G.VI.17.2.).*

As has been seen in the ‘Taranis’ section, it is generally accepted that Taranis, or whatever name each Gallic tribe gave to its sky-god, equates to Jupiter, because among Jupiter’s spheres of operation were the sky, weather and the control of the thunderbolt and Taranis must have been concerned with thunder and, therefore, storms and the sky. Caesar probably noticed these common factors and thus equated them; this superficial observance of the similarities between the two deities is supported by the fact that Caesar does not say that the Gallic ‘Jupiter’ is the supreme deity. Although Taranis can be identified with Jupiter and even though Jupiter is the Roman supreme deity and the Dagda is the Celtic supreme deity, Le Roux<sup>442</sup> rejects the possibility that Taranis is the Dagda.

### **‘Minerva’**

*Minerva operam atque artificiorum initia tradere (Caes.B.G.VI.17.2.).*

The use of the vernacular sources certainly suggests a possible identification of the goddess Caesar equates with Minerva as being Brigit or, rather, the Gallic equivalent of Brigit. De Vries<sup>443</sup> considers this likely. This is supported by three points. Brigit was the daughter of the Celtic supreme god the Dagda<sup>444</sup>, just as, as Le Roux<sup>445</sup> points out, the Roman deity Minerva was daughter of the Roman supreme god Jupiter and as Athena, on whom Minerva was modelled<sup>446</sup>, was daughter of the Greek supreme god Zeus. This was probably the case with the Gallic equivalent. The other two arise from two of the very few epithets<sup>447</sup>, possessed by the Romano-Celtic Minerva, Belisama<sup>448</sup> and Sul<sup>449</sup>. Brigid’s name, as has been said, may be translated as ‘exalted one’ and for this reason can be compared with the Gallic word Belisama<sup>450</sup>. Sul, whose name probably means sun<sup>451</sup> (cf Latin *sol*), or, in Olmsted’s<sup>452</sup> opinion, the goddess who had the byname of Sul, was equated to Minerva (**Solin**.XXII.10). At *Aquae Sulis* [Bath] Sul was supposed to have had an eternal fire in her temple<sup>453</sup>; the presence of an eternal fire reminds one of Brigit<sup>454</sup>. Therefore, there is a connection from Brigit to Sul to Minerva meaning that the identification of Brigit with the Gallo-Roman Minerva is securely established<sup>455</sup>. This idea that it was the Gallic equivalent to Brigit whom Caesar identified with Minerva has received a great deal of acceptance<sup>456</sup>, although she is referred to as the Gallic Minerva rather than the Gallic Brigit<sup>457</sup>.

This would certainly explain Caesar's use of Minerva in his *interpretatio Romana*. He may have identified this Gallic equivalent of Brigit with Minerva, on the basis that they are the daughter of the Supreme god and they have the patronage of the arts and blacksmiths in common, even though Minerva has functions wider than that of the arts and crafts<sup>458</sup>. It is also possible that he may have seen that all the Gallic goddesses were concerned with fertility and considered them all to be the same goddess, the Gallic version of Brigit, because this goddess had fertility aspects. Sjoestedt<sup>459</sup> suggests that Caesar identified either a Gallic goddess unknown at present or one known, but not in connection with the function of patroness of the arts. However, this identification can be misleading. Sjoestedt warns that, if the Gallic equivalent to Brigit was, indeed, the basis of Caesar's Minerva, she had fertility functions even though Minerva did not.

This Gallic equivalent to Brigit may have been the same goddess as the one whose sanctuary was dismantled by her Insubrian worshippers of north Italy (**Polyb.**II.32.5-6); in an example of *interpretatio Graeca* Polybius refers to her as Athena, on whom Minerva is based<sup>460</sup>.

### 'Dispater'

*Galli se omnes a Dite patre prognatos praedicant* (**Caes.**B.G.VI.18.1).

Reinach<sup>461</sup> says that "le conquérant romain [Caesar] appelle Dispater, et non Pluto, sans doute parce que dans Dispater, l'idée de la paternité est indiquée à côté de la nature infernale". Lambrechts<sup>462</sup> notices the similarity between Dispater and Donn and MacCana<sup>463</sup> suggests that Donn can be equated with Dis Pater or, rather, that Donn corresponds in Irish legend to the Gallic deity equated by Caesar with Dispater; York<sup>464</sup> calls Donn "the Gaelic Dis Pater". This idea finds support in Irish vernacular sources, which reveal that the Irish considered themselves to be descended from Donn, the god of the dead<sup>465</sup>. Caesar presumably constructed this equation between the Gallic deity and Dis because he recognised one of the functions of the Gallic 'Donn' was rule over the dead. The idea that the god of the dead is an ancestor god is alien to Greek and Roman mythology, but is typical of a Celtic deity and betrays the fact that Caesar must have been referring to an actual Gallic god. Birkhan<sup>466</sup> says it is connected with the belief in a life after death. The claim to be descended from not just a chthonic deity but the god of the dead may seem strange until one realises the importance to the Celts of the earth and agriculture. It is not a stretch of the imagination for one to believe that all life comes from the earth and, since the dead are put into the earth, the god of the dead is also the source of life of

the people. On the basis that the cauldron of the Dagda did not revive the dead immediately, but after one night, Le Roux<sup>467</sup> proposes that *Eochu Ollathir* should be identified as the Gallic Dispatar, while Cabuy<sup>468</sup> identifies Dispatar with Teutates, presumably because each tribal god would be the ancestor of the tribe and, therefore, would be a smaller version of Dispatar, the ancestor god of all the Gauls.

It will be seen that the Gallic deities, which were mentioned in Classical literature, are portrayed in Celtic iconography or whose identities have been extrapolated from Irish vernacular literature, were not abandoned soon after the Roman Conquest and continued for some time both to be worshipped either openly on their own or under the covering of a Roman deity.

Four of the Gallic deities known from Classical literature continued to be worshipped in varying degrees.

### **Teutates**

This deity is found not only in theophoric names<sup>469</sup>, but also as an epithet for Mars<sup>470</sup>. These facts demonstrate both that he continued to be present in the Gallic consciousness and to be worshipped in combination with or under the guise of Mars.

### **Esus**

In one of two reliefs discovered at Paris<sup>471</sup>, regarded as connected<sup>472</sup> and forming part of an “altar” dated to the period of Tiberius<sup>473</sup>, a person is portrayed as chopping at a tree, the inscription clearly identifying him as Esus<sup>474</sup> (**Fig.3.8**). Next to the relief of Esus is a relief (**Fig.3.9**) depicting a willow associated with a bull and three



**Fig.3.8**  
Relief discovered at Paris entitled Esus



**Fig.3.9**  
Relief discovered at Paris entitled  
*Tarvos Trigaranos*

egrets/ cranes<sup>475</sup>, which perch on the bull, two on his back and one between his horns<sup>476</sup>. The relief is equally clearly called *Tarvos Trigaranos*<sup>477</sup> meaning “bull with three cranes”<sup>478</sup>, presumably because of the contents: *Tarvos* is Gallic for “bull”<sup>479</sup> and *Trigaranos* means “three cranes”, *Tri-* three and *garanos*-cranes<sup>480</sup>.

A similar activity, differing only in that only the head of the bull is visible and the three egrets/ cranes are resting in the branches of the tree<sup>481</sup>, is portrayed on a relief (Fig.3.10) found at Trier/ Trèves on the side of a stone<sup>482</sup> dedicated to Mercury by a Mediomatrician called Indus<sup>483</sup> and dated to the 1st century CE<sup>484</sup>. The lower register of the relief has no identifiable images or inscriptions. The main image in the upper register is



Fig.3.10  
Relief found at Trier/Trèves

of a man with short hair, but with at least side-burns and, therefore, probably a beard, in a very short tunic, which reaches only to the bottom of the upper-thigh. He is seen from the front as regards his arms and torso, but in profile as regards his legs and head. His left eye and ear are clearly visible. He is standing, his left leg braced with the knee locked and the right leg slightly forward with the knee bent, so that he appears to be placing his weight on his right leg. To his right is a flourishing, leafy tree or at least the right side of it. The lowest branch curves out just grazing the top of the figure's head. The figure is holding the pole-like handle of a utensil with both hands, thrusting it into the trunk of the tree or hacking at the trunk with it. The utensil has a curved head, which curves downwards. From one angle one can imagine the head of the tool resembles the head of an animal. Above the topmost branches of the tree sits a whole bird, seen in profile from the left. It has a long neck and quite a long beak. It resembles a crane. Sitting on top of it or standing in front or behind it and to the right is another bird, also in left

profile. It also has a long neck, but most of the head is missing except the under part of the beak, which is quite long. It certainly seems to be the same type of bird as the first. Standing behind both of them, but over to the right, with thick legs, is another bird, twice as big as each of the others and also seen in profile facing left. The wings

and tail go to the right and only come to what appears to be the tail feathers halfway along the body of the second bird. The head, neck and part of the breast are missing. Also visible above the topmost branches, but under the breast, and therefore the head, of the third bird, is the head of a bovine creature, seen almost in profile looking, like the birds, to the left. The creature's left eye, ear and horn are quite clear as is its snout. Even part of the right horn is visible.

The similarity between the two reliefs, particularly the use of *three* egrets, is such that it cannot be coincidence and the pictures, as many experts agree<sup>485</sup>, must refer to the same person and creatures. Birkhan<sup>486</sup> thinks that Esus' activity is a representation of the old sacrifice to Esus from a time when human sacrifice was already prohibited. Whatever the Gallic myth was, it involved Esus and these two carvings indicate that the worship of Esus had survived under Roman rule and cultural influence.

The name of Esus can also be found in theophores<sup>487</sup> in two Gauls<sup>488</sup> and Switzerland<sup>489</sup>, in the name of a minor character mentioned in the *Satyricon* of Petronius (**Petron.Sat.CIV**), according to Gricourt<sup>490</sup>, and, according to various scholars<sup>491</sup>, in a dedication<sup>492</sup> of a statue of Mercury from Lezoux, although Duval calls this reading absolutely uncertain<sup>493</sup> and most conjectural<sup>494</sup>. This shows that the worship of Esus continued after the Roman Conquest; indeed, the inscription containing Esuggus is dated to the 3rd century CE.

According to the Berne Scholiasts, one of the Roman deities identified with Esus was Mercury<sup>xx</sup>. This finds support in two ways. The relief from Trier (**Fig.3.10**) is on the side of a stone on the front of which is a dedication to Mercury. Another, albeit longer, link between Esus and Mercury is the following. Wotan's day became identified as Mercury's day, which indicates, if not an identification, then certainly a connection between the two deities, Odin is the Germanic equivalent of Wotan and the parallelism between Esus and Odin has already been mentioned<sup>xxi</sup>. This suggests that, among the Treveri at least, Esus was identified with Mercury.

### **Taranis**

Various inscriptions to Taranis<sup>495</sup> or Tanarus<sup>496</sup> are widespread from Dalmatia to Britain. Tanarus, a form of Taranis, is a cognate of Thor<sup>497</sup> and is a metathesis of

---

<sup>xx</sup> Page 43.

<sup>xxi</sup> Page 44.

Taranus<sup>498</sup>. But evidence that the worship of Taranis continued under Roman rule may also be seen in Giant columns dedicated to Jupiter (**Fig.3.11**). These are found,

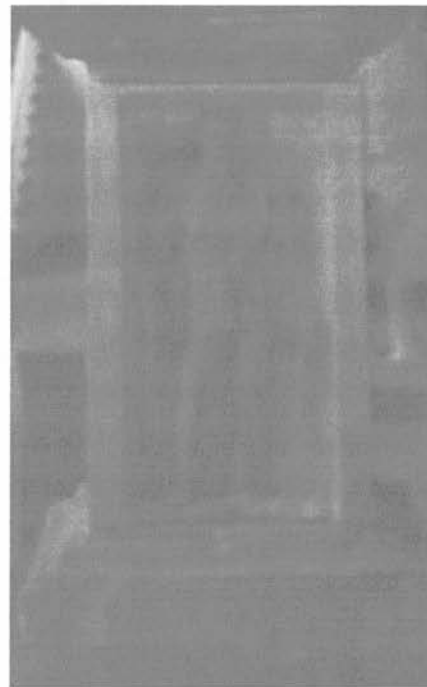


**Fig.3.11**  
Reconstructed Giant  
Jupiter-column

in Belgic Gaul, in Flanders and the east of the province, that is the Treveri tribal territory and the Rhine valley, and, in Aquitania, in the Arverni tribal territory<sup>499</sup>. Although in rural areas, the cost involved in each column indicates that, contrary to Hatt<sup>500</sup>, they were a public cult<sup>501</sup>. They number about 150, which exceeds the number of dedications to Mercury and, according to Sterckx<sup>502</sup>, indicates that this Jovian deity was the most frequently venerated. Many are dated from 170 to 240 CE<sup>503</sup> or 150 to 260 CE<sup>504</sup> and reached the greatest density in the 3rd century<sup>505</sup>. They follow roughly the same pattern. The base of the column had four sides decorated most commonly with the deities Apollo (**Fig.3.12**), Hercules (**Fig.3.13**), Juno, Mercury, or Minerva<sup>506</sup>, although there are many exceptions<sup>507</sup>; on top of this was an octagonal stone decorated with the Days of the Week<sup>508</sup>, most commonly in the North and North-East of Gaul, according to Benoît<sup>509</sup>, or the seven planetary deities of the week and either Victory or an inscription to Jupiter<sup>510</sup>. It supported a column decorated with oak leaves and acorns. On top of the column is a Corinthian figured capital with a personification



**Fig.3.12**  
Relief depicting Apollo from the base of a  
Giant Jupiter-column



**Fig.3.13**  
Relief depicting Hercules from the  
base of a Giant Jupiter-column

of the four seasons<sup>511</sup>, or the Hours<sup>512</sup>, and at the top a horseman riding over a snake-legged giant<sup>513</sup>; the horseman, dressed like a general, was armed with a spear and sometimes held a wheel as a shield<sup>514</sup>, while the giant was sometimes three-headed<sup>515</sup> and or reduced to merely a head coming out of the ground<sup>516</sup>. Altars to Jupiter Optimus Maximus were erected nearby<sup>517</sup>. The interpretation is ultimately unknown<sup>518</sup>, although some suggestions have been made<sup>519</sup>. Some claim that the columns, although made under Roman influence and apparently Roman, are not Roman monuments, but are actually Gallic with non-Roman features<sup>520</sup>, connected with Celtic religious context<sup>521</sup> and show the adaptation of Roman mythology to indigenous beliefs<sup>522</sup>. Benoît<sup>523</sup> considers them to be “le plus «original» de la sculpture Gallo-romaine”, King<sup>524</sup> states that “few would deny that they are a distinctive product of Celtic religion in its Romanised form” and van Andringa<sup>525</sup> says that they are a combination of Gallic art and Roman triumphal themes and that, if one ignores the latter, one may be able to isolate some Celtic peculiarities. The base displays Roman influences, but the rest of the column contains symbols, which can be interpreted as being as pertinent to Gallic religion as to Roman<sup>526</sup>. Benoît suggests that the column has funerary significance from Italy, pointing to columns found in Etruscan necropoleis or at Tarentum<sup>527</sup>, but also points out that the column had religious significance in a Germanic context, such as the Irminsul, “the Universal Column”<sup>528</sup>. The oak on the column can be associated with Jupiter<sup>529</sup>, but also with Taranis (**Maximus Tyrius**.*Dialexeis*.VIII.8.)<sup>xxii</sup>. The image of the sky-god as a horseman<sup>530</sup> is alien to Roman art<sup>531</sup>, but recalls the importance of the horse for the Gauls. If the crushing of the giant refers to the supremacy of the Uranic/celestial deities over the Chthonic/ terrestrial ones, it is equally applicable to the Gallic sky god as to the Roman. The presence of the wheel is significant; the lightning bolt is specifically connected with Jupiter, but the wheel, although a common symbol of the sun and not peculiar to the Celts<sup>532</sup>, represented thunder<sup>533</sup> and is the greatest manifestation of the Gallic sky god<sup>534</sup>. The symbolism is intentionally ambiguous, but whether the deity represented on the columns was intended to be Taranis, as is accepted by many scholars<sup>535</sup>, or another Gallic sky god, it indicates that even as late as the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, the worship of a Gallic sky god, possibly Taranis, continued.

While the equestrian Jupiter/Taranis on a column is most common in the North-East of Gaul, in the Centre and South-West it is replaced by an upright but pedestrian Jupiter/Taranis with no pillar<sup>536</sup>.

---

<sup>xxii</sup> Pages 45-46.

## Epona

Predominantly worshipped in the north and east of Gaul<sup>537</sup>, the goddess Epona was



**Fig.3.14**  
A dedication to Epona  
from Wederath in the Treveri tribal territory  
IN HDD DEA  
EPONE VICA  
I BELG P CV  
RANTE G VEL  
ORIO SACRIL  
LIO O

one of the few deities worshipped across Gaul. The sources are epigraphic<sup>538</sup>, such as a dedication to Epona (**Fig.3.14**)<sup>539</sup>, and iconographic; but the catalogue of the epigraphy and iconography of the goddess is very well supplied<sup>540</sup>. The iconography of Epona is consistent; the commonest image depicts a woman sitting side-saddle on a horse, which walks or trots slowly, but never gallops<sup>541</sup>, towards the right of the observer<sup>542</sup>. This is found in all regions<sup>543</sup>, in Belgic Gaul, as at *Durocortorum* [Reims]<sup>544</sup> (**Fig.3.15**)<sup>545</sup>, *Augusta*

*Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]<sup>546</sup> (**Fig.3.16**)<sup>547</sup> and *Divodurum* [Metz]<sup>548</sup> (**Fig.3.17**)<sup>549</sup>,



**Fig.3.15**  
Relief of Epona from  
*Durocortorum* [Reims]



**Fig.3.16**  
Relief of Epona from  
*Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]



**Fig.3.17**  
Relief of Epona from  
*Divodurum*[Metz]

and in Aquitania, as at *Aquae Neri* [Neris]<sup>550</sup> (**Fig.3.18**)<sup>551</sup>, at Gannat<sup>552</sup> (**Fig.3.19**)<sup>553</sup> and at *Limonum Pictonum* [Poitiers]<sup>554</sup> (**Fig.3.20**)<sup>555</sup>. There are minor variations, all

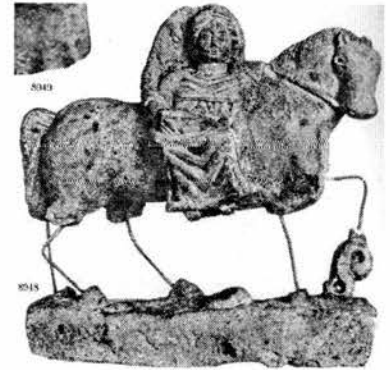
involving the horses<sup>556</sup>.



**Fig.3.18**  
Relief of Epona from  
*Aquae Neri* [Neris]



**Fig.3.19**  
Relief of Epona from  
Gannat



**Fig.3.20**  
Relief of Epona from  
*Limonum Pictonum*  
[Poitiers]

Epona is generally regarded as the patron-goddess of horses<sup>557</sup>, because of her name and the presence of horses in all variations of her iconography. However, this is only one of her areas of authority<sup>558</sup>. It has been proposed that the equine-related aspect is derived from her original purview, which was the concept of “sovereignty”; it has already been seen that there was a link between the Horse-goddess and the Sovereignty-goddess<sup>xxiii</sup> and that a function of Epona’s may have been sovereignty<sup>xxiv</sup>. Epona may also be regarded as a fertility goddess<sup>559</sup> because she is sometimes portrayed as carrying a basket or bowl of fruit or produce<sup>560</sup>. But fertility is another function of a sovereignty-goddess; by continuing the line of horses, she ensures the continuance of sovereignty. Epona also has funereal and psychopompic functions<sup>561</sup> due to her connection with fertility and, therefore, with all things in the earth, a transference common in many religions<sup>562</sup>. Since Rhiannon was also a solar-goddesses<sup>563</sup>, Epona may also have been. Indeed, whenever the sun is depicted in Celtic mythology, one of the forms by which it is depicted is a woman on a mare<sup>564</sup>. This would also bring the dead under Epona’s protection, because the sun sets in the west, where the dead go<sup>565</sup>. Due to the precarious nature of farming and breeding, it is not unreasonable to expect that the deity supervising fertility is also regarded as connected with the granting of good fortune. Interestingly in two inscriptions<sup>566</sup> Epona has the title of *regina*, which is also given to goddesses of fertility and also to Fortune<sup>567</sup>. Therefore Epona is a goddess concerned originally with sovereignty and, from this, with the protection of horses, principally for the cavalry, and with fertility,

<sup>xxiii</sup> Page 63.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Page 48.

primarily of horses, but generally too; from this she became concerned with fortune, with the escort of spirits of the dead and with the sun<sup>568</sup>. According to Dumézil<sup>569</sup> there are three functional levels in the cosmic and social structure. From her various aspects Epona could be called transfunctional, like the Sovereignty-goddess.

Epona is the Gallo-Roman version of the Indo-European Horse/Sovereignty-goddess, but with the emphasis being on the horse aspect and the concept of sovereignty being played down, because, with the Conquest, sovereignty passed from any Gallic institution to Rome. Sterckx<sup>570</sup> suggests that, since, on her dedications, Epona has the titles *sancta* and *regina*, for which the French is 'reine', Epona survived the conversion to Christianity by being converted into St Reine, the patron saint of Alesia. If Sterckx is right, then Epona must have had a strong association with Alesia, which may explain why the Gauls under Vercingetorix did not kill their horses when they were besieged by Caesar and short of food.

### **Divine Twins**

There are many Gallo-Roman reliefs and inscriptions in Belgic Gaul to the *Dioscuri*. Duval<sup>571</sup> suggests that the success of the cult of the *Dioscuri* may be explained by the prior existence of a similar Gallic parallel. He argues that an inscription<sup>572</sup> from southern France may be evidence of Gallic Divine Twins<sup>573</sup> called Divannos and Dinomagetimarus; they have the first syllable in common and are referred to under the single title of *Martes*<sup>xxv</sup>. The latter indicates that they are associated with war and, therefore, possibly with providing aid in battle and, because of the importance the horse has in warfare for the Indo-European peoples in general and the Gauls in particular, they are possibly connected with horses<sup>xxvi</sup>. If Divine Twins formed part of the mythology of the Gallic people, as is reasonable, and the *Dioscuri* mentioned in the Gallo-Roman inscriptions are, as with the major Roman deities, the original Gallic Divine Twins under the guise of the Roman *Dioscuri*, then the worship of the Divine Twins survived until the 2nd century CE and even, if Divannos and Dinomagetimarus are the Divine Twins, until the 3rd century.

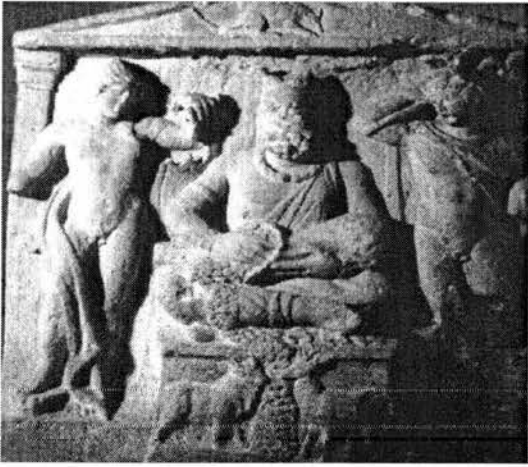
### **Cernunnos**

There are many representations of a cross-legged deity with antlers on his head<sup>574</sup>, such as, in Belgic Gaul, at *Durocortorum* [Reims]<sup>575</sup> (**Fig.3.21**)<sup>576</sup> and *Divodurum* [Metz]<sup>577</sup> (**Fig.3.22**)<sup>578</sup> and, in Aquitania, at *Santoni* [Saintes]<sup>579</sup> (**Fig.3.23**)<sup>580</sup> and

---

<sup>xxv</sup> Page 50.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Page 50.



**Fig.3.21**  
Relief of Cernunnos from  
*Durocortorum* [Reims]

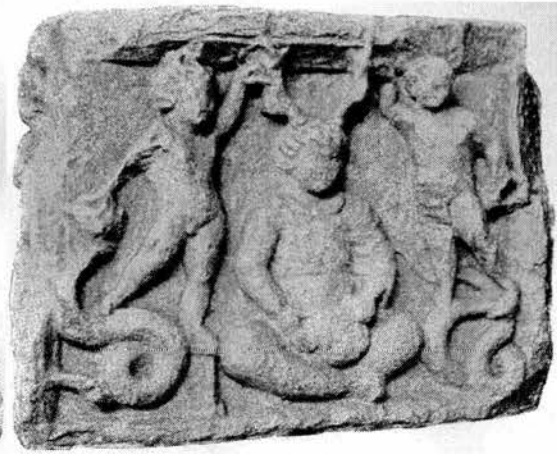


**Fig.3.22**  
Relief of Cernunnos from  
*Divodurum* [Metz]

*Vindobriga* [Vendoeuvres]<sup>581</sup> (**Fig.3.24**)<sup>582</sup>. In a relief from Paris<sup>583</sup> this deity is portrayed as an old man with antlers and cervine ears, who, although the lower part is



**Fig.3.23**  
Relief of Cernunnos from  
Aquitania, at *Santoni* [Saintes]



**Fig.3.24**  
Relief of Cernunnos from  
*Vindobriga* [Vendoeuvres]

missing, must have been depicted cross-legged<sup>584</sup>. Although in Lugdunensian Gaul, this is important because it provides a name for the deity. Below the relief an inscription<sup>585</sup>, dated to the principate of Tiberius, gives the name as Cernunnos<sup>xxvii</sup>. For Bober<sup>586</sup>, any assertion that the image was a Greek invention cannot be accepted in art-historical terms. Moreover, the deity is easily identified with the Antlered-god on the Gundestrup cauldron<sup>587</sup> and, therefore, shows that this distinctly Gallic deity continued to be worshipped after the Roman Conquest. Lambrechts<sup>588</sup> holds that

<sup>xxvii</sup> See page CLXXXIV-CLXXXV.

Cernunnos had become identified with Mercury because one of the favourite attributes of Cernunnos was the purse<sup>589</sup> and the purse, from earliest times, had been an undisputed characteristic of the Classical Mercury, symbolising his connections with riches, abundance and commerce. Jenkins claims that most of the attributes of



**Fig.3.25**

Statue from Sommerécourt

whose head originally had antlers attached, reveals chthonic attributes in the form of the three Ram-Headed serpents he and his consort are feeding. For Bober<sup>597</sup> the relief from Reims is significant because it links Cernunnos with three Roman deities. The presence of Mercury is explained by Mercury's psychopompic function and fertility associations, demonstrated by two of his attributes being a rabbit and a cock. There is no clear relationship between Apollo and Cernunnos, except the association Apollo had with Mercury<sup>598</sup>. Finally Cernunnos holds a sack from which pour flat, round objects identified as coins; this, along with Cernunnos' chthonic and fertility functions leads Bober<sup>599</sup> to support Peter's<sup>600</sup> contention that Cernunnos was equated by the Romans with Dis Pater, but only in the 2nd century CE, having preserved his independent identity for two centuries. According to Lantier<sup>601</sup>, a female version of this deity comes from Aquitania.

the Antlered-deity on the Gundestrup cauldron suggest that Cernunnos was closely identified with Mercury<sup>590</sup> and not only feels that the presence of Mercury, and Apollo, with Cernunnos on a relief from Reims<sup>591</sup> is not merely to fill a space, but also speculates that it is possible that Cernunnos sometimes assumed the functions of Mercury and Apollo<sup>592</sup>. The relief from Saintes (Fig.3.23) reveals an anonymous female consort with a *cornucopia*<sup>593</sup>. Bober<sup>594</sup> says that a statue from Sommerécourt<sup>595</sup> (Fig.3.25)<sup>596</sup> of a cross-legged man

### **The Tricephalic deity**

There are many representations in Roman Gaul, especially in stone, of a deity whose most characteristic trait is the fact that he is tricephalic<sup>602</sup> and this image can be

found in both Belgic Gaul<sup>603</sup>, as at *Noviodunum* [Soissons]<sup>604</sup> (**Fig.3.26**)<sup>605</sup> and Aquitania, such as at *Vesunna* [Périgueux]<sup>606</sup> (**Fig.3.27**)<sup>607</sup>. Strictly speaking, the



**Fig.3.26**  
Tricephalic image from  
*Noviodunum* [Soissons]



**Fig.3.27**  
Tricephalic image from  
*Vesunna* [Périgueux]

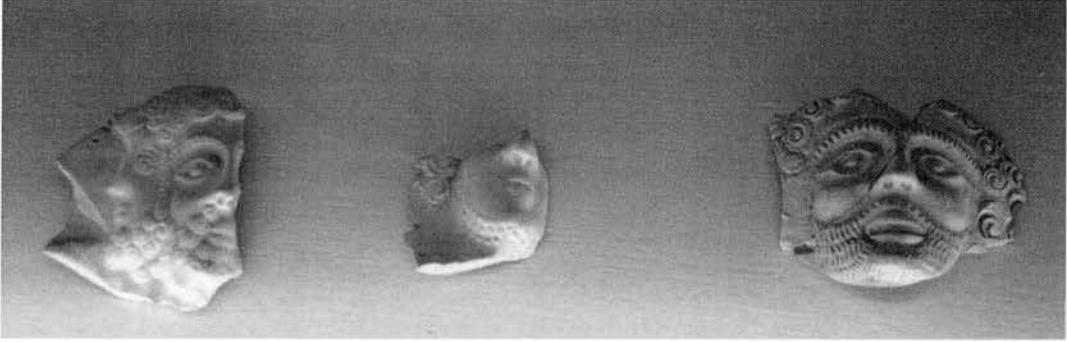
deity is portrayed more often with three faces on one head<sup>608</sup>, particularly among the Remi<sup>609</sup>, but this seems to be merely a variant on the proper concept of a Three-Headed god<sup>610</sup>. The image of three faces may appear with a single body or without a body at all and with or without attributes<sup>611</sup> (**Fig.3.28**)<sup>612</sup>. Bober<sup>613</sup> states that the large number of examples from *Durocortorum* [Reims] shows that it was a cult centre.



**Fig.3.28**  
Tricephalic images

Examples of this image, with horns, can be found on certain pots known as Belgian “planetary” pots<sup>614</sup>, dating to the late 2nd century or early 3rd CE<sup>615</sup> or between 200 and 250 CE<sup>616</sup>, except by Bober<sup>617</sup>, who dates them to the early part of the 1st

century CE. These are decorated with the heads of deities, usually five or seven heads, which are interpreted as the Days of the Week<sup>618</sup> (hence the name “planetary”) with the potter substituting for the Roman deities the Gallic deities with which they are identified<sup>619</sup>. Occasionally one of the heads is triple-faced<sup>620</sup> and there are about 30 of these depictions of the tricephalic deity<sup>621</sup>. Debris of these pots has been found almost everywhere in Belgian territory<sup>622</sup>, but mainly in the region of the Sambre and Maas rivers<sup>623</sup>. Many ceramic fragments of these pots or even whole



**Fig.3.29**  
Fragments of a planetary pot from Fontaine-Valmont displaying a tricephalic image

pots have been found in the Tungri tribal region<sup>624</sup> and in the Nervian tribal region<sup>625</sup>, such as the example from Fontaine-Valmont (**Fig.3.29**); two intact examples, one from each region, come from Jupille-lez-Liège, in the Tungri tribal territory, and the Nervian town of *Bagacum Nerviorum* [Bavai]<sup>626</sup>. This indicates that the use of the triple-faced image was widespread in the Tungri tribal territory and seems to have been present among the Nervii. The statuettes and reliefs taken together with the planetary vases and the evidence from the regions of the largest and most powerful tribes of Aquitania, the Arverni, Biturges and Santones, show that the image, while undoubtedly most venerated among the Remi, seems to have been popular over almost half of Belgic Gaul and that it was not limited to the Belgic region, but was also popular and venerated in most of Aquitania. The tricephalic image was a survival of Celtic beliefs<sup>627</sup> and shows that the pre-Conquest concept of a tricephalic deity continued under Roman rule.

Reinach<sup>628</sup> claims that this deity was identified by the Gauls with Mercury, because a relief at Paris<sup>629</sup> depicts him with the purse, tortoise and ram of Mercury; Lambrechts<sup>630</sup> agrees with him claiming that the three tribal regions of the Suessiones, the Remi and the Bituriges have produced monuments showing the tricephalic image with the attributes of Mercury; although Lambrechts lists many, in only a few can the tricephalic deity be discerned<sup>631</sup>. Lambrechts<sup>632</sup> points out that

triplism and the use of the number three not only does not come from the Classical world, but from Celtic art and religion and is also an essential part of Gallic mentality, indeed, is a universal symbol. Lambrecht follows Deonna<sup>633</sup> and his concept of “la répétition d’intensité”, in stating that “la multiplication des membres symboliserait l’omnipotence du dieu”. Birkhan believes not only that the tricephalic deity was not Mercury or Janus Quadrans<sup>634</sup>, but that it was not even a deity in its own right, because every deity’s power could be stressed in this way<sup>635</sup>. However, according to Cunliffe<sup>636</sup>, the three-headed god was a distinct deity and belonged to a group of beneficent gods, whose principal function was to bring prosperity to Man. It is possible that the representation of the Triple-headed deity was a symbolic means of enhancing the power of the principal deity portrayed; hence the association of him with deities such as Mercury<sup>637</sup>, concerned with prosperity in commerce, or with Cernunnus and the Mothers, whose concern was fertility<sup>638</sup>. In view of the multitude of Gallic tribes, the lack of evidence of a pan-Gallic pantheon and the fact that a single Roman deity can have many different Gallic identifications, it is possible that the Tricephalic deity was associated with Mercury among certain tribes, while others associated him with Cernunnus and still others with both Cernunnus and a feminine deity.

Bober<sup>639</sup> argues that, since reconstructions of some “planetary” vases reveal that the Tricephalic image corresponds with Mars on one, Saturn on another and Mercury on a third, it is perfectly reasonable to accept that the Tricephalic deity can be assimilated to various Roman deities. Bober<sup>640</sup> holds that the assimilation of the Tricephalic deity to Mercury is “incontestable”, as is its assimilation to Cernunnos, but states that “assimilation in isolated instances does not imply identity. Noticing that, in Classical mythology, tricephaly is too common a feature of chthonic beings<sup>641</sup> to be an accident, Bober<sup>642</sup> speculates, on the basis of common Indo-European consciousness and with no suggestion of direct Graeco-Roman influence, that the origin of the Tricephalic deity may have been chthonic, which explains his assimilation to Mercury and Cernunnos.

### **The Ram-Horned Snake**

One notable Celtic image, which survived from before the Conquest of Gaul until the Gallo-Roman period, becoming a very powerful symbol<sup>643</sup>, is the Ram-Horned Snake. There are representations of the Ram-Horned Snake in Aquitania, as at *Aquae Neri* [Néris]<sup>644</sup> (**Fig.3.30**)<sup>645</sup> and Belgic Gaul<sup>646</sup>, as at Sommerécourt<sup>647</sup> (**Fig.3.31**)<sup>648</sup>. According to Amand<sup>649</sup>, its customary representation is by a rather thick body with

some swelling at the base of the neck evoking some rolled up horns and an elongated skull.

The stone sculptures reveal that the pre-Roman Gallic Ram-Horned Snake survived the Roman Conquest to be portrayed on Gallo-Roman monuments, even in connection with images of a Roman deity.



**Fig.3.30**  
Representation of the  
Ram-Horned Snake  
from *Aquae Neri* [Néris]



**Fig.3.31**  
Representation of the Ram-  
Horned Snake  
From Sommerécourt

## Lugus

Lugus, the Gallic equivalent of the Irish deity Lug<sup>xxviii</sup>, is mentioned in inscriptions either in the name of the divinities called *Lugoves*<sup>650</sup> or in personal names<sup>651</sup>, such as *Luguadix*<sup>652</sup>, *Luguselva*<sup>653</sup> and *Lugiola*<sup>654</sup>. This demonstrates that Lugus continued to be worshipped after the Roman Conquest.

## Sovereignty/Fertility Goddess

### *Divine Consorts*

One distinct characteristic of Gallo-Roman deities, attested in iconography and epigraphy<sup>655</sup>, is that many are in pairs composed of a male and a female deity<sup>656</sup>. The concept of divine partners was a predilection for the Gauls<sup>657</sup> and possibly for Celts in general. The majority of divine couples was indigenous in origin<sup>658</sup>; while the male may be either a Roman or a Celtic god, the female is always a Celtic goddess with a Celtic name<sup>659</sup>. The reason for this pairing may be ascertained by the

---

<sup>xxviii</sup> Page 63-64.

examination of the female deity in those divine couples about which there is sufficient information.

### Mercury and Rosmerta



**Fig.3.32**  
Sculpture of  
Mercury and  
Rosmerta from  
*Augusta  
Trevororum*  
[Trier/Trèves]

Throughout Gaul Mercury is linked in reliefs and inscriptions to female deities as a consort. Maia<sup>660</sup> and Visucia<sup>661</sup> are examples, but he is usually connected with Rosmerta<sup>662</sup>. At Niedaltdorf<sup>663</sup> the altar at a temple, dated to possibly 1st century CE<sup>664</sup>, was dedicated to Mercury and the Celtic goddess Rosmerta<sup>665</sup> and there are sculptures of Mercury and Rosmerta<sup>666</sup> (**Fig.3.32**). She was the companion of Mercury, notably in the east of Gaul<sup>667</sup>, in the north-east of Gaul<sup>668</sup>, and in the central and eastern areas of Gaul<sup>669</sup> and her cult was popular among the Lingones, Treveri, Mediomatrici, Triboci and Leuci<sup>670</sup>, as at *Tullum Leucorum* [Toul]<sup>671</sup> (**Fig.3.33**)<sup>672</sup>; according to de Vries<sup>673</sup>, this means that the cult of Mercury and Rosmerta can be regarded as a real Gallic cult. The fact that Rosmerta is mentioned twenty-one times, exceeded only by Epona<sup>674</sup>, demonstrates her popularity. Bémont<sup>675</sup> believes that Rosmerta existed before the Roman

Conquest and the introduction of Mercury; Green merely grants that she may have existed before then<sup>676</sup> and that it may

have been that Mercury was actually attached to her rather than the other way around<sup>677</sup>. She is depicted either with the attributes of Mercury, making her merely the reflection of the god, or with a *cornucopia* or fruits in a basket, attributes of fertility<sup>678</sup>. Her name<sup>xxix</sup> and her iconography indicate that she was a goddess of prosperity and fertility<sup>679</sup>, who was



**Fig.3.33**  
Sculpture of Mercury and Rosmerta  
from *Tullum Leucorum* [Toul]

<sup>xxix</sup> See page CLXXXVI-CLXXXVII.

concerned with the accidents of human fortune<sup>680</sup>.

It is generally thought, based on the fact that some dedications are to Mercury alone, that Rosmerta had no identity and was merely a female version or counterpart of Mercury, who was the dominant partner, borrowing his attributes<sup>681</sup>; however, her Celtic character is manifest on many monuments<sup>682</sup> and she brings attributes alien to Mercury's imagery, such as the *cornucopia*, the snake and the *patera*<sup>683</sup>. Moreover, she is sometimes worshipped in her own temple<sup>684</sup>. These indicate a definitely separate character, quite distinct from a mere feminine counter-part, confirmed by her appearances on her own. According to Bémont<sup>685</sup>, a dedication to Rosmerta alone shows that she was able to enjoy greater independence than her habitual association with Mercury would allow one to suppose. According to Green, these show that she had a status independent of her consort<sup>686</sup> and cannot be dismissed as a mere adjunct or extension of Mercury<sup>687</sup>, but even indicate that she was actually of greater importance than her role as part of a divine couple might suggest<sup>688</sup>. Green<sup>689</sup> even says that Mercury was made accessible to the Celts and connected with the imagery of fertility only by being associated with Rosmerta. Green<sup>690</sup> believes that she had "a very real personality and imagery of her own" and that she was "considered as an independent goddess". Indeed, Bémont<sup>691</sup> believes that it is when she is represented on her own that she rediscovers her original vitality.

#### *Apollo and Sirona*

In almost all inscriptions in *Belgic Gaul* Apollo is linked with Sirona<sup>692</sup>. There is an inscription to Apollo and Sirona from Graux<sup>693</sup> (**Fig.3.34**)<sup>694</sup>. Sirona<sup>xxx</sup> was the



**Fig.3.34**  
Inscription to Apollo and Sirona  
from Graux

divine consort of Apollo Grannus<sup>695</sup> in the 2nd and 3rd centuries<sup>696</sup>. However, her cult may have existed before the Roman Conquest<sup>697</sup>. Her cult is widely spread<sup>698</sup>,

---

<sup>xxx</sup> See pages CLXXXVII.

but she was most popular among the Treveri<sup>699</sup> where she is associated with Apollo<sup>700</sup>.

According to Green<sup>701</sup>, Hochscheid<sup>702</sup> was Sirona's principal shrine; certainly this site was very important in the worship of Apollo and Sirona, as is shown by an inscription dedicated to them (**Fig.3.35**), by a head of Sirona (**Fig.3.36**)<sup>703</sup> and by



**Fig.3.35**

Inscription to Apollo and Sirona  
from Hochscheid  
DEO APOLLI  
NI ET SANC  
T(a)E SIRON(a)E RC PRO CO  
NIU[G]E(?) T[----]



**Fig.3.36**

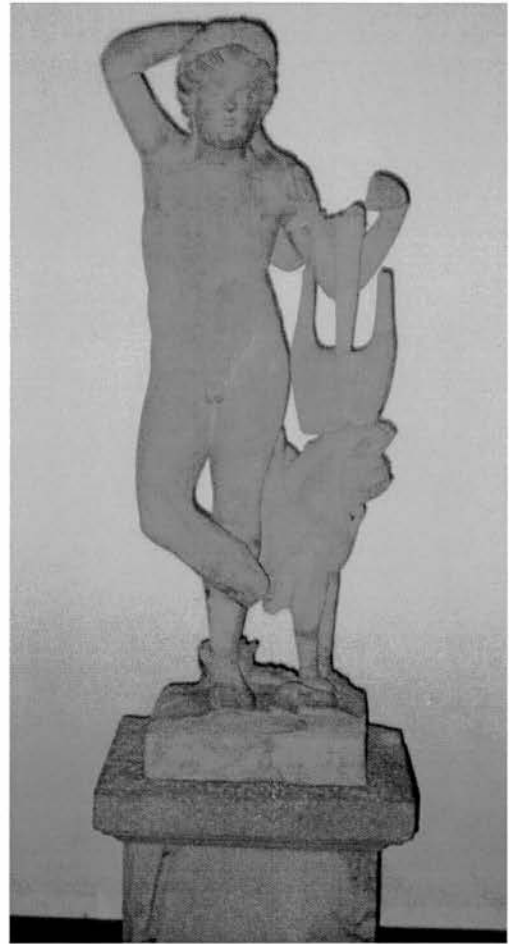
Head of Sirona  
from Hochscheid

statues of Sirona and Apollo (**Fig.3.37** and **Fig.3.38**)<sup>704</sup>. Birkhan<sup>705</sup>, however, considers it to have been *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]. Other Treveran sites were Niedaltdorf<sup>706</sup> and Sainte-Fontaine<sup>707</sup> (**Fig.3.39**)<sup>708</sup> and, according to Green<sup>709</sup>, she was also worshipped among the Mediomatrici at Sablon, near *Divodurum* [Metz]. Sirona's iconography at Hochscheid, carrying a bowl of three eggs and with a snake wrapped around her arm<sup>710</sup> (**Fig.3.37**), portrays her as concerned with fertility and regeneration as well as healing<sup>711</sup>; her imagery at Sainte-Fontaine, where she is portrayed with corn and fruit<sup>712</sup>, also represents fertility. At Epidaurus there was an inscription in which miraculous cures were ascribed to dogs<sup>713</sup>, and Sirona is also depicted with a dog in her arms or on her lap<sup>714</sup>. At some sites, as at Hochscheid<sup>715</sup>, Sainte-Fontaine<sup>716</sup> and, according to Green<sup>717</sup>, at Sablon, she appears independent of Apollo, although his image may still be at the site indicating that he was also worshipped there. In Aquitania, at *Burdigala* [Bordeaux] in the Bituriges Vivisci

tribal territory, she was mentioned on her own in an inscription<sup>718</sup>. Green<sup>719</sup> believes



**Fig.3.37**  
Statue of Sirona from Hochscheid



**Fig.3.38**  
Statue of Apollo from Hochscheid



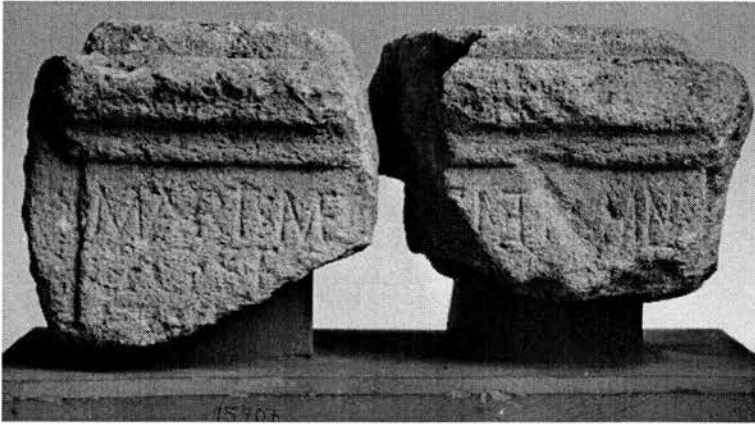
**Fig.3.39**  
Image of and inscription to Sirona from Sainte-Fontaine  
Deae Dironae  
Maior ma  
giatitilius  
V S L M

that the fact that Sirona was invoked on her own indicates her independent status among the Celtic deities. She is mentioned fourteen times; this must indicate her popularity.

*Mars and his consorts*

Like Apollo, Mars had different epithets and different consorts. At the 'Irminenwingert temple<sup>720</sup> at *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]<sup>721</sup>. Lenus Mars is considered to have had Ancamna as his consort<sup>722</sup>, because, on an *exhedra* in the immediate vicinity of the great sanctuary, there was a dedication to Ancamna as well as to Mars, and to the Genius of the Vilciatis

*pagus*<sup>723</sup>. The temple at Möhn has supplied an inscription<sup>724</sup> the text of which is



**Fig.3.40**

Inscription to Mars Smertrius and his consort from  
the temple of Lenus Mars  
at *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]  
Photograph courtesy of the Rheinische Landesmuseum, Trier

disputed (**Fig.3.40**).

While the mention of Mars can be accepted beyond dispute, there is a debate regarding the Gallic epithet and the identity of the consort apparently mentioned.

According to Duval and Grenier<sup>725</sup> the inscription reads *MARTI SMER[.]IO ET ...MANAE/C.G. SEC.*

Accepting this interpretation, Hettner and Hatt<sup>726</sup> posit that the Gallic epithet is Smertrius, while, according to Pauly-Wissowa and Grenier<sup>727</sup> it is Smertrius, a view accepted by Wightman<sup>728</sup>. Certainly the name Smertrius fits the missing space, whereas the Smertrius version requires three letters to fit a space for two. The *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* increases the size of the space, reading the inscription as *MARTI SME[....]IO ET ..MANAE*, and constructs the epithet as being Smertrius. As regards the alleged consort, a fertility goddess, according to Thévenot<sup>729</sup>, Hettner and Hatt<sup>730</sup> consider it to be Pomona, but Pauly-Wissowa, Grenier, Thévenot, Wightman, Metzler and Green<sup>731</sup> prefer Ancamna. However, having inspected this inscription I cannot agree with this interpretation; there is insufficient space even for the name Ancamna and the interpretation lies more in the imagination, perhaps based on the inscription at the temple of Lenus Mars. The fact that all these sanctuaries are in the Treveri tribal region indicates that Ancamna, as Green<sup>732</sup> says, was a Treveran deity. Other examples of Mars with different epithets and consorts are Mars Loucetius with Nemetona<sup>733</sup>, Mars Cicolluis with Litavis<sup>734</sup> and Mars Visucius with Visucia<sup>735</sup>; there was even a pairing of Mars Cicolluis and Rosmerta<sup>736</sup>.

### *Sucellus and Nantosuelta*

Another notable pairing<sup>737</sup>, found in Belgic Gaul among the Mediomatrici and, according to Green<sup>738</sup>, the Treveri is Sucellus<sup>xxxii</sup> and Nantosuelta<sup>xxxiii</sup>, identified from

<sup>xxxii</sup> See page CLXXXVII.

a monument at *Pons Sarravi* [Sarrebouurg], near *Divodurum* [Metz]<sup>739</sup> (**Fig.3.41**)<sup>740</sup>, which is the only image of Nantosuelta with an inscription of her name<sup>741</sup> and is one of two Mediomatrican reliefs in which she appears with Sucellus<sup>742</sup>. While the other pairs mentioned consist of a Roman god, either with or without a Celtic epithet, this pair is of two Celtic deities. As regards Nantosuelta's functions, her name shows she had a connection with water, although this is not present in her images<sup>743</sup>, and this links her to fertility<sup>744</sup>; this is confirmed by the fact that she always carries a *cornucopia*<sup>745</sup>. Of her attributes found only in her images in the Mediomatrican<sup>746</sup> tribal region<sup>747</sup>, one is a miniature house with a gabled roof and two openings like windows on top of a long pole<sup>748</sup> and the second is a raven<sup>749</sup>. A final attribute is honey. In one relief<sup>750</sup> there appear to be three honeycombs at her feet<sup>751</sup> and in the second<sup>752</sup> she appears to hold a hive<sup>753</sup>, on which the raven perches, and on the ground on the left there are three objects which have been interpreted as honeycombs<sup>754</sup>. The *cornucopia*, the miniature house on a pole and the honeycombs and hive all suggest her concern, at least among the Mediomatrici, with domesticity, protection of the family home, the hearth and everything connected with it<sup>755</sup> and may indicate that, like the other consorts, Nantosuelta was concerned with prosperity<sup>756</sup>. Linckenheld postulates that Nantosuelta also had a funerary aspect<sup>757</sup> and an astrological one<sup>758</sup>. Linckenheld<sup>759</sup> points out the possible connection of Nantosuelta, rather than Sucellus, with Mithras; the two altars<sup>760</sup> were found 20m from a contemporary Mithraeum and a relief of Nantosuelta<sup>761</sup> was surmounted by the head of Sol surrounded by seven rays, the same type of head as is found on the upper part of the altars of Mithras. The fact that Sucellus often appears on his own, is older and possesses a distinctive attribute identifying him suggests that he is the dominant partner<sup>762</sup>; however, Nantosuelta's diadem reflects high status<sup>763</sup> and the fact that she was represented alone four times<sup>764</sup>, as at *Pons Sarravi* [Sarrebouurg]<sup>765</sup> (**Fig.3.42**)<sup>766</sup>, indicates that in Eastern



**Fig.3.41**  
Relief of and inscription to  
Sucellus and Nantosuelta  
from  
*Pons Sarravi* [Sarrebouurg],  
near *Divodurum* [Metz]  
*Deo Sucello*  
*Nantosuelte*  
*Bellausu Smas*  
*se filius VSLM*

<sup>xxxiii</sup> See page CLXXXV-CLXXXVI.

Gaul she could be worshipped separately from her consort<sup>767</sup> and suggests that she was not a subordinate. Her popularity may be gauged by the fact that the goddess is represented on seventeen monuments<sup>768</sup>.

Although Grenier<sup>769</sup> believes that the goddesses were only the feminine personification of the male deity with whom they were associated, they demonstrate, by their independent identity, that they were not female ciphers attached to a more important male deity<sup>770</sup>. They were more than just feminine personifications, but were goddesses with personality separate from their consorts.

Therefore the best explanation, since all the female deities were concerned with fertility and prosperity<sup>771</sup>, is that the pairs were forms of a divine marriage<sup>772</sup> between the local goddess of sovereignty, who governs the fertility of the area, and various local gods<sup>773</sup>, which would explain the cases of different partners and account for the apparent polygamy or promiscuity by the various deities. This explains why the deities with Roman names had different consorts; they had to have different consorts to legitimise their rule on different areas. For Green<sup>774</sup>, a concept common to all divine couples and central to the cult is the marriage of equal partners since there is no evidence in the iconography of either party being dominant, and also the iconography shows that the marriage aspect may account for the popularity of the cults<sup>775</sup>. In view of the fact that in all but three of the divine couples the male is manifestly Gallic, it is probable that the remaining three, Mercury, Apollo and Mars, are simply Graeco-Roman exteriors for Gallic equivalents.

The frequency of male deities with Celtic consorts indicates that the concept that a sacred marriage to the goddess of sovereignty of an area bestows legitimacy on the rule of her marriage partner continued into the Gallo-Roman period; Roman



**Fig.3.42**  
Relief of Nantosuelta  
From  
Pons Sarravi [Sarrebouurg]

acculturation resulted in the deity in whom sovereignty was vested having the external image and name of a Roman deity.

### Mother-Goddesses

There is a group of goddesses, which, by their attributes, were concerned with fertility, one of the functions of the Sovereignty-Goddess. The Mother-Goddesses often have epithets<sup>776</sup> pertaining to specific groups<sup>777</sup> or to certain areas of operation<sup>778</sup>, but the majority is concerned with locality<sup>779</sup>; some refer to a region and some are concerned with the province, but many link the Mothers to a specific area<sup>780</sup>. Toutain<sup>781</sup> demonstrates that sometimes the modern name of a brook or spring can be recognised in the epithet of certain Mothers. Although von Petrikovits<sup>782</sup> disagrees, many scholars accept that the Celtic, specifically Gallic, origin of the Mothers is beyond question<sup>783</sup>. They sometimes took the form of a Triad of Mother-Goddesses or Triple Mothers<sup>784</sup>, like the triad<sup>785</sup> from *Nasium* [Naix]<sup>786</sup> or that<sup>787</sup> from *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]<sup>788</sup>. A group of Celtic fertility goddesses called the Xulsigiae is epigraphically attested with the worship of Lenus Mars (**Fig.3.43**)<sup>789</sup>.



**Fig.3.43**

Inscription to Lenus Mars and the Xulsigiae from the temple of Lenus Mars at *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]  
*LENO MARTI/ ET XULSIGIIS*  
*L. VIRIUS DISE*  
*TO V.S.L.M*

The iconography of the Triple Mothers, usually in stone or clay and sometimes in metal or bone<sup>790</sup>, has a consistent element, the depiction of three women, each fully clothed, seated side by side<sup>791</sup>, with a variety of attributes, all concerned with the concepts of fertility and nourishing, the commonest being baskets of fruit, *cornucopiae*, fish, loaves and children<sup>792</sup>. In many reliefs<sup>793</sup> the middle figure is young and bare-headed and the two other figures are matrons with large hats<sup>794</sup>, as in the statuette from Velzeke<sup>795</sup> (**Fig.3.44**). The cult of the Three Mothers was specific to the Celtic world<sup>796</sup> and was limited to Gaul and the Rhineland of Germany<sup>797</sup>; it

was not found in the East or North-west of Gaul<sup>798</sup>. As Lambrechts<sup>799</sup> points out that, there can be images of single Mother-Goddess, such as the figurine from *Bagacum Nerviorum* [Bavai]<sup>800</sup> (Fig.3.45). Triads of Mothers were absent from Aquitania, the goddesses being expressed in dyads<sup>801</sup>, such



**Fig.3.44**  
Statuette of Triple Mothers from Velzeke

as the dyad from *Limonum Pictonum* [Poitiers]<sup>802</sup> (Fig.3.46)<sup>803</sup>.



**Fig.3.45**  
Figurine of a Mother-Goddess from *Bagacum Nerviorum* [Bavai]



**Fig.3.46**  
Relief of a dyad of Mother-Goddesses from *Limonum Pictonum* [Poitiers]

It is clear from the fertility-related attributes that the Triple Mothers, and Mother-Goddesses in general, were fertility goddesses<sup>804</sup>. Bober<sup>805</sup> calls them the counterparts to Cybele in Gaul. Toutain<sup>806</sup> states that they were not only Mothers of

fruits, but exercised control over all nature and humanity, fertility of the earth and humans. Images of single goddesses<sup>807</sup> found at *Samarobriva* [Amiens]<sup>808</sup>, at *Divodurum* [Metz]<sup>809</sup> and at Dalheim and Luxemburg<sup>810</sup>. The Mother-Goddesses had a funerary aspect<sup>811</sup>; this is true in the case of Epona, who had a fertility aspect, and possibly Nantosuelta. Linckenheld<sup>812</sup> states that it is only on the images of the Mothers, and a goddess interpreted as Venus, that “*symboles astraux*” and “*décorations stellaires*” are found, which supports the funerary aspect, because such symbols are found in an appreciable number of funeral monuments of the Gallo-Roman period.

Linckenheld claims that the “*symboles astraux*” are found in a context outside of and sheltered from Roman influence<sup>813</sup> and that these symbols, encountered on funeral monuments, coins and vases in Gaul during the Gallo-Roman period, are not the result of acculturation, but are indigenous and indicate that indigenous religious beliefs survived<sup>814</sup>. MacCana<sup>815</sup> feels that there is no clear distinction between these goddesses and divine consorts. Since divine consorts are manifestations of the Sovereignty-goddess myth, it is possible that the groups of Mother-goddesses are too. Indeed, Aldhouse-Green<sup>816</sup> expresses a similar idea in suggesting that they are the Gallic equivalent of the *puella senilis*, a form of the Sovereignty-goddess; the fact that they are depicted in groups of two or three recalls the fact that the Sovereignty-goddess appears in twos or threes<sup>817</sup>. If Linckenheld, MacCana and Aldhouse-Green are correct, these Mother-Goddesses are another manifestation of the survival of the Sovereignty-goddess myth under Roman rule.

#### *Fertility goddesses and Minerva*

The reliefs<sup>818</sup> and statuettes found in connection with temples<sup>819</sup> of Cybele/*Magna Mater*, Diana, *Fortuna*, Isis, *Abundantia*, Minerva and Venus and the references to some of these goddesses in inscriptions<sup>820</sup>, may be considered as examples of the influx and acceptance of Roman deities. However, all these deities were concerned with fertility; even Diana, governing menstruation, is connected with fertility. Fertility is one aspect of the transfunctional sovereignty-goddess and these Roman goddesses were, therefore, actually viewed as various forms of the sovereignty-goddess. The presence at some sites of statuettes of Minerva<sup>821</sup>, who is not considered as concerned with fertility, along with images of fertility deities is not an anomaly and neither is her mention in inscriptions<sup>822</sup>. It has been demonstrated that Minerva was probably equated with the Gallic equivalent of the Irish goddess

Brigit<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Brigit, and therefore the Gallic “Minerva”, was a form of the transfunctional goddess concerned with sovereignty and all its aspects. Therefore, the presence of Roman or Oriental goddesses, although an indication of acculturation, is not evidence of acceptance of Roman deities, but rather of the continued worship of the sovereignty-goddess.

### Sucellus/Dispater

There are 230 representations of this deity in Gaul and, although he is found more rarely in these provinces<sup>823</sup>, he is represented in Aquitania, as on the relief from Gannat<sup>824</sup> (**Fig.3.47**)<sup>825</sup>, and Belgic Gaul<sup>826</sup>, as on the relief from *Solicia* [Soulosse]<sup>827</sup> (**Fig.3.48**)<sup>828</sup>. He was worshipped as early as the 1st century CE. A relief<sup>829</sup> found in 1854 in the Mediomatrici tribal territory supplies the image of this god and two reliefs and two inscriptions<sup>830</sup> provide his name and consort<sup>831</sup>. His Gallic name, beard and attire indicate that he is a Gallic deity<sup>832</sup>.



**Fig.3.47**

Relief of Sucellus from Gannat

His attributes were, most frequently, a long-handled mallet<sup>833</sup>, a vase called an *olla*<sup>834</sup>, a sign of abundance, and a dog<sup>835</sup>. Birkhan<sup>836</sup> thinks that the mallet is a tool of a mint master, tub-maker or smith, while Bober<sup>837</sup> states that Sucellus is a divinity of the Underworld. For Linckenheld certain ideas are recognisable in the attributes: fertility; death and the Underworld; and the home. The mallet signifies chthonic fertility, indicating that the god is linked to arboreal vegetation, and is symbolic of death<sup>838</sup>, the latter because of the similarity with the Charon-like figure, who dispatches fallen gladiators with a hammer,<sup>839</sup> and a hammer is used to kill sacrificial animals<sup>840</sup>. However, contrary to this is the story in which Valeria Luperca tapped sick Romans lightly on the head, making them well again (**Plut.Parallela Graec. Rom.XXXV**). This indicates a duality about the hammer, bringing of life and inflicting death. Although Linckenheld merely says that the meaning of the *olla* is so well known in private cults that “il est inutile d’y insister ici”<sup>841</sup>, the attribute seems to represent prosperity and, therefore, fertility; according to Linckenheld<sup>842</sup>, it proves that Sucellus is a domestic deity. Linckenheld<sup>843</sup> also claims that the dog indicates a

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Pages 70-71.

deity concerned with the Underworld, because the dog has a role in the Underworld, which “il n’est pas besoin d’insister”; Linckenheld<sup>844</sup> also says that the dog proves that Sucellus is concerned with fertility<sup>845</sup> and even says that the presence of a dog with the Mother-goddesses proves their fertility and funerary connections and that “je n’ai pas besoin de citer des exemples”. But this is based on the assumption that the dog is connected to the Underworld and the dog can symbolise friendship or hunting or, as has been seen<sup>xxxiv</sup>, healing. Linckenheld does not mention it, but the dog, the earliest domestic animal and one customarily kept to guard the home, may indicate a domestic deity. Finally, for Linckenheld<sup>846</sup>, the presence of Nantosuelta proves Sucellus’ connection with all three functions. Two proposals have been made regarding Sucellus, both based on his mallet. (**Plut.** *Parallela Graec.Rom.XXXV*).



**Fig.3.48**  
Relief of Sucellus  
from  
*Solicia* [Soulosse]

The first is that Sucellus can be identified with the Gallic deity Caesar calls Dispater<sup>847</sup>; the “good” in his name, therefore, refers to the beneficial infliction of death to relieve suffering or, in view of the apparent dual ability of the hammer, to the bringing of health. The alternate argument is that the god with a mallet, called Sucellus in the north, is not the god Caesar calls Dispater, but is the deity known in the Lower Rhine as Silvanus<sup>848</sup>, although images of Silvanus have been found in sanctuaries in the north<sup>849</sup>. A basic flaw with both these arguments is that they are based on the assumption that the depiction of a deity was uniform over the whole of Gaul, with a difference in image indicating a difference in identity; in view of the large number of tribes in Belgic Gaul alone, this is untenable. Linckenheld accepts Reinach’s view that Sucellus is the deity whom Caesar calls Dispater and explains

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Page 88.

the different images<sup>850</sup>. Birkhan<sup>851</sup> says that the connection of Sucellus with death and wealth is supported by his identification with Pluto.

It has also been suggested that Sucellus was the Gallic equivalent of the Irish deity the Dagda<sup>852</sup>, who possessed a club which could heal with one end and kill with the other, the mallet becoming a club presumably in the transfer from Gaul to Ireland; here the “good” refers to the idea that his attribute, like the club of the Dagda, could revive as well as hurt. The equivalence is strengthened by the fact that, just as the Dagda had a consort who was a river goddess, Boand, Sucellus had Nantosuelta and by the fact that the hammer can be seen as a healing instrument as well as a killing one and this is reflected in the idea of the Dagda’s club. Sterckx suggests that the attributes of the Dagda, the cauldron and club, are found in the images of Sucellus<sup>853</sup> and, since the mallet contains the symbolism of thunder, Sucellus is connected with the Gallic Jupiter of the Jupiter columns and with Taranis<sup>854</sup>. Birkhan<sup>855</sup> proposes the Dagda as the Irish Dispater. This study proposes that Sucellus was an indigenous deity, whose worship survived the Roman Conquest, can be identified as Caesar’s Dispater and is the Gallic origin of not only the Dagda, but also Donn. He is connected to the Dagda by having a striking implement, his connection with fertility and having a river goddess as a consort; he is connected to Donn by bringing death and by being the ancestor god. It is suggested that Sucellus can be identified with Dispater and that, in the spread of the Celts to Ireland, Dispater split into two deities, the death and ancestor functions becoming Donn and the fertility function and the implement passing to the Dagda<sup>856</sup>.

### **Other indigenous deities**

The coupling of the major deities, Mercury<sup>857</sup>, Mars<sup>858</sup>, Apollo<sup>859</sup> and Jupiter<sup>860</sup>, with the names of Gallic gods, the most noticeable point about Gallo-Roman religion, has been interpreted to mean that the Gauls worshipped Roman gods, equating them with their own, resulting in a deity who was essentially a Roman deity with a slight Gallic connection indicated by the epithet and has been regarded as evidence for the supremacy of the Roman religion and the abandonment of the Gallic. An examination of Gallo-Roman religion reveals that many Gallic deities are mentioned in inscriptions linked as epithets to only a few Roman deities, which are usually, of all the possible Roman deities, the first on Caesar’s list of alleged Gallic deities (*Caes.B.G.VI.17.1-2*). For Derks this limited variety indicates a specific selection due to a Gallic perception of the Roman pantheon<sup>861</sup> and indigenous ideas may even be hidden behind dedications to a deity with a Roman name<sup>862</sup>.

Roman deities with Gallic deities as epithets:

Mercury

*Belgic Gaul*

Cosumias<sup>863</sup>;  
Channo<sup>864</sup>;  
Cissonius<sup>865</sup>;  
Clavariatis<sup>866</sup>;  
Iovantucarus<sup>867</sup>;  
Mercialis<sup>868</sup>;  
Vassocaletis<sup>869</sup>;  
Visucius<sup>870</sup>;  
Vosegus<sup>871</sup>.

*Aquitania*

Arvernus<sup>872</sup>;  
Adsmerius<sup>873</sup>;  
Atsmerius<sup>874</sup>;  
Dumias<sup>875</sup>;  
Dumiatis<sup>876</sup>;  
Viducus<sup>877</sup>;  
Visucius<sup>878</sup>.

Mars

*Belgic Gaul*

Camulos<sup>879</sup>;  
Cnabetius<sup>880</sup>;  
Intarabus<sup>881</sup>;  
Iovantucarus<sup>882</sup>;  
Lenus<sup>883</sup>;  
Smertrius<sup>884</sup>;  
Vegnius<sup>885</sup>.

*Aquitania*

Arixo<sup>886</sup>;  
Cososus<sup>887</sup>;  
Dahus<sup>888</sup>;  
Leherenn<sup>889</sup>;  
Lelhunnus<sup>890</sup>;  
Mogetius<sup>891</sup>;  
Rigisamus<sup>892</sup>;

Randosatus<sup>893</sup>;

Vorocius<sup>894</sup>.

Apollo

*Belgic Gaul*

Grannus<sup>895</sup>

*Aquitania*

Atepomarus<sup>896</sup>;

Matuix<sup>897</sup>;

Cobledulitavus<sup>898</sup>.

Jupiter

*Aquitania*

Beissirisse<sup>899</sup>.

Minerva

*Aquitania*

Belisama<sup>900</sup>

The idea that acting as an epithet indicated the abandonment of Gallic religion is, however, incorrect. The Gallic deities identified from epithets were actually those being granted official state acceptance and consecration, which allowed them to be placed on the same rank as Roman cults<sup>901</sup>. The combination of two deities shows, not the supremacy of the Roman religion, but the promotion of an indigenous cult. Camulus was the principal deity and protector of the Remi<sup>902</sup>. But at *Vetera* [Xanten], in *Lower Germany*, a temple was dedicated to Mars Camulus<sup>903</sup> by Gauls from Remi, who were “sans doute déjà citoyens romains”<sup>904</sup>. This shows that epithets were used, not by Gauls abandoning their identity, but by Gallic Roman citizens, who, to demonstrate their Roman-ness, applied, not Gallic deities to newly worshipped Roman ones, but Roman ones to the Gallic deities whom they were actually worshipping. Certainly, in the Convenae tribal territory, there was no possibility of abandoning the ancestral deities<sup>905</sup>. Even though *Lugdunum Covenarum* [Saint Bertrand des Comminges] was a Roman colony, the cult of Jupiter was beside a cult vowed to an indigenous deity<sup>906</sup> and 50% of the votive inscriptions made by Roman citizens were to indigenous deities<sup>907</sup>.

Far from indicating Roman essence, the epithets meant that the gods were Gallic with only Roman prefixes, as Hatt<sup>908</sup> stated. Expanding on the analogy used by Vendryes<sup>909</sup>, it is proposed that, just as a Gaul who acquired Roman citizenship took two Roman names with his original name as a *cognomen*, but remained a Gaul,

descended from Gauls and the same person in essence, in the same way the various Gallic deities, “traités comme de simple mortels”, would be given the names of Roman gods, with the Gallic name, like the mortal’s *cognomen*.

However, in many inscriptions, indigenous deities are mentioned on their own:

#### Belgic Gaul

Caprio<sup>910</sup>; Epona<sup>911</sup>; Grannus<sup>912</sup>; Icovellauna<sup>913</sup>; Intarabus<sup>914</sup>; Iovantucarus<sup>915</sup>; Nantosuelta<sup>916</sup>; Ritona<sup>917</sup>; Siquates<sup>918</sup>; Sucellus<sup>919</sup>; Sunuxsal<sup>920</sup>; Virathethi<sup>921</sup>; Visucius<sup>922</sup>.

#### Aquitania

Abellio<sup>923</sup>; Aberris<sup>924</sup>; Aereda<sup>925</sup>; Ageio<sup>926</sup>; Alardos<sup>927</sup>; Alardost<sup>928</sup>; Ande<sup>929</sup>; Arard<sup>930</sup>; Arixo<sup>931</sup>; Artahe<sup>932</sup>; Astoilun<sup>933</sup>.  
Baicorix<sup>934</sup>; Boriennus<sup>935</sup>.  
Carpentus<sup>936</sup>.  
Eberrius<sup>937</sup>; Elvontios<sup>938</sup>; Eriappe<sup>939</sup>; Etnosus<sup>940</sup>.  
Herauscorritsehe<sup>941</sup>.  
Ibosus<sup>942</sup>; Idiatte<sup>943</sup>; Ilumber<sup>944</sup>; Ilunn<sup>945</sup>.  
Leherenn<sup>946</sup>.  
Mavida<sup>947</sup>.  
Naga<sup>948</sup>; Nerius<sup>949</sup>.  
Onuava<sup>950</sup>.  
Sirona<sup>951</sup>; Socona<sup>952</sup>; Solimara<sup>953</sup>; Stanna<sup>954</sup>; Sutugius<sup>955</sup>.  
Telon<sup>956</sup>.  
Verpantus<sup>957</sup>.

There are others whose tribal territory cannot be identified:

Adagrius<sup>958</sup>; Adido<sup>959</sup>; Aherbelste<sup>960</sup>; Arpenin<sup>961</sup>; Axonies<sup>962</sup>.  
Baeserte<sup>963</sup>; Baiase<sup>964</sup>; Baiosi<sup>965</sup>; Basceiandossus<sup>966</sup>; Belgo<sup>967</sup>; Boccus Harauso<sup>968</sup>.  
Carrenius<sup>969</sup>.  
Edelat<sup>970</sup>; Ele<sup>971</sup>; Erditse<sup>972</sup>; Erge<sup>973</sup>.  
Gar<sup>974</sup>.  
Ilixo<sup>975</sup>; Ilurberrixo<sup>976</sup>; Iluro<sup>977</sup>; Iscittus<sup>978</sup>.  
Lahe<sup>979</sup>.  
Stoiocus<sup>980</sup>.  
Xuban<sup>981</sup>.

Some Gallic deities, Caprio<sup>982</sup>, Epona<sup>983</sup>, Icovellauna<sup>984</sup>, Intarabus<sup>985</sup>, Ritona<sup>986</sup> and Virathethi<sup>987</sup>, were associated with the Divine House [of Augustus], in their own and not combined with any Roman deity, as late as the 2nd century CE (Epona and Intarabus and possibly Icovellauna) and even the 3rd (Ritona and Virathethi)<sup>988</sup>. Other Gallic deities, Adacrius<sup>989</sup>, Damona Matuberginnis<sup>990</sup>, Nerius<sup>991</sup>, Ritona<sup>992</sup>, Romugilios<sup>993</sup>, Socona<sup>994</sup>, Telonis<sup>995</sup>, are associated with the cult of the *Numen Augusti*, again in their own right and not combined with any other Roman deity, between 50 and 200 CE (Telonis), in the 2nd century CE (Ritona and Nerius) and as late as the 3rd (Damona Matuberginnis)<sup>996</sup>. These facts both indicate that indigenous deities were still worshipped long after it is alleged that Gallic religion had been abandoned and shows that they were considered to be worthy of the honour of association with the Divine House or the *Numen Augusti*.

The deities associated with the cult of Augustus are essentially indigenous ones and such dedications suggest an early date for this association<sup>997</sup>; van Andringa posits that the association was deliberate to promote acceptance into the civic pantheon later of new deities by their being associated with the veneration of Augustus<sup>998</sup> and that, in the same way, honours to the Emperor and to the Gallic deities integrated the cult of the emperor into the framework of rituals to these deities. If this was the case, it shows that the indigenous deities were not only still worshipped, but also considered an important factor in the promotion both of the cult of Augustus and the establishment of an official pantheon for each tribal territory. It was not a policy of abandonment by the Gauls, but of integration and acceptance by the Roman civic authorities. The Altbachtal precinct in *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves] was organised at the same time as the town and was progressively filled with the principal Treveran deities<sup>999</sup>. The cults of indigenous patron deities of the *pagi* were included in the central cults and integrated with the main deities of the tribal territory<sup>1000</sup>; the indigenous deities were enrolled into a territorial organisation<sup>1001</sup>.

These facts demonstrate that Gallic deities were still worshipped and were still the object of dedications after the Roman Conquest and the alleged replacement of the Gallic religion by the Roman. It seems that the Gauls felt that, for appearance, they had to have a Roman deity on the dedication and so the most common gods used were those known to be concerned with the three important things: money; protection; and health. Like the Gauls themselves, the indigenous deities adapted because of the new political situation<sup>1002</sup>; they were not abandoned nor was the Roman religion considered as better.

## Chapter Four

### **Gallic Sanctuaries, especially in Picardy**

An accepted belief about the Gauls was that they had no formal, artificial sanctuaries<sup>1</sup>, but instead used springs or groves as cult places of worship<sup>1</sup>. This was due to an unquestioning reliance on literary sources and, until the excavations of Gournay-sur-Aronde, the apparent absence of archaeological evidence for such buildings. However, due to the work of Brunaux and others at Gournay-sur-Aronde and other sites, this belief is no longer held. It can now be seen that the Gauls, indeed Celts in general, worshipped not just in artificial structures, but in sanctuaries, which have similar design and common characteristics. As Ross states<sup>2</sup>, the archaeological evidence indicates that the Celts not only did not worship only in sacred groves, but actually built enclosures, temples and other structures for the performance of their religious rituals. At Gournay-sur-Aronde the outline of an enclosure has been found contemporaneous with a pit dating to the 4th century BC<sup>3</sup>, showing that the use of such sanctuaries was not the result of Roman acculturation.

#### **Characteristics**

Gallic sanctuaries all display certain characteristics<sup>4</sup>, even those in the 2nd and 1st centuries, which, according to Méniel<sup>5</sup>, point to a common background. Brunaux<sup>6</sup> states that the excavated Gallic sanctuaries correspond exactly to the description given by Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.27.4**). Bertin<sup>7</sup> sets out the following: the *cellae* are more rectangular than square; although the ambulatory, with the enclosure, is a prime element of the Celtic sanctuary, the ambulatory gallery is absent in some cases; and an approximately eastward orientation, actually oscillating between east and north, most often facing east-north-east, the direction of the rising sun at the winter solstice. Brunaux<sup>8</sup>, however, relying on Celtic sanctuaries from both inside and outside the Roman Empire<sup>ii</sup>, says that the essential elements of a Gallic sanctuary are an enclosure, an entrance, pits, deposits and a temple. Méniel<sup>9</sup> says that they are merely demarcated by a small enclosure, usually with a palisade, containing pits. As regards orientation, even the most primitive, possibly pre-Celtic sanctuaries of the Leuci are most often orientated to the azimuth of the east of the summer solstice<sup>10</sup>. This is accepted by Cabuy, Lambot and Webster<sup>11</sup>, although, possibly due to a presupposition regarding the Celts, the idea that these elements are typical characteristics of a purely Celtic sanctuary and, therefore, that their presence does

---

<sup>i</sup> See pages CLXV-CLXXVIII.

<sup>ii</sup> See pages 111-128 (Inside) and 128-130 (Outside).

not need to be explained by any foreign influence does not seem to be fully accepted. Despite the fact that a new sacred enclosure in the Celtic site of the Acropolis of Zavist displays all the attributes of a Celtic sacred space, Drda, Motykova and Rybova<sup>12</sup> interpret it as the manifestation of a Mediterranean element. Brunaux<sup>13</sup> points out that none of the examples have preserved every characteristic, but that all of the sanctuaries possess most of them and that in each sanctuary the various elements are preserved to varying degrees. The principal sources of information are the Belgic<sup>14</sup> sanctuaries<sup>15</sup>. The characteristics of Gallic sites are described in relation to the example of Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>16</sup>, which has all the features considered as essential for a Gallic sanctuary<sup>17</sup>, because other cult sites, Morvillers-Saint-Saturnin, Estrées-Saint-Denis and Saint-Maur-en-Chaussée, display the same characteristics<sup>18</sup>.

The first two characteristics were on the very limit of the sanctuary.

### **The enclosure**

The first element is the enclosure, which Bertin and Venclova<sup>19</sup> call one of the principal characteristics. The normal type of sanctuary had an enclosure<sup>20</sup>. This was indispensable and the most important element<sup>21</sup>, because it was this, which not only demarcated the sacred area, but also separated the sacred from the secular and prevented the former from being tainted by the latter<sup>22</sup>. The biggest examples have sides measuring about fifty metres<sup>23</sup>. Some sacred spaces, such as pools, springs, lakes and grottoes, did not have artificial delimitations<sup>24</sup>, but even these are a form of natural delimitation and may also be viewed as enclosures. The sacred area is above all the property of the deity who resides in the sanctuary either underground or in the altar pit or in the temple or in the sacred wood<sup>25</sup>. This area was usually no more than a large open space, about 25 ares<sup>26</sup>, enclosed by a ditch and sometimes a palisade<sup>27</sup>; in the period of the Early La Tène<sup>28</sup> and for many sanctuaries<sup>29</sup>, the enclosure was the only indication of the existence of a sanctuary. On some sites the ditch was a simple trench, while on others it had monumental proportions; its importance lay not its ability to be a good defence, but in its undeniable symbolic character<sup>30</sup>. Webster<sup>31</sup> says that weapon deposits are associated more with the perimeter ditch than with the internal buildings and concludes that “in the Celtic world, an enclosure ditch was a primary focus of cult activity”; but such associations with the perimeter ditch will almost inevitably be the result in the case of improved land. Brunaux<sup>32</sup> says “le fossé de clôture, plus qu’une structure cultuelle proprement dite, n’est qu’une limite, une marge autour de l’espace sacré”. The enclosure was both the simplest and the only permanent element and the one present in almost every Indo-European religion<sup>33</sup>.

The Vedic Hindus would establish a new sacred area for the performance of each sacrifice<sup>34</sup>, the Greek religion had the *temenos* and the Romans had the *templum*<sup>35</sup>. The two words *temenos* and *templum* are cognates derived from the same root<sup>36</sup> meaning “to cut”, indicating that they mean nothing more than “cut-off area”<sup>37</sup>; only later did *templum* come to refer to a building consecrated to a deity. Having boundaries of a wall, a fence or just a ditch, such a space is archaeologically recoverable<sup>38</sup>. Brunaux says that the marked enclosure is the exact equivalent of the Greek term *temenos* as used by Greek authors and is a temple in the etymological sense of the term<sup>39</sup> and states that the surface area of the sacred space, or *temenos*, of Gournay-sur-Aronde is comparable to that of the *temenoi* of the Aphaion of Aegina, the Temple of Delos, the Athenaion of Larisa and the Artemision of Sparta<sup>40</sup>. Unlike the Vedic Hindus, who considered the quadrangular enclosure as a temporary affair<sup>41</sup>, the sacred area being separate and having such a status only for the length of the sacrifice or sacred act, the Greeks, Romans and, according to Brunaux, the Celts considered the enclosure and sanctuary permanent<sup>42</sup>. It can be seen that the enclosure was usually quadrangular<sup>43</sup> and Brunaux<sup>44</sup> suggests that the reason for this is astronomical considerations; the orientation of the main entrance to an easterly direction and each of the sides to face one of the cardinal points enables the very layout of the site to support the liturgical calendar by focusing on one of the main points, solstice or equinox, of the solar cycle. Even in those instances where the enclosure was oval or circular, the building was still quadrangular and sometimes square. Birkhan<sup>45</sup> considers the quadrangular enclosed space or *temenos* as an alternative to the grove.

However, Brunaux<sup>46</sup> states that an enclosure composed only of a ditch was usually insufficient and suggests as reasons for the addition of a palisade and the lining of the ditch with wooden boards that religious ritual requires architecture and sometimes works through revelation and that a tall palisade would satisfy the former and, by concealing the cult activities, supply the latter. Méniel<sup>47</sup> seems to follow this idea. The erection of a wooden wall surrounding the sacred space was a major stage, an act of foundation, in the creation of the sanctuary and the sacred space became both separated and masked so that, from that point on, the sanctuary divided the people into two categories, those who enter the enclosure and were initiated and those who remain outside; by preventing many from seeing the activities, the palisade would create a hierarchy, of attendees as opposed to non-attendees, and so increase the status and influence of those permitted within the enclosure<sup>48</sup>. Brunaux<sup>49</sup> estimates that the maximum which the enclosures could contain was some dozens of

individuals. Finally, an enclosure composed of only a ditch would last not long, particularly in the temperate climate of Gaul, without reinforcement of some kind<sup>50</sup>.

However, Brunaux<sup>51</sup> speculates that the palisade, posts, gates and lintel were well carved and painted and warns that one should not imagine an organised, stable Gallic sanctuary to retain the appearance of simple wood and earth. Indeed, Brunaux<sup>52</sup> believes that Gallic sanctuaries would have been in no way inferior to Graeco-Roman temples and the only differences between the two types would have been in the building materials and the type of decoration.

### **The entrance**

The second element is the entrance. It was the point at which the sacred area came into contact with the ordinary, unclean secular world, the point at which the boundary around the sacred area, and therefore the holiness of the area, was weakest and it acted as a means of communication between the two worlds and states, one of the most important functions in a sanctuary<sup>53</sup>. The entrance to the enclosure on all observed cult sites shows a more or less complex arrangement, ranging from a simple pair of post-holes, which disclose a gate, to large remains left by a building, such as a porch<sup>54</sup>, which Brunaux<sup>55</sup> calls one of the most important architectural elements. A porch above the gate, the suspension of human skulls from the portico and the presence of a heap of skulls and weapons in the ditch on either side of the entry point all underlined the significance of the entrance<sup>56</sup>. As a result the entrance can be considered as separate and autonomous from the enclosure<sup>57</sup>. The function of the entrance dictated its design and the entrance might change with the sanctuary<sup>58</sup>. Brunaux cites<sup>59</sup> the sanctuary at Gournay-sur-Aronde as an example of this. When the enclosure was a single ditch, the entrance was merely a break in the ditch. When the ditch was remodelled, the entrance had a pit dug in front purely to require it to be crossed by a footbridge. When the palisade was built, the entrance acquired a gate.

### **The centre**

Just as the enclosure might be considered as the least sacred, since it came into closest contact with the secular, the centre, the furthest point from the secular, was the most sacred and the point where the holiest activity, the most important, took place<sup>60</sup>. The centre, determined geometrically with reference to the enclosure, was marked, by a post for example<sup>61</sup>. But it was not just the centre on a two-dimensional plane; a third, astronomical, dimension was created by the addition of posts around the centre spot; this astronomical dimension would be reinforced by the posts being

erected at the four cardinal points of the compass<sup>62</sup>. Brunaux<sup>63</sup> suggests that the extreme holiness of the spot may explain the Celtic rite of circumambulation, although he does not explain how. Perhaps he means that it arose as a compromise between participating in a cult and keeping the centre holy, the zone of circumambulation being the nearest the participants in a rite could approach.

The following two characteristics were usually at the centre of the sanctuary.

### **Pits**

At the centre of Gallic sanctuaries there are pits, a main pit surrounded in a circle by several, generally nine, other pits, marking an area of about 20 to 25 m<sup>2</sup>; they range from 1m to 5m in width and 1m to 3m in depth and, while often circular or oval, they may be rectangular or even without any definable shape<sup>64</sup>. The premier function of the main central pit was to establish communication between the people and their deity, which was done by killing a victim<sup>65</sup> and the pits were the receptacle into which the carcass of the sacrificed animal was left to decompose<sup>66</sup>. The religious concept on which this procedure was based is not clear, other than that it was chthonic<sup>67</sup>, and some suggestions have been raised.

Perhaps, in view of one form of the Celtic afterlife<sup>iii</sup>, each pit may have been considered as forming a route to the World Below<sup>68</sup> or it may have been a means by which the dead may be nourished by the blood of the animal<sup>69</sup>. If this were the case, the concept would have been similar to the Etruscan concept of offering the blood of gladiators to the *Manes* and the Greek concept that blood gave intelligence to the Shades of the dead. Brunaux suggests that the pits were possibly resting-places for the deities attending the sacrifice<sup>70</sup>. Or, from a functional point of view, it may have been possible to seal them so that they were merely a sensible place for the decomposing flesh to reside<sup>71</sup> to avoid fouling the sanctuary with unpleasant smells. Whatever the theology behind the practice, the pit was, in effect, a hollow altar<sup>72</sup>. In these sanctuaries this altar-pit, which was probably closed other than at the periods of sacrifice, was the object of a great deal of care; its walls were lined with wood and it was strenuously cleaned out after each victim, so that it was a perfectly pure place which, each time, would have to welcome a new victim<sup>73</sup>. This is very similar to the care shown by the Vedic Indians to their Vedic altar, a hole in the centre of a sacred circle where the deity was supposed to rest to participate in the sacrifice; the hollow altar or *vedi* was carefully recovered at each new sacrifice with several thicknesses of

---

<sup>iii</sup> See page 259.

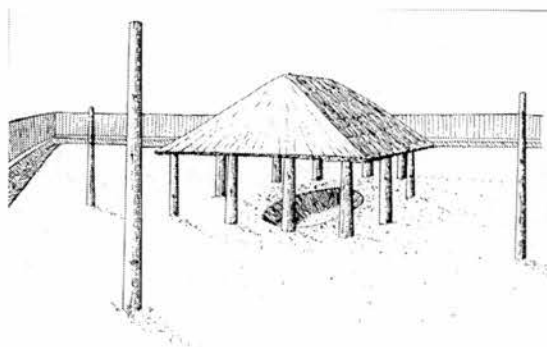
turf as a couch for the deity<sup>74</sup>. Brunaux<sup>75</sup> says that the Belgic Gauls of the 3rd century BCE had preserved the pure and ancient form of the early times of the Indo-European people.

### **The temple**

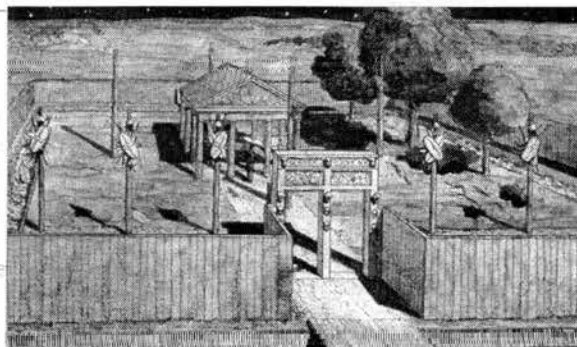
Sanctuaries at the beginning of the La Tène period did not have the wooden structure which may be considered as a temple<sup>76</sup> and the construction of a temple only became necessary for certain reasons. The principal reason was a practical one. The centre point was the part of the sanctuary, which was the holiest, where the most important cult rites were performed and where the participants to the rituals had to be protected from possible unpleasant weather, which was all too common in the temperate region of Gaul<sup>77</sup>. And, of course, as with the erection of the palisade, the temple building satisfied the need in religion for architecture. Brunaux<sup>78</sup> claims that the Celts did not have images of deities and, therefore, the temple need not be considered as a structure for housing them. The Gallic temples tended to be square or an almost square rectangle in plan<sup>79</sup>; constructed out of huge wooden posts set in postholes in the ground, they were obviously intended to be permanent<sup>80</sup>. They were probably decorated, but there is no knowledge about this point other than the fact that weapons were displayed on the outer walls<sup>81</sup>. A temple was usually closed on three sides and the opening, complete or partial, which may also have had a form of *pronaos*, was usually on the east side<sup>82</sup>. Even the primitive sanctuaries among the Leuci face east<sup>83</sup>. The eastward orientation was actually only approximate and oscillated between east and north; the most common was east-north-east, in the direction of sunrise on the winter solstice<sup>84</sup>. Bertin<sup>85</sup> thinks that an ambulatory was one of the primary elements of a Celtic sanctuary, along with the enclosure, and that it had always existed, but in the form of a simple, uncovered path. In later temples, a light, open gallery often encircled the temple<sup>86</sup>.

The first temples were not uniform. While most were square or rectangular, some were oval. Even the rectilinear varied greatly in size from 4m a side to 10m<sup>87</sup>. The square plan became the general shape in Gaul in the 1st century BCE; it may have arisen as a result of ritual, that is the rites needed a cover and a square roof was the simplest to erect<sup>88</sup>, in short, a practical reason. Bertin<sup>89</sup> says that the square plan is that of the Indo-European house, but Iron Age houses in Europe were generally rectangular. Brunaux<sup>90</sup> suggests that the square plan of the temple both should also be seen in relation to the square plan of the enclosure and may have been the result of a combination of practical need, Indo-European astronomical practice and pre-Indo-

European circumambulatory rite. Secondly, a quadrangular enclosure and quadrangular central temple could be aligned to the cardinal points. Unfortunately, since the principal material, wood, rots leaving little, if any, trace, little is known of the gallery, other than it probably existed for circumambulation, or of the roof, such as whether it was four-pitch or two-pitch with two gables like Graeco-Roman temples<sup>91</sup>. Bertin<sup>92</sup> thinks that there is no reason to consider the square form as previous to the circular merely because the majority of pre-Roman sanctuaries and early Gallo-Roman temples are square rather than round and that to ask about the choice of a particular type is a specious problem.

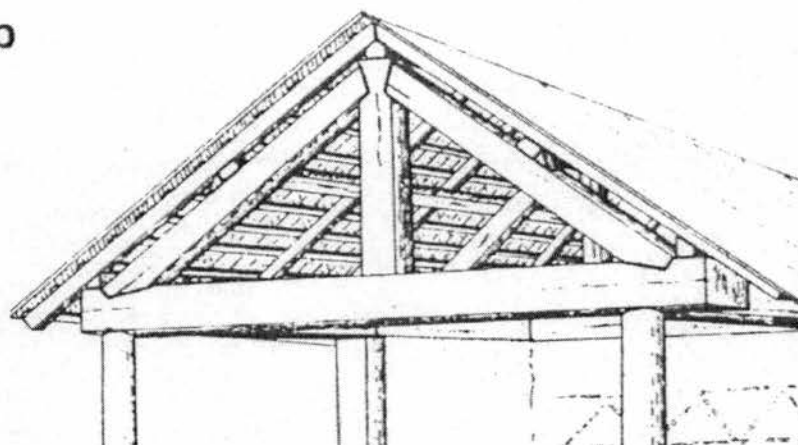


Brunaux's reconstruction of the early phase of the sanctuary at Gournay-sur-Aronde with the central pit (hollow altar) covered by the temple and the ditch and palisade in the background.



Brunaux's reconstruction of the sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde at its height.

b



Brunaux's reconstruction of the temple at Montmartin

## Deposits

An element for which there is both literary and archaeological evidence is the trophy deposit. In literature both Diodorus Siculus (*Diod.* V.27.4) and Caesar (*Caes. B.G.* VI.17.4) describe sanctuaries as depositories for gold and weapons taken as booty<sup>93</sup>. The deposit of weapons is supported by archaeology<sup>94</sup>. It seems that the offerings

and sacrificed animals were carefully placed within the enclosure, either on one of the walls of the sanctuary, as at Gournay-sur-Aronde, or on the cult buildings on the enclosure itself, as at Ribemont-sur-Ancre<sup>95</sup>. Interestingly, this careful positioning of heaps of weaponry at Ribemont-sur-Ancre is reflected, according to Brunaux<sup>96</sup>, exactly by Caesar's statement that the Gauls made their booty into *exstructos cumulos*<sup>97</sup>.

### **The altar**

In contrast to the trophy deposits, one characteristic for which there is no undisputed documentary or archaeological evidence is the raised altar. However, although the existence of altars in the Belgic sanctuaries is not substantiated, it is reasonable to assume that the Celts used altars<sup>98</sup>. The main reason for the assumption is that the altar forms an integral part of any sacrificial rite and not just among the Indo-European peoples; it could be viewed as a universal concept. Brunaux<sup>99</sup> posits that, since the triad of the enclosure or sacred area, the temple and the altar were inseparable for the Greeks and probably true of the Romans, even if the sacred area and the temple were the same, it is reasonable to suppose that the Celts, who had the concepts of enclosures and temple in common, would also use altars. Birkhan<sup>100</sup> suggests that most altars were made of wood; this would explain the lack of archaeological evidence. The internal posts in the building at Acy-Romance—"La Noue Mauroy" correspond to supports for an altar<sup>101</sup>.

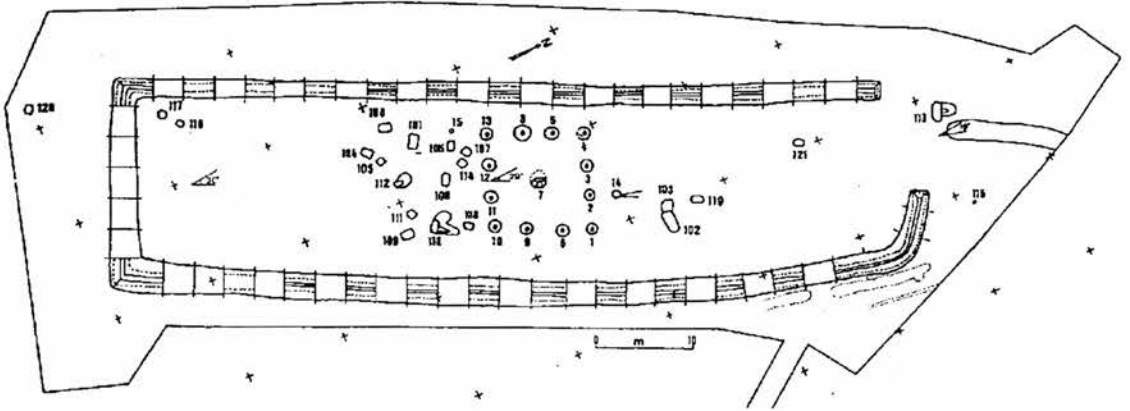
It is possible to establish that the characteristics of a typical pre-Roman Gallic sanctuary were: (1) An **enclosure**, usually **quadrangular**, with (2) an **eastward** facing **entrance** forming a sacred space. The enclosure is demarcated by (3) a **ditch**, which may be combined with (4) a **palisade**. At the geometric centre, usually, there are (5) **pits** and, on the same axis as the entrance, erected over, covering and protecting the pits, (6) a **temple**, square in shape with a gallery<sup>102</sup>. (7) **Deposits**, either of coins or of bones, human or animal, are made in the pits or the ditch. The common ancestry of the lay-out and elements of the sanctuaries of the Vedic Indians, the Celts and the Greeks has been mentioned; the list of characteristics underlines the common ancestry between the Celtic and Greek sanctuary, since all the elements of a Celtic sanctuary can be found in a sanctuary in the Greek world at the end of the archaic epoch<sup>103</sup>.

Site	Dept.	Tribal territory	Enclosure	Eastward-facing entrance	Ditch	Palisade
Acy-Romance- "La Croizette" <sup>104</sup>	Champagne- Ardennes	Remi	√		√	√
Acy-Romance- "La Noue Mauroy" <sup>105</sup>	Champagne- Ardennes	Remi	√ (Trapezoidal)		√	√
Chilly <sup>106</sup>	Somme	Viromandui	√	√	√	√
Estrées-Saint- Denis <sup>107</sup>	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√	√	√
Fesques <sup>108</sup>	Seine- Maritime	Ambiani	√	√	√	√
Gournay-sur- Aronde	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√	√	√
Montmartin <sup>109</sup>	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√	√	√
Morvilliers-Saint- Saturnin <sup>110</sup>	Somme	Bellovaci	√	√	√	√
Mouzon-Flavier	Ardennes			√		
Nanteuil-sur- Aisne <sup>111</sup>	Champagne- Ardennes	Remi	√	√	√	√
Roizy <sup>112</sup>	Ardennes	Remi	√	√	√	√
Saint-Maur-en- Chaussée <sup>113</sup>	Oise	Bellovaci; Bertin <sup>114</sup> places it in the Ambiani	√	√	√	√
Vendeuil- Caply <sup>115</sup>	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√	√	√

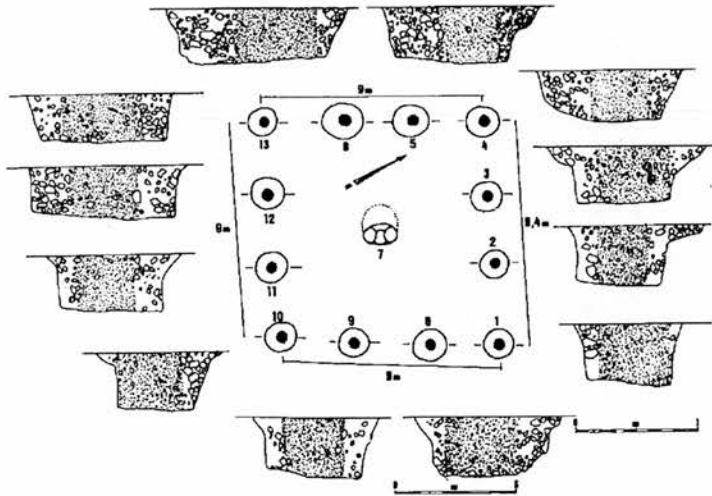
Site	Dept	Tribal territory	Temple	Pits	Deposits	All at the centre	Altar
Acy-Romance- "La Croizette"	Champagne - Ardennes	Remi	√ <sup>116</sup>	√ <sup>117</sup>	√ <sup>118</sup>	√	
Acy-Romance-"La Noue Mauroy"	Champagne - Ardennes	Remi					√ <sup>119</sup>
Chilly	Somme	Viromand ui		√ <sup>120</sup>	√ <sup>121</sup>		
Estrées-Saint- Denis	Oise	Bellovaci	√ <sup>122</sup>	√ <sup>123</sup>	√ <sup>124</sup>	√ <sup>125</sup>	√ <sup>126</sup>
Fesques	Seine- Maritime	Ambiani			√ <sup>127</sup>	√ <sup>128</sup>	
Gournay-sur- Aronde	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√	√		
Montmartin	Oise	Bellovaci	√ <sup>129</sup>	√ <sup>130</sup>	√ <sup>131</sup>		
Morvilliers- Saint-Saturnin	Somme	Bellovaci		√ <sup>132</sup>	√ <sup>133</sup>	√ <sup>134</sup>	
Mouzon- Flavier	Ardennes		√ <sup>135</sup>		√ <sup>136</sup>		
Nanteuil-sur- Aisne	Champagne - Ardennes	Remi	√ <sup>137</sup>	√ <sup>138</sup>	√ <sup>139</sup>		
Roizy	Ardennes	Remi		√ <sup>140</sup>	√ <sup>141</sup>		
Saint-Maur- en-Chaussée	Oise	Bellovaci; Bertin <sup>142</sup> places it in the Ambiani	√ <sup>143</sup>	√ <sup>144</sup>	√ <sup>145</sup>	√ <sup>146</sup>	
Vendeuil- Caply	Oise	Bellovaci	√ <sup>147</sup>	√ <sup>148</sup>	√ <sup>149</sup>		

**Diagrams**

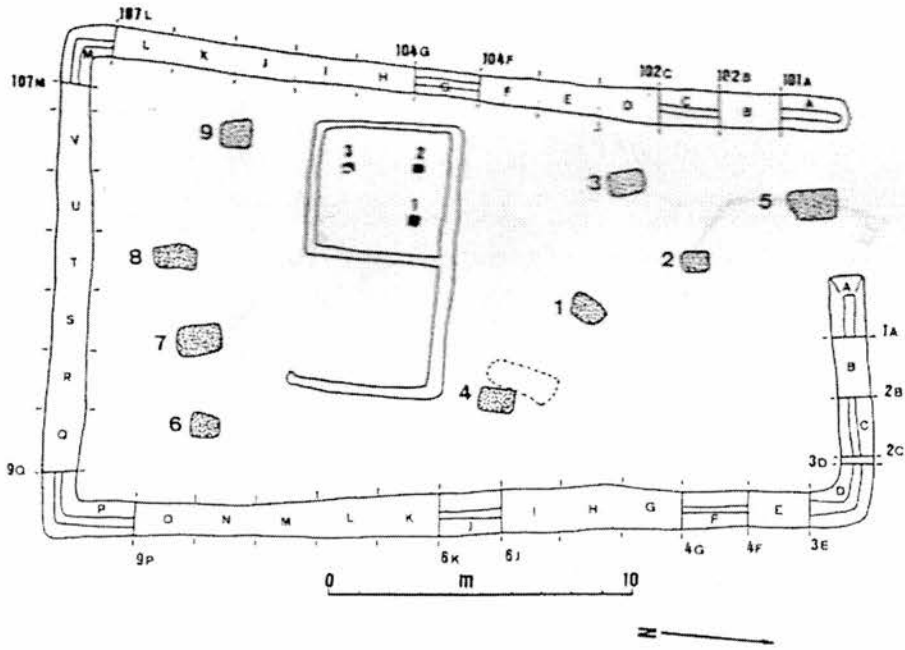
*Acy-Romance-“La Croizette”* (Remi tribal territory)



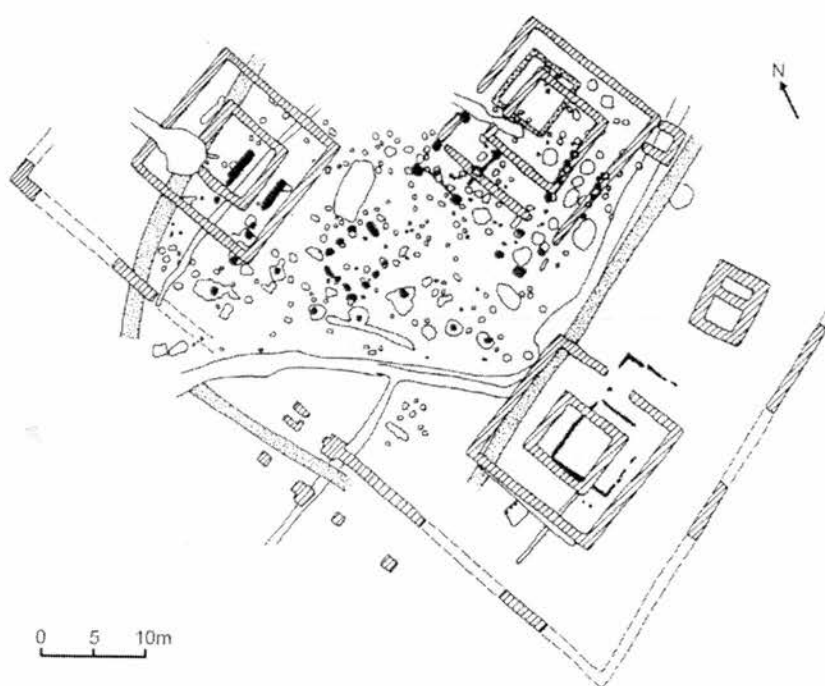
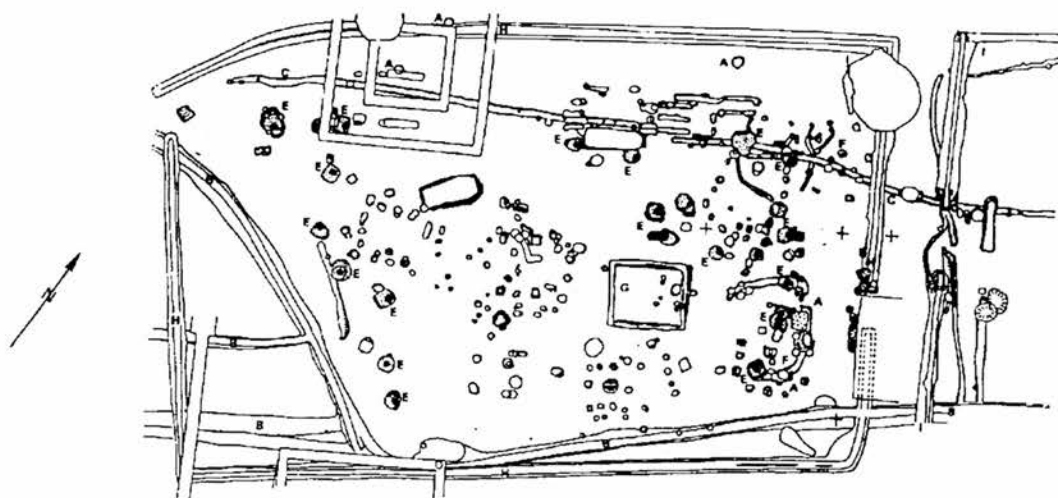
Reconstruction of the cult enclosure, its surrounding ditch and palisade and the temples  
by  
Jean-René Chatillon



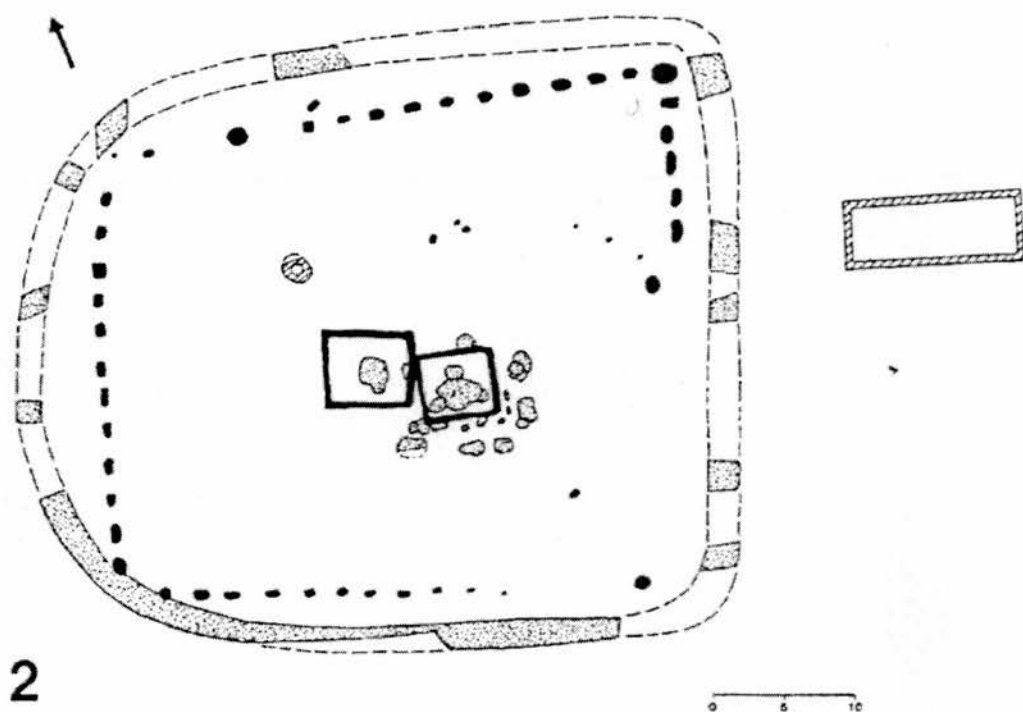
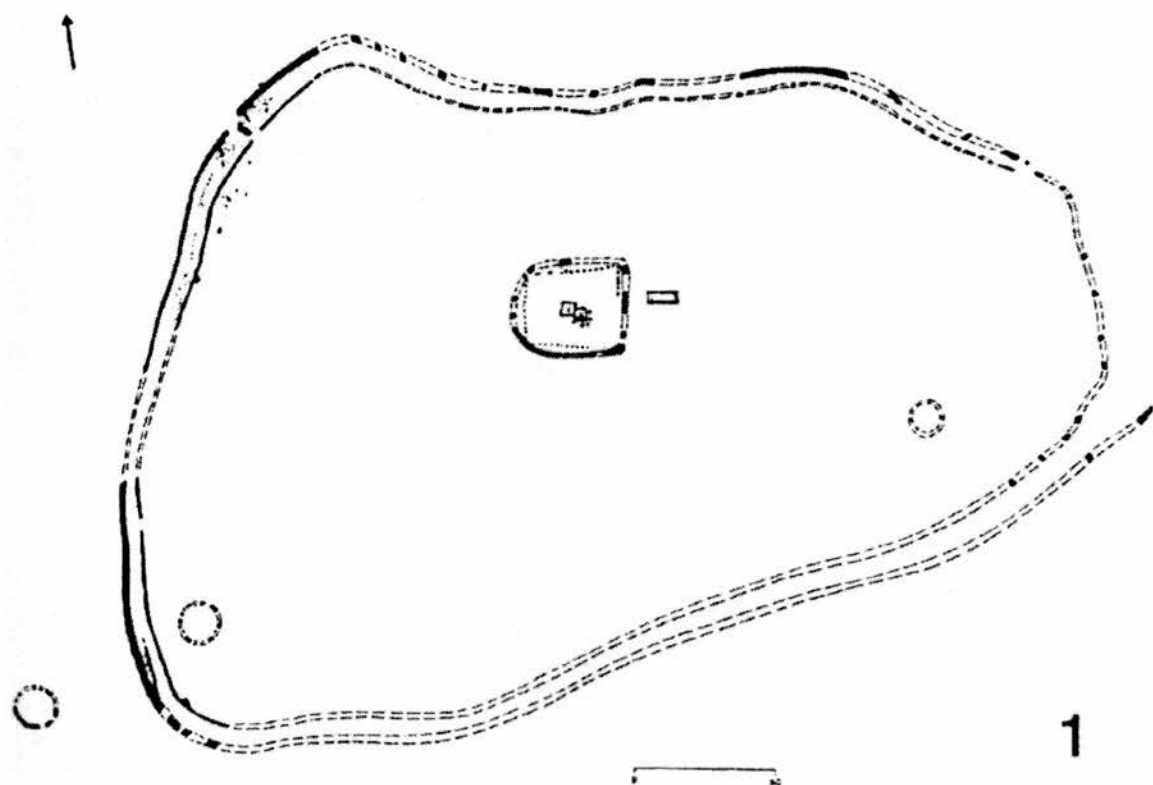
*Acy-Romance-“La Noue Mauroy” (Remi tribal territory)*



*Estrées-Saint-Denis* (Bellovaci tribal territory)



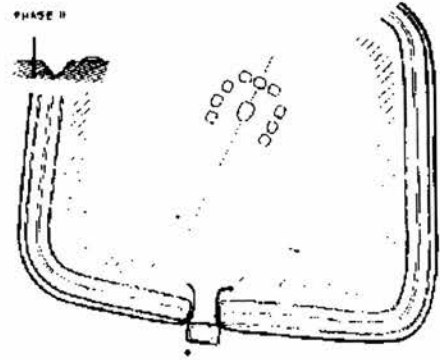
*Fesques* (Ambiani tribal territory)



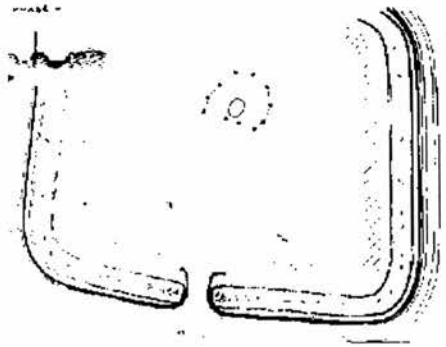
*Gournay-sur-Aronde* (Bellovaci tribal territory)



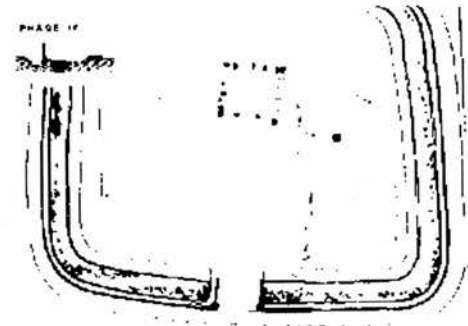
Phase I



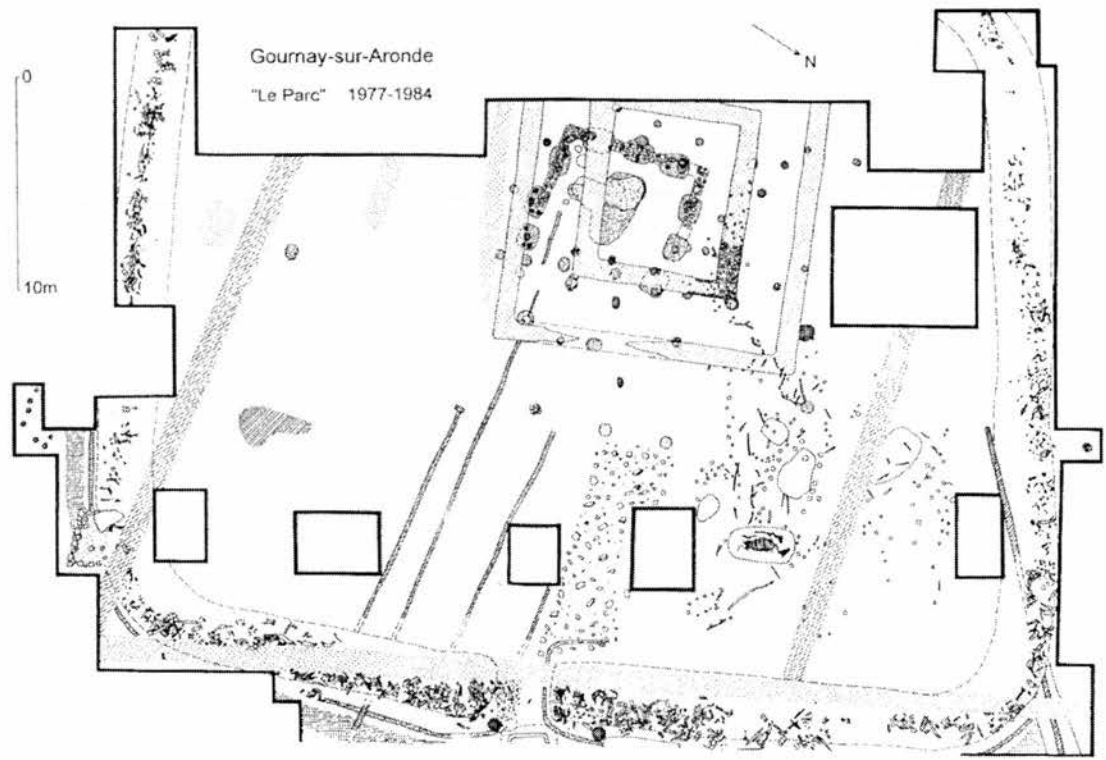
Phase II



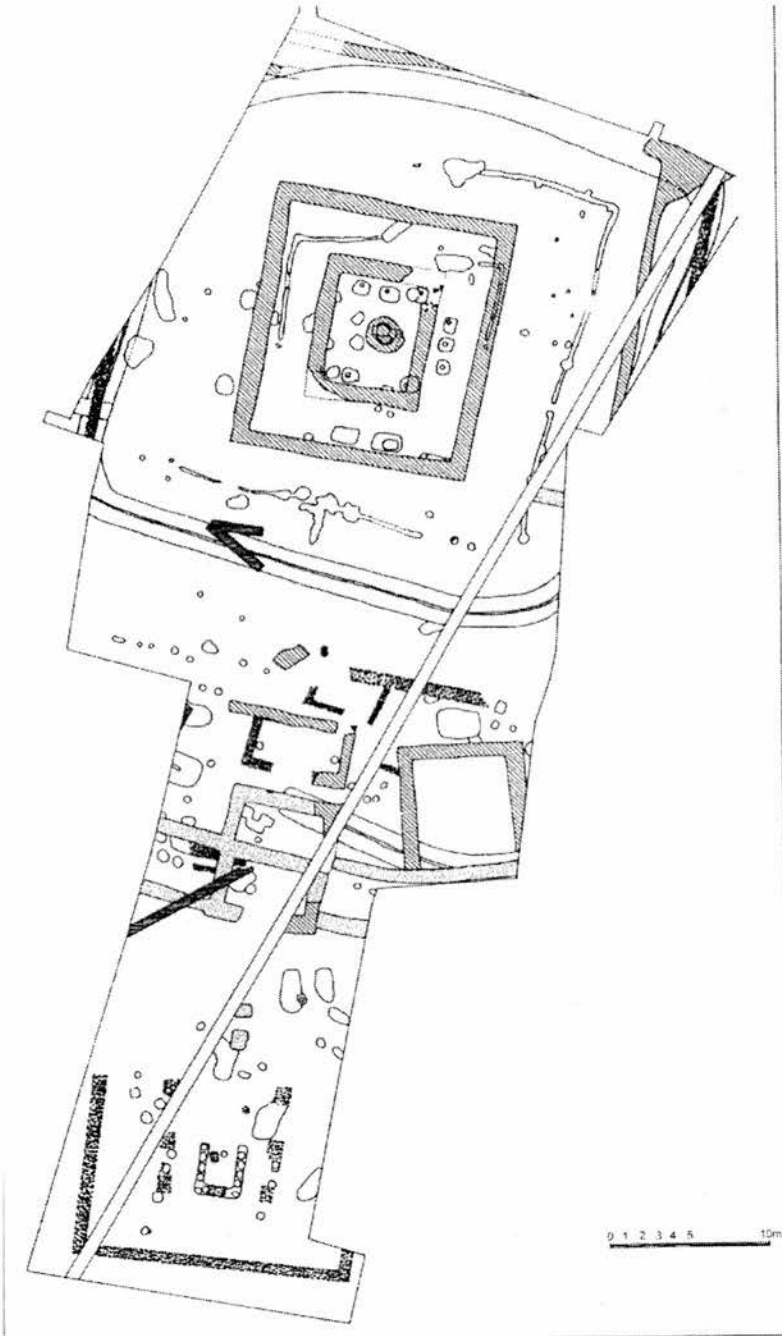
Phase III

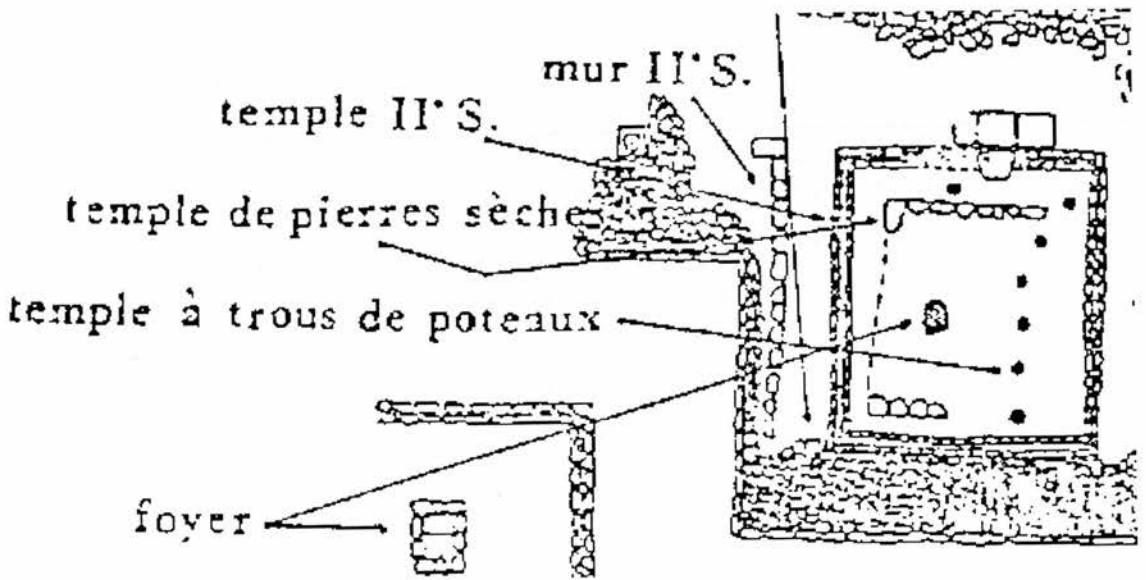
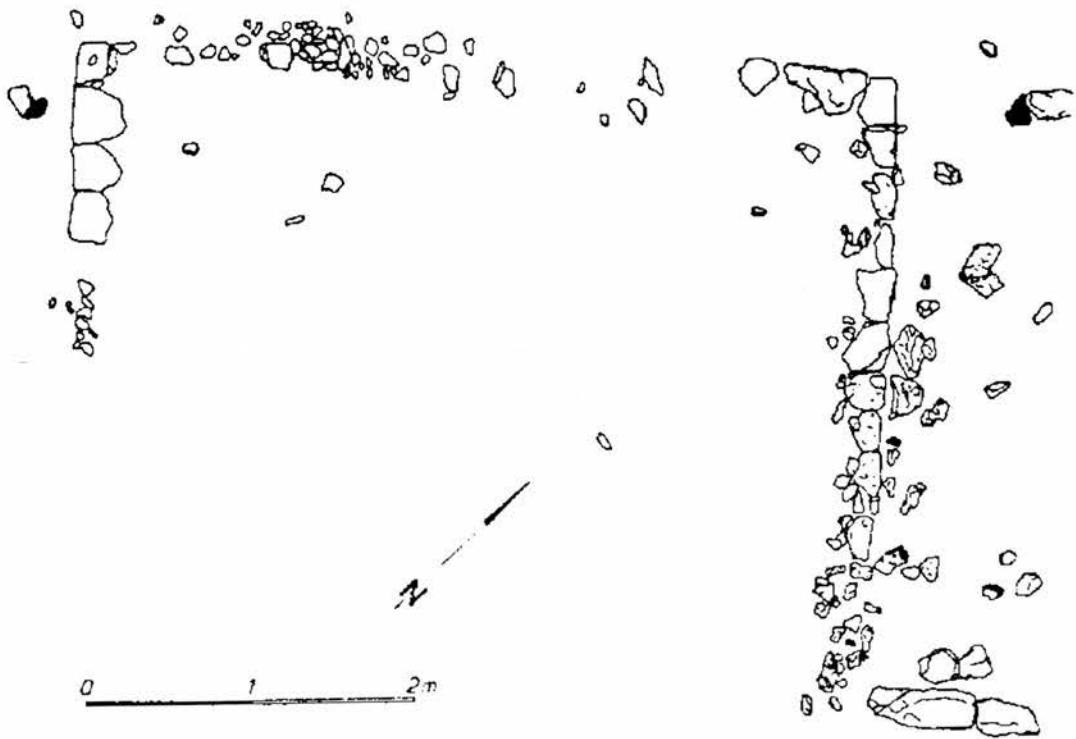


Phase IV

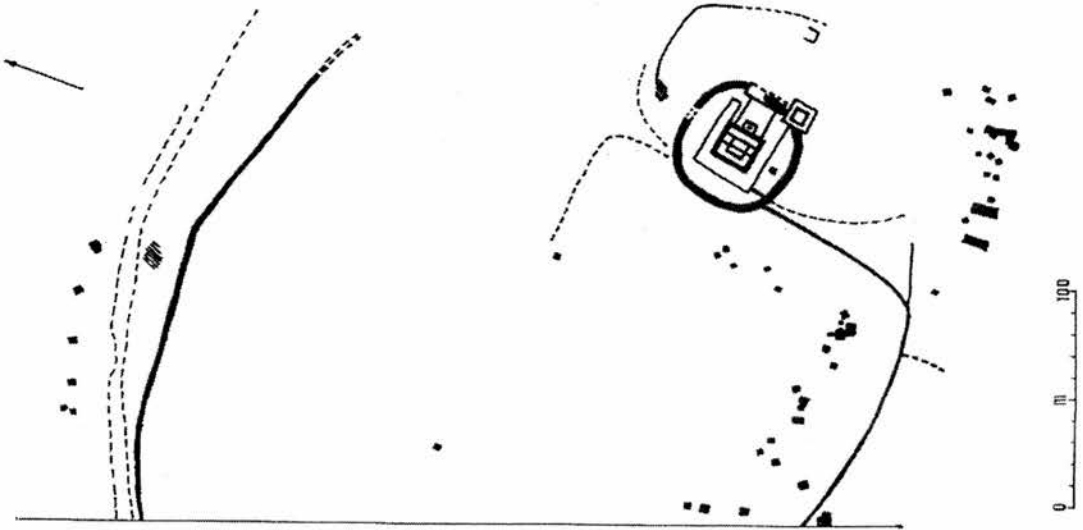


*Montmartin* (Bellovaci tribal territory)

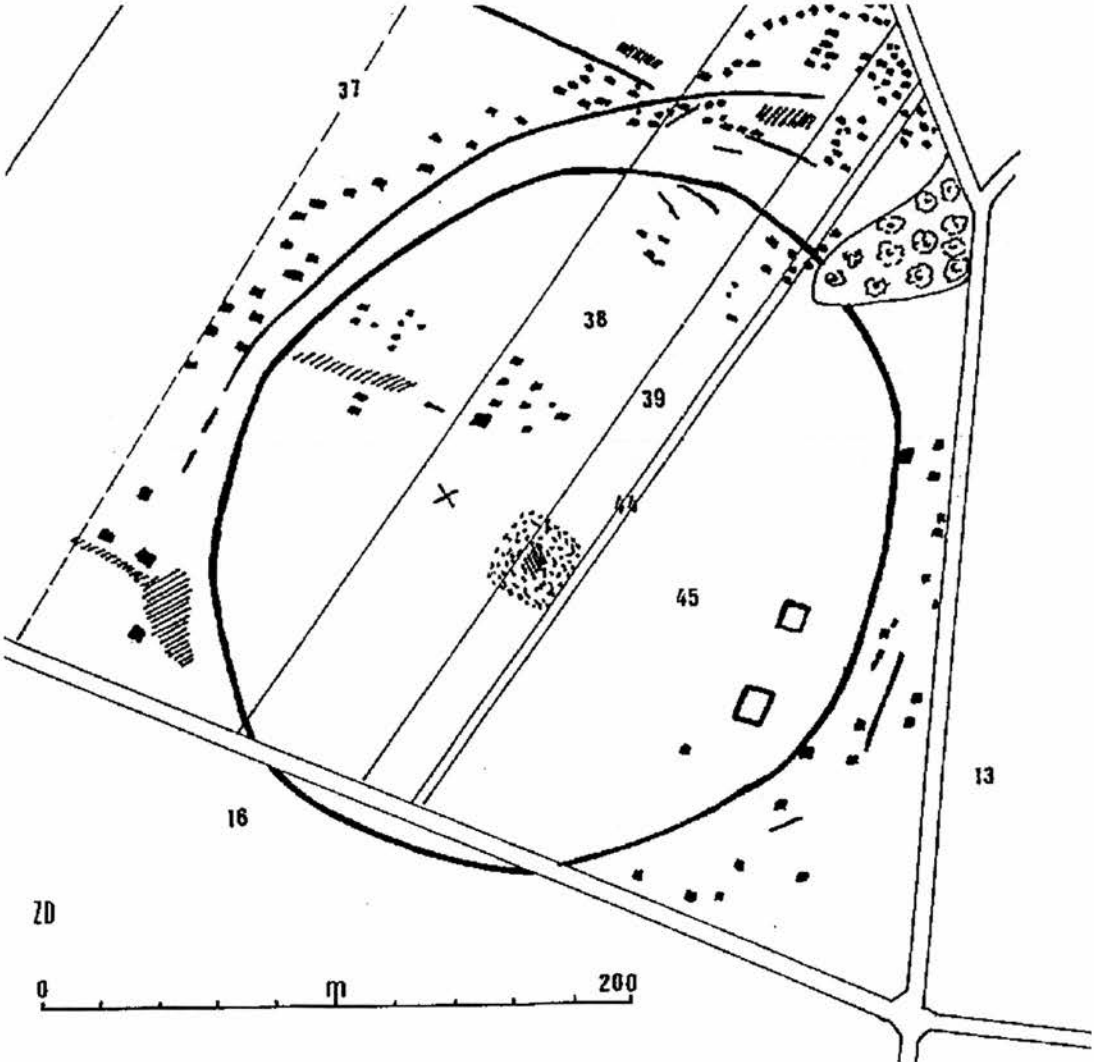




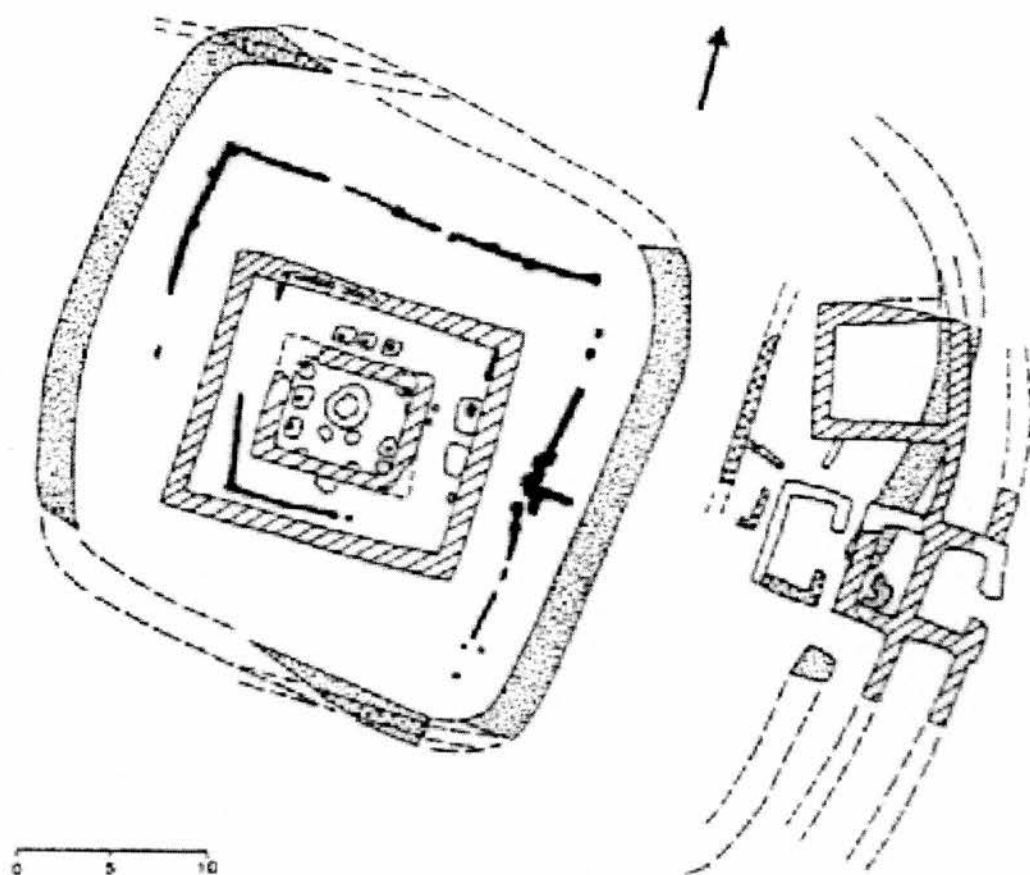
*Nanteuil-sur-Aisne* (Remi tribal territory)



*Roizy* (Remi tribal territory)

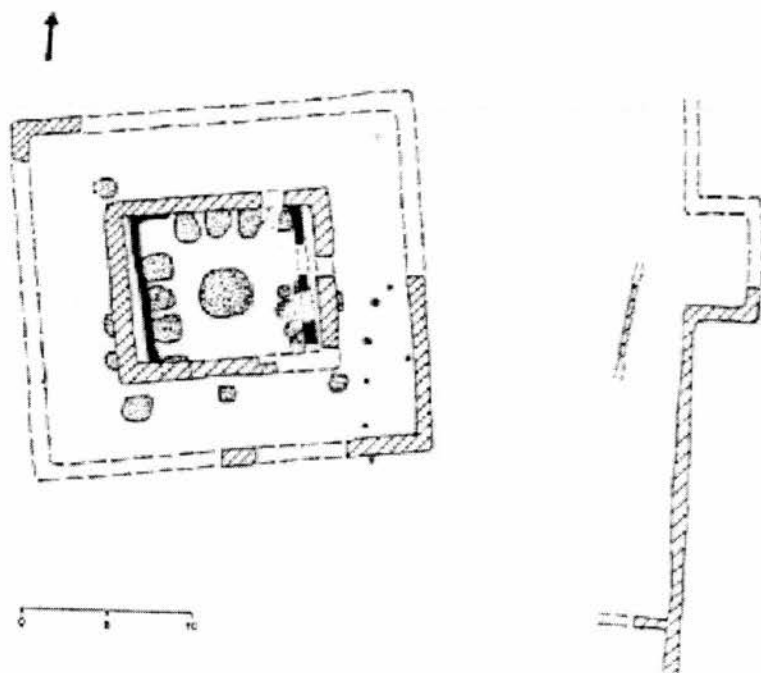


Saint-Maur-en-Chaussée (Bellovaci tribal territory)



(According to Brunaux)

Vendeuil-Caply (Bellovaci tribal territory)



(According to Piton)

### **Possible additional characteristics**

Gournay-sur-Aronde displays even the possible additional characteristics<sup>150</sup>.

#### **Proximity to Roads**

Confirmation of this is difficult. Marchand says it is difficult to distinguish between La Tène roads and Roman roads<sup>151</sup>, but Malrain, Matteredne and Méniel<sup>152</sup> say that, while many routes have disappeared, in Picardy it is possible to follow paths for several hundreds of metres, although most are not able to be followed and one does not know where they lead. However, Marchand<sup>153</sup> seems to believe that there is substance to the idea and Fichtl<sup>154</sup> contends that the relationship between sanctuaries and roads is clearly evident in the sanctuaries of the Oise region. Whether Gallic sanctuaries were built on or near pre-Roman roads or the Roman roads were built near the sanctuaries, there seems to be a connection between them.

One could add two further essentials not mentioned by Brunaux, Marchand or Fichtl.

#### **Liminality**

##### *Proximity to a source of water*

Proximity to a marsh, which is part solid and part fluid, is the most typical way liminality by water is conceived, but nearly all of the sanctuaries are near a river, which is completely fluid. The proximity to water is probably purely practical; a constant source of water would be necessary for cleaning the pit, the sacrificial tools and the sacrificers.

##### *Proximity to tribal border*

It may be thought that liminality is exhibited only by proximity to water, but it is also expressed by proximity to and even location on a tribal border. Although Brunaux<sup>155</sup> says that the known sanctuaries in Picardy are situated either at the centre or near the border and are separated from each other by an appreciable distance, many sites seem to be located near a tribal border. Of the four sites not near a border, three are in the Remi tribal territory and this may reflect a peculiarity of the Remi attitude to sanctuaries.

For a sanctuary to be regarded as having proximity to a road, source of water or tribal border it must be 10km or less from them.

## Elevated Location

From the Belgic sites it seems that a sanctuary should be situated on an elevated position, even if only a rise in the ground.

Site	Dept.	Tribal Territory	Elevated Location	Proximity to Roads	Proximity to water	Proximity to borders
Acy-Romance- "La Croizette"	Champagne - Ardennes	Remi	√ <sup>156</sup>		√ <sup>157</sup>	
Chilly	Somme	Viromandui		√ <sup>158</sup>		√ <sup>159</sup>
Estrées-Saint-Denis	Oise	Bellovaci	√ <sup>160</sup>	√ <sup>161</sup>	√ <sup>162</sup>	
Fesques	Seine-Maritime	Ambiani	√ <sup>163</sup>			
Gournay-sur-Aronde	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√ <sup>164</sup>	√	√
Le Donon	Vosges	Leuci, Mediomatrici and Triboci	√ <sup>165</sup>			√ <sup>166</sup>
Montmartin	Oise	Bellovaci	√ <sup>167</sup>	√ <sup>168</sup>	√ <sup>169</sup>	√ <sup>170</sup>
Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin	Somme	Bellovaci	√ <sup>171</sup>	√ <sup>172</sup>		√ <sup>173</sup>
Mouzon-Flavier	Ardennes		√ <sup>174</sup>	√ <sup>175</sup>	√ <sup>176</sup>	√ <sup>177</sup>
Nanteuil-sur-Aisne	Champagne - Ardennes	Remi		√ <sup>178</sup>	√ <sup>179</sup>	
Roizy	Ardennes	Remi	√ <sup>180</sup>	√ <sup>181</sup>	√ <sup>182</sup>	
Saint-Maur-en-Chaussée	Oise	Bellovaci or, Bertin <sup>183</sup> says, Ambiani	√ <sup>184</sup>	√ <sup>185</sup>		√ <sup>186</sup>
Vendeuil-Caply	Oise	Bellovaci	√	√ <sup>187</sup>	√ <sup>188</sup>	√ <sup>189</sup>

## Other sites as comparisons

### Sites outside the territory of the Belgic Gauls

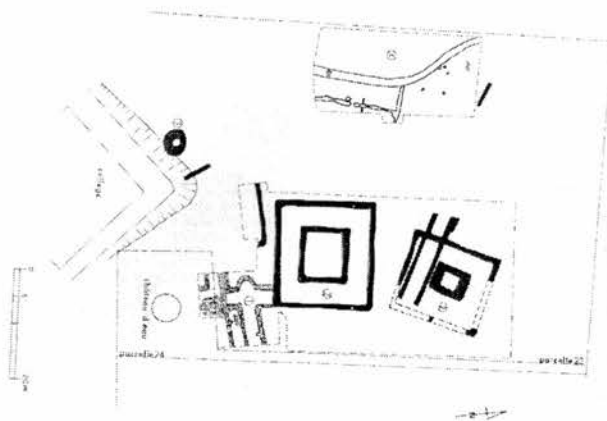
#### *Gallia Lugdinensis*

##### Bennecourt

This site has a quadrangular ditch, about 50m on each side, open to the east forming the enclosure, at the centre of which are a central pit and the traces of a small building<sup>190</sup>. The ditch shows signs of cleaning and the filling, dated to the Late La Tène, contained more than 20,000 very well preserved remains of animals which had been eaten among which there were the last remains of more ancient deposits, a few, corroded horse remains, totally destroyed by the excavations<sup>191</sup>.

##### Mirebeau-sur-Bèze

The site, about a century earlier than Gournay-sur-Aronde, Ribemont-sur-Ancre and Estrées-Saint-Denis<sup>192</sup>, is on elevated ground and near a river<sup>193</sup> and has an enclosure demarcated by a ditch and a palisade, and, in the centre of the sacred space, an elevated spot on which there were temples<sup>194</sup>. Inside the temples in the centre of the sanctuary were communication pits<sup>195</sup>. There was evidence of offerings of food and coins<sup>196</sup> and weapons<sup>197</sup>, which Guillaumet & Barral<sup>198</sup> say had been sacrificed; the offerings were simply deposited on the ground<sup>199</sup>. No human bones have been found<sup>200</sup>.



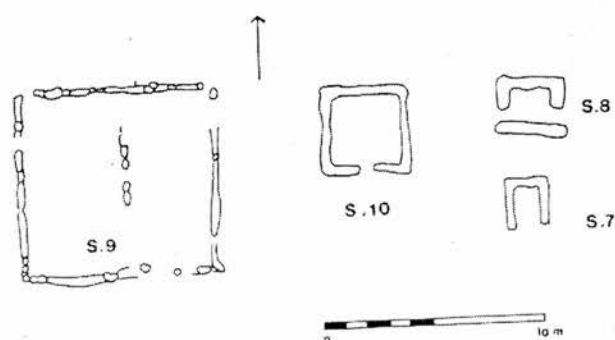
#### *Britannia*

As regards pre-Roman Celtic sanctuaries in Britain, Wait<sup>201</sup> conducted an analysis of 24 such sites prior to that performed by Brunaux on the Gallic sites. The statistics in Wait's work confirm many of Brunaux's conclusions. Wait<sup>202</sup> finds that rectangular sanctuaries outnumber circular ones<sup>203</sup>; all the sanctuaries were probably roofed<sup>204</sup>; an overwhelming number of the sanctuaries were orientated to the east<sup>205</sup>, which, Wait points out, cannot be by chance<sup>206</sup>; and Celtic sanctuaries were built in an open

space, which may have been used for ceremonial use, such as circumambulation, demarcated in some way to separate the sanctuary and the sacred world from the secular<sup>207</sup>. Wait<sup>208</sup> suggests that there is a preference for the erection of sanctuaries on tribal boundaries.

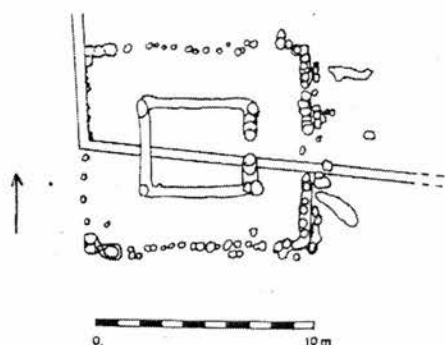
### Danebury

The four structures, all rectangular, are orientated to the east and aligned on a track leading from the main east gate, are found on the summit of a hill in the centre of a hillfort, two dating to the Early Iron Age, one dating to the Middle Iron Age and one to the end of the Middle Iron Age or the beginning of the Late Iron Age<sup>209</sup>.



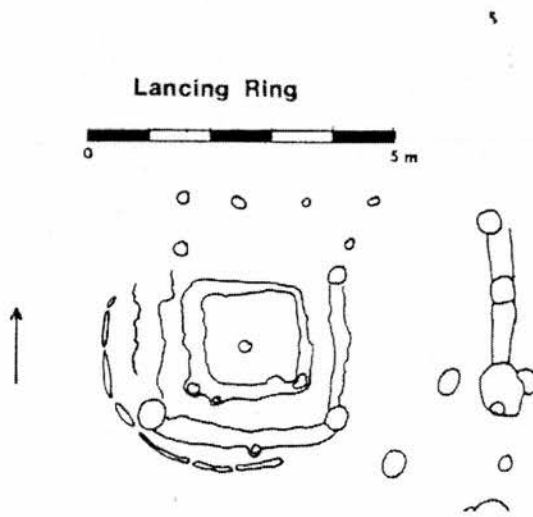
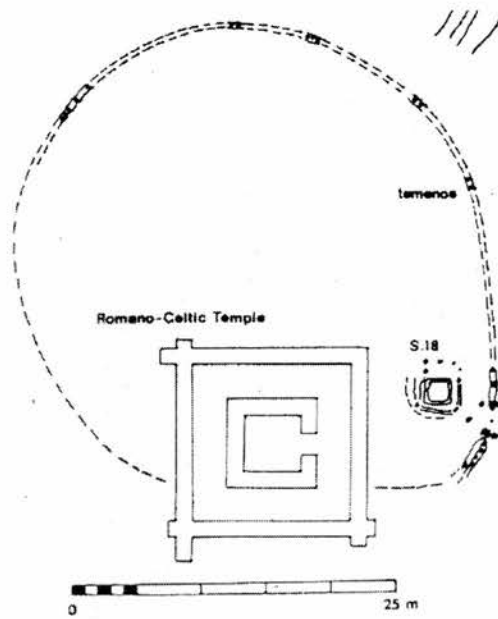
### Heathrow

The sanctuary, in the middle of an undefended village, which later had defences erected, according to post-holes, consists of a rectangular *cella* in a concentric ambulatory orientated to the east and all evidence indicates that occupation would have been in the 3rd century BC at the end of the Middle Iron Age<sup>210</sup>.



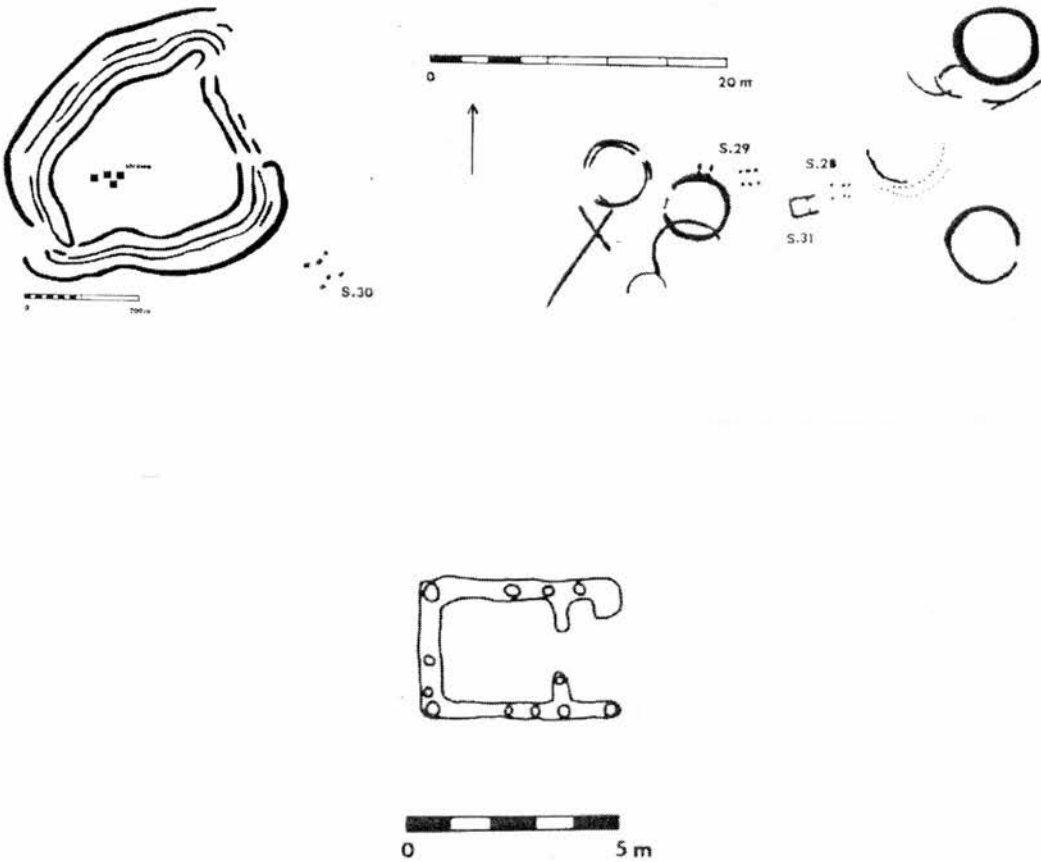
## Lancing Ring

The *temenos* of this site, dating to the 1st century BC, is delimited by a ditch and a palisade and, away from the centre, the temple, a square building, which consisted of a *cella* and an ambulatory, both of which can be identified by post-holes and trenches, with an east-facing entrance was next to the southeast boundary.<sup>211</sup>



South Cadbury

Of the four rectangular structures, all situated on the highest point of a hillfort and interpreted as sanctuaries, two, in the centre of the hillfort on the summit of the central ridge, date from approximately the middle of the 2nd century BC, one, defined by post-holes as square with an east facing entrance, the other, near to it, slightly longer on two sides, but also with an entrance facing east, and seem to be a small room and a porch<sup>212</sup>. At the west end of the central ridge a third, larger structure, also defined by post-holes, is orientated to the east<sup>213</sup> and appears to be a room and a porch or portico<sup>214</sup>. There are six pits with deposits of horse and cattle skulls and an arc of more than twenty burials of lambs, piglets and calves in pits associated with the third structure<sup>215</sup>. A fourth structure, dating to the very late Iron Age and probably sacked *circa* AD 61, east facing and defined by bedding trenches, was also a room with an open porch and seems to have been a replacement for the second one<sup>216</sup>.



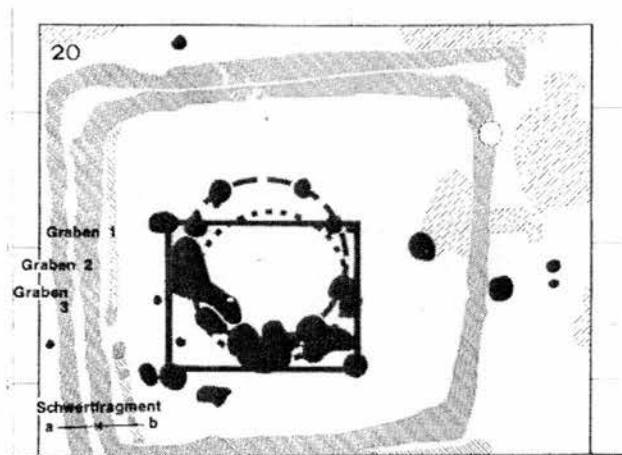
## Worth

The building is represented by four post-holes and was either square or rectangular and, on the basis of three miniature shields and brooches deposited here, is dated to the Late Iron Age<sup>217</sup>.

## *Outside the Roman Empire*

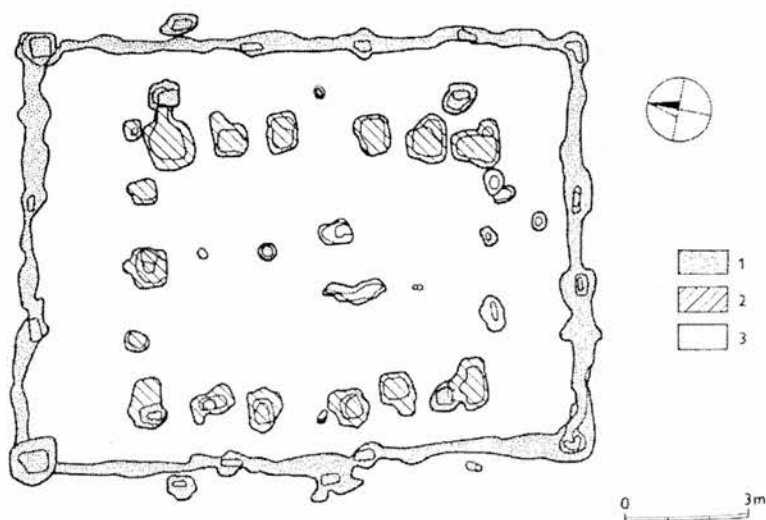
### Manching

Situated near two rivers, the site has three sectors, A, B and C, each containing a structure; for convenience, the structure is named after its sector. Only Structures A and C have any evidence of cultic activity and can, therefore, be called temples. In structure A starting at the end of the Early La Tène or during the Middle La Tène and, according to discoveries, ending in La Tène C or La Tène D, phase 1 consists of a circular construction inside a quadrangular enclosure marked by a ditch and a palisade, phase 2 a deeper ditch around a still circular structure and phase 3, a structure having changed to a rectangular building<sup>218</sup>. There appear to be deposits of weapons as offerings<sup>219</sup>. Structure C was in an isometric sacred enclosure, inside of which there is a square ditch surrounding a circular or polygonal temple<sup>220</sup>. Although no animal bones were present and there were very few weapons, the distribution of human bones<sup>221</sup> leads Sievers to conclude that Structure C, occupied uninterruptedly from the Middle La Tène to the Final La Tène, was a sanctuary<sup>222</sup>. These two structures show that, even though the temple may be not be quadrangular, the enclosure always is.



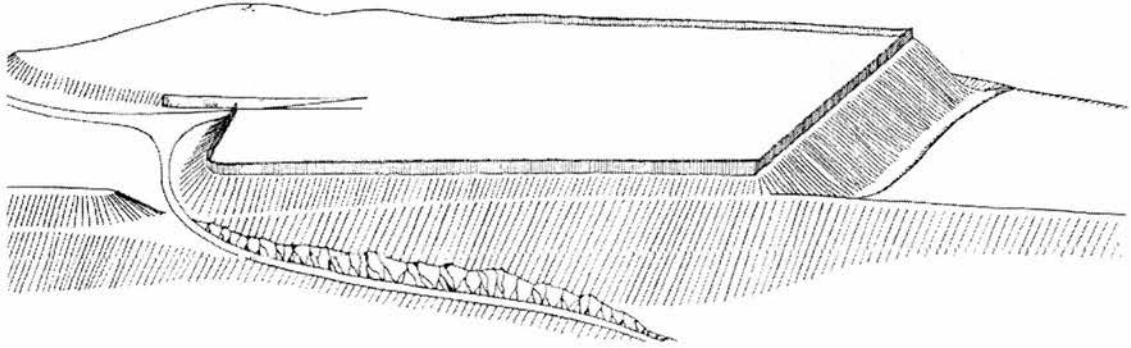
## Mšecke Žehrovice

The site consists of a quadrilateral enclosure measuring 2h, surrounded by a wall, 100m by 200m, and a ditch, divided internally into two 1h squares<sup>223</sup>. The southern square enclosure is also enclosed by a V-shaped ditch, typical of the *Viereckschanzen* of central Europe and is divided from the north east corner to the south west corner by a palisade<sup>224</sup>. In the north west corner of the southern square enclosure a rectangular structure, 182m<sup>2</sup>,<sup>225</sup> was found and identified as a temple analogous to *Viereckschanze* enclosures of Southern Germany<sup>226</sup>. Occupation of the site ended between 190 BC and 110 BC<sup>227</sup>.



Zavist

The “*nemeton*” was situated on a summit<sup>228</sup>, north of the confluence of the Berounka and Vlatava rivers<sup>229</sup>. It was a central enclosure<sup>230</sup>, quadrangular and delimited by a palisade<sup>231</sup>, in which there was temple. The “*nemeton*” was destroyed by fire in the first half of the 5th century BC and then rebuilt, rectangular at the centre of a quadrangular enclosure<sup>232</sup>.



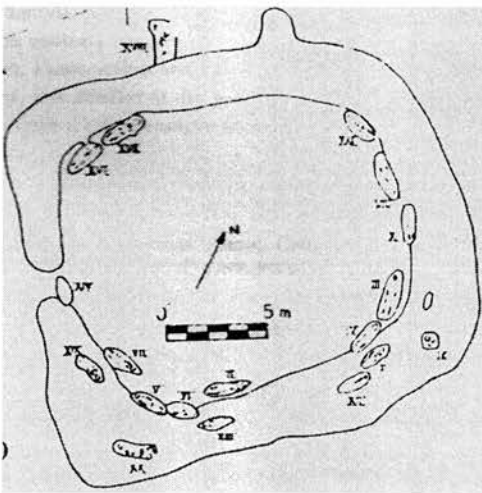
## Origin

Scholars posit a number of possible origins for the plan of the Celtic pre-Roman temple. However, many of these propositions seem to be influenced by an ethnocentric presupposition. The first, and most fantastical, is Oelmann<sup>233</sup>, who proposed that the plan of the Gallic temple is derived from Slavic temples and is connected to Iranian and even Chinese temples, ultimately derived from the pagoda. Bertin disagrees with this<sup>234</sup>, but still suggests that the quadrangular Celtic temples were possibly due to Graeco-Roman influence<sup>235</sup>. According to Brunaux, Celtic culture was influenced by Mediterranean culture in various ways, such as, the progressive abandonment of kings, the rise of the aristocratic oligarchies and the development of the concept of territory, with the evolution of the collective and then the tribal territory,<sup>236</sup> and that the enclosure in the form of a *temenos* and the trophy weapons were two late novelties, which arrived suddenly and without any antecedent in the whole Celtic world as part of the Celtic fashion for importing spectacular concepts pertaining to architecture<sup>237</sup>. He goes on to claim that these two novelties were superimposed on two other ritual representations, which already existed, but in another category of ritual, that is the funerary context; these are the necropolis enclosure with its precinct and the offerings of weapons in the burial. Evidence of this is the fact that at Gournay-sur-Aronde some weapons were buried in the fashion of a burial; they are ritually destroyed just like the burial of weapons in burials of warriors of an earlier period, in North Italy in particular. Brunaux claims that the more spectacular examples of Celtic religion are imports from Greece and Rome; he, therefore, immediately designates most examples of Celtic religious practice as not being Celtic in origin, but borrowed from others, even though the very fact that they are recoverable by archaeology or there is archaeological evidence for them, means that they have to be spectacular. He also contradicts himself. He claims that there are no antecedents for the two alleged novelties, yet states that they already existed; the fact that they were in the context of funerary practices does not alter the fact that they already existed.

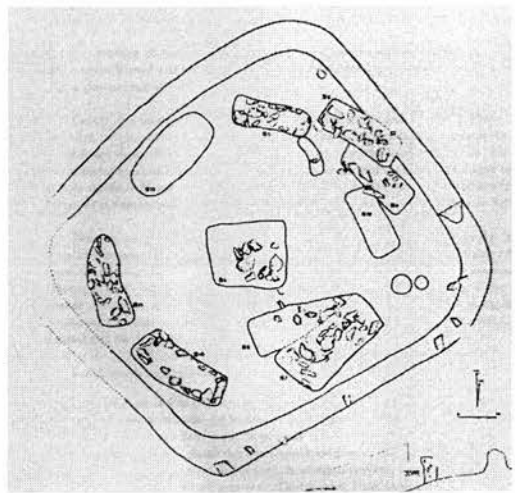
This is an unnecessary and complicated assignment to foreign influence. Brunaux<sup>238</sup> himself says that the enclosure was present in almost every Indo-European religion and that the *temenos* was the enclosure in the Greek religion; Venclova<sup>239</sup> says that the enclosure of the Celtic temple corresponded to the *temenos* of the Greeks. Therefore, it is not surprising that the enclosure in the religion of one branch of the Indo-European language and culture group, the Celts, should be in the form of a *temenos* when the *temenos* is the enclosure in the religion of another branch of the

same linguistic and cultural group, the Greeks, or that the shape should resemble the shape of temples among two other Indo-European peoples, the Slavs and the Iranians. They are similar because they are derived from the same source. There is, therefore, no need to suggest some form of cultural import. A far simpler explanation for the origin of the enclosure and the ritual of the trophy weapons and one which has its origins in Celtic culture with no need to appeal to outside influence. It is that, far from having no antecedents, these two concepts have their origins in the rituals on which Brunaux claims they were superimposed.

Although Bertin<sup>240</sup> suggests that quadrangular Celtic temples were possibly influenced by the shape of the Celtic hut and Green<sup>241</sup> observes that “many Celtic shrines closely resemble secular houses”, Grenier, Benoît, Lantier and Harmand<sup>242</sup> all propose that the plan of the Celtic sanctuary had its origin in the plan of a tomb. However, because the sites in Picardy had not been discovered, these scholars were only able to use finds in southern Gaul in Narbonnensis at Roquepertuse, Entremont, Glanum and Mouriès. As a result the idea is not accepted because it is imprudent to attempt to apply customs in the Midi, where the sites were actually Celto-Ligurian with strong Greek influence, to the rest of Gaul<sup>243</sup>. However, de Laet, van Doorselaer and Desittere<sup>244</sup>, using finds in Belgium, and therefore beyond Greek and Ligurian influence, posit that the origin of the layout of the Celtic temple was indeed the layout of the tomb. Reiterating this van Doorselaer<sup>245</sup> states that the tombs in Yorkshire and Champagne were direct prototypes of La Tène sanctuaries and even Gallo-Roman temples. Agache<sup>246</sup> is impressed by the proposal, Piggott<sup>247</sup> supplies further support and Cabuy and Fauduet<sup>248</sup> accepts it. Support for this can be found in the layout of necropoleis 1 and 2, enclosure B at Courtavant, Boulogny beach in Belgic Gaul<sup>249</sup> and in the fact that, in Brunaux’s<sup>250</sup> opinion, the initial enclosure at Gournay-sur-Aronde is reminiscent of funerary enclosures of the Early La Tène.



Necropolis 1 enclosure B at Courtavant, Boulogny beach



Necropolis 2 enclosure B at Courtavant, Boulogny beach

It is also possible that the funerary rites the source for the sanctuary rites; just as the square, roofed structure of the sanctuary grew from the square, roofed mortuary structure and the construction of the sanctuary enclosure in the form of a *temenos* grew from the enclosure around the necropolis, so the offering of weapons at the sanctuary was based on the idea of burying weapons with the dead warrior. The fact that one version of the afterlife is that the dead live in the tomb<sup>iv</sup> supplies the reason for the application of the practices of the funeral to the sanctuary.

Despite his earlier statement, Brunaux<sup>251</sup> states that there is no evidence of a direct connection between the summary enclosures in a funereal context of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE and the cultic enclosures, removed from every necropolis, of the 3rd century BCE, and suggests that, rather than funerary rites being the source of the sanctuary rites and the sanctuary enclosure having grown from the enclosure around the necropolis, it is a matter of two distinct types descending from a single much more ancient model, that is a cultic space drawn on the ground only for a temporary activity, just like the cultic enclosures of the Vedic Indians, rather than funerary rites being the source of the sanctuary rites and the sanctuary enclosure having grown from the enclosure around the necropolis.

The fact that archaeology demonstrates that the Gauls had the same concepts regarding a *locus cultus* as the Romans, a sacred area, a point, enclosed and protected by a structure in which the rituals are performed and an altar below, on or above the surface, and that their sacred enclosures, as Brunaux<sup>252</sup> says, differed little from the Roman counterparts calls into question Woolf's<sup>253</sup> idea that the Gauls considered the Roman religion to be different. It is, therefore, difficult to believe that they would consider it better. In the rest of the chapter it will be seen that the shape and characteristics of the Gallic sanctuary was reflected in the Gallo-Roman temple, demonstrating that, while acculturation did occur, as regards the introduction by Rome of non-perishable construction materials, certain Gallic characteristics continued.

Vitruvius (*Vitr. De Arch. III. 2.*) sets down the types and designs of Greek and Roman temples. In general Greek temples mostly had a uniform design of a rectangular *cella*, in which the image of the deity resided, an east facing doorway and a porch created by extending the *cella*'s side-walls. Occasionally there was a rear porch as well. This basic design, with the *cella* elongated and surrounded by columns, is

---

<sup>iv</sup> See page 258.

found as far back as the 10th century BCE and was established by the second quarter of the 6th century. The porch might have two, four or six columns to support the roof, which extended over it. Large temples, in order to support the roof, were not only peripteral, that is having a *cella* enclosed by solid, load bearing, walls, but had columns both outside the *cella*, usually six columns at each end and twelve to fourteen on each of the sides, and inside, with usually a double row of columns. Small temples, with less concern for roof support, might have an exposed *cella* and are called non-peripteral. The peripteral design meant that the size of the temples could be increased. The roof was low-pitched with a pediment at each end. Roman temples were similar, but were usually non-peripteral and had a temple floor, which was raised and thrust forward beyond the porch, which now had great importance.

The La Tène Gallic sanctuaries survived and continued to be used, most up to the Late Empire<sup>254</sup>. The structure of any Celtic pre-Roman sanctuary had certain common factors<sup>v</sup>. Similarly, Gallo-Roman temples have common factors regarding their form, topographical position and their orientation<sup>255</sup> and nearly all exhibit most of the essential characteristics of Celtic pre-Roman sanctuaries.

### **The enclosed sacred space**

Temples were surrounded by a sacred space or *temenos*, in which sacred ceremonies were held,<sup>256</sup> sometimes with a demarcation, referred to by the modern term of *peribolos*<sup>257</sup>, necessary to mark the division between the sacred and the profane<sup>258</sup>, such as a palisade<sup>259</sup> or a ditch<sup>260</sup>, which was replaced by an enclosure wall<sup>261</sup>, or, in most cases and generally from the middle of the 1st century, a wall<sup>262</sup>. While out of 52 sites in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories 26 are in an enclosure separating the sacred from the profane<sup>263</sup>, the cult area has only been recognised in about one-third of sanctuaries, usually those of conurbations; out of 653 excavated sites, 223 are inside a *peribolos*, while in 387 there is either no trace or the evidence is too imprecise to define the cult area<sup>264</sup>. The small number of enclosures identified is probably due to more interest being shown in the temples<sup>265</sup>. The enclosed space was most often quadrangular<sup>266</sup>, but it could be trapezoidal<sup>267</sup>, polygonal<sup>268</sup> or oval or circular<sup>269</sup>. Enclosures were rare around temples without an ambulatory<sup>270</sup>. The dimensions of a sacred space are known from 116 sites<sup>271</sup>. They varied from 30m long to 100m and rarely exceeded 200m<sup>272</sup>. On average the sacred space seems to have been 50m long with the smallest, at Martelange<sup>273</sup>, being 14.4m<sup>274</sup> or 15m<sup>275</sup>.

---

<sup>v</sup> Pages 104-110.

### **The entrance**

The entrance of the sacred space, when discernible, was often situated facing the entrance of the temple or to the east<sup>276</sup>. Most often the entrance was narrow as if to protect the sacred space<sup>277</sup>. The enclosure entrance could have a simple threshold<sup>278</sup>, but it could be marked by a porch, paved and bordered or leaning on the enclosure wall<sup>279</sup>. Sometimes there were two entrances<sup>280</sup>.

### **The centre**

The temple or, if there are several, the principal temple generally occupied a central or nearly central position in the sacred space<sup>281</sup> and has its origins, according to Bertin<sup>282</sup>, in the symbolism of the centre in Gallic sanctuaries; it seems that, as regards the temples in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories, temples only very rarely occupied a central position<sup>283</sup> and in most cases occupy only half the sacred space<sup>284</sup>. If the temple is not central<sup>285</sup>, then the construction of the enclosing wall was not contemporaneous with the temple or there were other temples or constructions in lighter materials, which have not been recognised<sup>286</sup>.

### **Pits**

Sometimes the sacred space can be riddled with pits<sup>287</sup>, which can be identified from the air<sup>288</sup>. The system of pits at Vendeuil-Caply<sup>289</sup> dates from the end of the 1st century BCE, but recalls the pits existing at Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>290</sup> during Phase II at the end of the 3rd century BCE<sup>291</sup>. Some were dug and refilled before the foundation of the temple and refer to an earlier cultic phase, most were refilled before the end of the 1st century CE with either votive offerings or sacrificial remains<sup>292</sup>. The situation is different for temples in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories where pits are rare<sup>293</sup>.

### **The temple**

There are various views on the shape of the *cella* of a typical Gallo-Roman temple<sup>294</sup>. In essence the characteristic shape of the Gallo-Roman *cella* was quadrangular, either rectangular or, more commonly, square or almost square. However, *cellae* could also be polygonal or even circular. Wilson, Rodwell and Cabuy<sup>295</sup>, in their definitions of a typical Gallo-Roman temple, consider the round and polygonal shaped *cella* to be as typical as the square or rectangular. However, the polygonal is less common<sup>296</sup> and the circular is very rare<sup>297</sup>. Only nineteen of the polygonal temples have a polygonal *cella* and ambulatory gallery and they are octagonal<sup>298</sup>, which is the most common polygonal shape<sup>299</sup>. The polygonal constructions at Niedaltdorf and

Heckenmünster<sup>300</sup> were related to a healing cult<sup>301</sup>. Some temples have a combination of shapes, such as a hexagonal *cella* with a quadrangular ambulatory gallery, or a circular *cella* surrounded by a quadrangular or polygonal ambulatory gallery<sup>302</sup> or the *cella* may even be polygonal externally, but circular internally<sup>303</sup>. The majority of sites comprise only one temple<sup>304</sup>, but, while one temple can house two deities<sup>305</sup>, there are sites with two or more temples<sup>306</sup>. There are also sites with twin juxtaposed temples surrounded by a common ambulatory gallery<sup>307</sup>. Both types of temple were dedicated to a deity and his consort. Sites with four or more temples generally have no ambulatory gallery and are usually cult enclosures<sup>308</sup>. Whatever the shape, Rodwell<sup>309</sup> considers the *cella* to be essential for a Gallo-Roman temple.

There are also various views on the dimensions of a typical Gallo-Roman temple<sup>310</sup>, drawing on 540 temples, with and without an ambulatory gallery<sup>311</sup>. The smallest temples with an ambulatory gallery have a *cella* less than 4m and an exterior measuring 1-1.5m<sup>312</sup>. Temples with *cellae* less than 3m, ten in number, generally have no ambulatory gallery<sup>313</sup>. The *cellae* of temples with a *pronaos* usually vary from 6.2m to 8m<sup>314</sup>. There are only fifteen temples, all rural and isolated, with an ambulatory gallery less than 8m long<sup>315</sup>, the smallest of which was 5m<sup>316</sup>. Thirty temples have *cellae* of at least 15m in length or diameter, eight of which are circular, while the others are part of a vast complex<sup>317</sup>. The vast majority of the sixty-five temples with an ambulatory gallery the total length of which measures at least 20m and of the twenty such temples measuring 30m are either circular or polygonal, have a double *cella* or are great urban temples<sup>318</sup>.

The temple entrance is usually orientated eastwards, towards the rising sun<sup>319</sup>, contrary to the principles of Vitruvius<sup>320</sup>. Bertin states that the orientation of Gallo-Roman temples is very different from that of Graeco-Roman ones<sup>321</sup> and suggests that it was connected to the rite of circumambulation mentioned in ancient literature<sup>322</sup>. Entrances to north, north-west or south-west are exceptional<sup>323</sup>, the orientation of Cantaing-sur-Escaut<sup>324</sup> to the west<sup>325</sup> particularly so. The exceptions are usually due to a topographical necessity, such as having to face another temple, or the sea or a river<sup>326</sup> or a road<sup>327</sup> or for an architectural effect<sup>328</sup>. A notable number of temples, which do not open to the east, have no ambulatory gallery<sup>329</sup>; temples open to the south have no ambulatory gallery<sup>330</sup>. The majority has an entrance marked by a simple threshold, sometimes preceded by one or two steps<sup>331</sup>. The entrance may be flanked by two columns<sup>332</sup> or be preceded by flagstones<sup>333</sup> or have a *pronaos*<sup>334</sup>. Some<sup>335</sup> have a staircase<sup>336</sup>, possibly showing Graeco-Roman influence.

The orientation of temples in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories differs in no way from the temples in the rest of Gaul, with the majority facing eastwards and the north and west being avoided, except that the proportion of temples orientated to the east and south-east is the opposite<sup>337</sup>.

### **The ambulatory**

The function of an ambulatory was for religious processions around the *cella*<sup>338</sup>. According to Agache<sup>339</sup> circumambulation was *an* essential characteristic of a Gallo-Roman temple and an ambulatory gallery facilitated this rite. Cabuy<sup>340</sup> does not consider the presence of a surrounding ambulatory gallery to be characteristic of a Gallo-Roman temple; others<sup>341</sup> consider a typical Gallo-Roman temple to have a *cella* surrounded by an ambulatory gallery and Fauduet even categorises temples according to the presence or absence of a one<sup>342</sup>. If an ambulatory gallery is present, the result is two concentric functional spaces<sup>343</sup>. In referring to an ambulatory gallery, Wilson<sup>344</sup> says that the use of the word ‘portico’, which Benoît<sup>345</sup> uses, should be avoided and certainly the word ‘verandah’. Rodwell<sup>346</sup> states that the ambulatory must be on three sides of a square *cella* or at least three-quarters of the circumference of a *cella*. However, a temple can be square without an ambulatory gallery<sup>347</sup>. A *cella* might be built alone first and then, in the second phase of construction, an ambulatory gallery or a *pronaos* would be added<sup>348</sup>.

Although she says<sup>349</sup> that it is probable that the ambulatory gallery already existed in the Final La Tène, Bertin, like Lewis<sup>350</sup>, thinks that the original form of the Gallo-Roman temple had no ambulatory gallery<sup>351</sup> and that the ambulatory gallery was the result of Roman acculturation<sup>352</sup>, a conclusion reached by de Laet, Doorselaer and Desittere<sup>353</sup>. At Bierbach-Klosterwald<sup>354</sup>, the primitive *cellae* were without ambulatory galleries and that these were added in the 2nd century<sup>355</sup> and that the fact that the temple at Hofstade-lès-Alost<sup>356</sup> had no ambulatory gallery suggests the possibility that Romanisation was very weak<sup>357</sup>. The site at Hochscheid<sup>358</sup> certainly seems to support this. Phase I, without an ambulatory gallery, was constructed in the second half of the 1st century; the ambulatory gallery was only constructed as part of phase II at the beginning of the 2nd century.

Temples with an ambulatory gallery include double *cellae* surrounded by a common ambulatory gallery and temples where the *cella* was preceded by a *pronaos*<sup>359</sup>; temples with an ambulatory gallery number 650<sup>360</sup>, fifteen of which are preceded by a *pronaos*<sup>361</sup>.

Derks, who confusingly calls the ambulatory gallery a *porticus*, Brunaux and Van Andringa<sup>362</sup> demonstrate that Bertin's proposal that the ambulatory gallery was a structure introduced by Roman acculturation was correct. Not only is the ambulatory gallery not found on early Gallo-Roman temples and only on those erected after the middle of the 1st century CE, with some exceptions, but there is no evidence for such a structure on pre-Roman temples. However, this begs the question as to why such a structure should have been erected. The best answer is that, although the structure had its origins in Roman culture, its application to Gallo-Roman temples could only have been due to its adaptation for circumambulation, showing that this Gallic rite was still practised after the middle of the 1st century. It was a Roman reaction to a Gallic stimulus. Van Andringa's argument that, not just the ambulatory gallery, but circumambulation itself and, therefore, the ambulatory were Roman in origin is extremely suspect.

### **The altar**

The altar was an essential element of sacrifice and altars, the bases of which usually had masonry, may be placed before the entrance of the temple<sup>363</sup>. Ternes<sup>364</sup> bases his view that the altar for offerings was in front of the temples on flagstones found there, Wilson<sup>365</sup> says that the altar was in the *cella*, but Fauduet<sup>366</sup> says that, in general, it was before the entrance of the temple. 16 altars have been found on 69 excavated sites<sup>367</sup>. The presence of altars in temples in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories is rare, with only six cases, and they are to the side of the entrance or before the staircase to the temple<sup>368</sup>.

### **Elevated Location**

Although Ternes<sup>369</sup> says that only some Treveran temples are found on high ground, the sites often occupied a dominating position on a slope, spur, summit, a plateau or even a slight incline<sup>370</sup>, although, according to Bertin<sup>371</sup>, the temple is rarely at the highest point. Some temples were on a hill and visible from afar<sup>372</sup>.

### **Liminality**

#### *Proximity to a source of water*

Not only in the Somme region do some temples dominate rivers and others springs<sup>373</sup>, but, in general, water is very important to the Celtic religion<sup>374</sup> and the Gallo-Roman temple has a position near a source of water, sea, lake, river, or spring<sup>375</sup>. Certainly, in the Treveri tribal territory, nearly all the temples seem to be inserted near a source of water<sup>376</sup> and, in Belgic Gaul in general, the role played by

rivers is considered incontestable<sup>377</sup>. A good number of those built by a river, a water course<sup>378</sup>, or a lake or on an island often form an integral part of a conurbation established at a confluence, bridge or a port<sup>379</sup>; of those sanctuaries built near a spring<sup>380</sup> a quarter are a considerable distance from a centre of population<sup>381</sup>.

### Proximity to tribal border

It must be remembered that the tribal borders are approximate and are traced back to the borders of the ancient dioceses<sup>382</sup>. Ternes<sup>383</sup> does not accept that there is any connection between a temple site and a tribal border, except for Hochscheid on the Treveri-*Lower Germany* border and Tholey on the Treveri-Mediomatrici border. Bertin<sup>384</sup> does not seem to consider proximity to a tribal border to be a characteristic of Gallo-Roman temples and Agache<sup>385</sup>, with reference to the Somme region, saw no connection between temples and tribal borders. However, more than 100 sites in Picardy and the Pays de la Loire were able to be placed in proximity of the frontiers of two or three tribal territories and nearly half of them are a considerable distance from a centre of population<sup>386</sup>. Cabuy<sup>387</sup> seems to accept that, in the Tungri, Nervii and Menapii tribal territories and part of the Treveri, temples are located near tribal borders. Belgic Gaul has a number of examples of liminal sites:

Assainvilliers near the Ambiani-Bellovaci border;

Beaumont-sur-Oise on the frontier of the Bellovaci tribal territory and

#### *Lugdenensian Gaul;*

Dieulouard on the Mediomatrici-Leuci border;

Dompierre-en-Santerre on the Ambiani-Viromandui border;

Fließem/Otrang on the Treveri-*Upper Germany-Lower Germany* border;

Fricourt near the Ambiani-Viromandui border;

Fontaine-Valmont on the Nervii-Tungri border;

Graincourt-les-Havrincourt near the Atrebates-Nervii border;

Halatte on the Bellovaci-Silvanectes border;

Hochscheid near the Treveri-*Upper Germany* border;

Kornelimünster on the Tungri-*Lower Germany* border;

Labuissière near the Atrebates-Morini border;

Le Donon on the Leuci-Mediomatrici-*Upper Germany* border;

Mouzon on the Remi-Treveri border;

Niedaltdorf near the Treveri-Mediomatrici border;

Rouvroy-lès-Merles on the Ambiani-Bellovaci border;

Tholey on the Treveri-Mediomatrici border;

Vendeuil-Caply on the Ambiani-Bellovaci border;

Versigny near the Remi-Viromandui border;  
Wederath near the Treveri-*Upper Germany* border.

As well as the Ambiani-Bellovaci border there is also a great density of sites at the Senones-Carnutes border, the Cenomani-Aulerci Diablintes border, Pictones-Turones border<sup>388</sup>. It is interesting that Cantaing-sur-Escaut<sup>389</sup>, a most unusual temple with its westward facing direction, is near to and faces the Atrebates-Nervii border. It is possible that, while proximity to a tribal border was a characteristic of most pre-Roman sanctuaries, due to Roman influence and urbanisation supplying a focal point for inter-tribal relations, it ceased to be one for Gallo-Roman temples.

### **Proximity to roads**

In an examination of 45 temples in the Treveri tribal territory, 12, that is 27% and primarily in the Treveri tribal territory, had a connection with a road<sup>390</sup>. Grenier<sup>391</sup> contend that the presence of a road has an important role in the location of a temple, Bertin<sup>392</sup> says that at least a path or road on one side of the temple is an inseparable element and temples are rarely isolated, being near a road, border, conurbation or some dwelling site and for Doorselaer<sup>393</sup> the role of roads in the construction of Gallo-Roman temples in Belgic Gaul is, like that of rivers, incontestable; according to Fauduet, a road is present in 267 sites, although two thirds of them are connected to a conurbation or a group of dwelling sites<sup>394</sup>, and the nearness of a road to an isolated site is conspicuous in scarcely 80 cases<sup>395</sup>. Sometimes the road is a secondary one, difficult to detect, but, in the majority, the temple is on one side of an important road<sup>396</sup>. The Somme temples are isolated and removed from roads<sup>397</sup>, although some were built to be seen from the road<sup>398</sup>, or overlook it<sup>399</sup>; in the study of temples in the Treveri and Tungri tribal territories, only a few sites<sup>400</sup> are situated directly on or in the immediate proximity of a road, five of which<sup>401</sup> can be explained by their connection to a conurbation<sup>402</sup>, and Cabuy<sup>403</sup> is of the opinion that the presence of a road plays only a secondary role in a temple's location.

### **Origin**

Aerial reconnaissance has revealed very large circular or square protohistoric enclosures, small square enclosures and the existence of square structures with no stone foundation<sup>404</sup>. Agache says that the latter were probably prototypes of Gallo-Roman temples<sup>405</sup> and confirms that buildings in wood dating from the end of the La Tène have been retrieved from under some Gallo-Roman temples<sup>406</sup>; this is repeated by Wilson<sup>407</sup> and Büchsenschütz<sup>408</sup> points out that the excavation of the best-

examined Gallo-Roman sanctuaries has revealed examples of wooden structures pre-dating the Gallo-Roman buildings. Fauduet<sup>409</sup> says, “le temple succède souvent à un édifice cultuel antérieur ou a été implanté sur un site déjà occupé”, either arising from a Celtic sanctuary of the La Tène period or from an undemarcated cultic area put in place in the 1st century BCE. At Gournay-sur-Aronde a Gallic sanctuary was discovered beneath a Gallo-Roman temple dated to the Late Empire<sup>410</sup>; this latter temple is situated in the same position as the building dated to the end of the La Tène, which possesses the same layout as the Gallo-Roman temple<sup>411</sup>. This, therefore, confirms the view of a number of scholars<sup>412</sup> that the plan, orientation and other characteristics of the Gallo-Roman temple and sanctuary had their origin, not in the Classical Graeco-Roman temple, but in those of the Gallic pre-Roman temple and sanctuary, that they remained essentially the same, that the Gallo-Roman temple continued Gallic tradition and that, other than outward changes in material, the layout of pre-Roman Gallic cult sites survived in the form of the Gallo-Roman temple, but, due to Roman acculturation, was realised in the permanent medium of stone. There are only one<sup>413</sup> or two<sup>414</sup> instances of a Classical style temple replacing an indigenous religious building on a pre-Roman site. Henig and King<sup>415</sup> consider it surprising that Gallic religious elements continued to be important for so long even in urban areas. The fact that the majority of temples built in stone date from only the second half of the 1st century or the 2nd century CE reveals that Roman acculturation was much slower in religious matters<sup>416</sup> and points to a conservatism among the Gallic people as regards religion<sup>417</sup>, contrary to Woolf’s claim that Gallic identity was replaced by a Roman one after a brief period.

Some Gallo-Roman temples were constructed directly on top of pre-Conquest sanctuaries, in some cases following the design exactly, differing only in the material used:

Bellovaci tribal territory: Vendeuil-Caply<sup>418</sup>

Mediomatrici tribal territory: Bierbach-Klosterwald<sup>419</sup>

Nervii tribal territory: Hofstade-lès-Alost<sup>420</sup>

Treveri tribal territory: Fell, temple A<sup>421</sup> and temple B<sup>422</sup>; Hochscheid<sup>423</sup>; Mouzon, temple A<sup>424</sup>; Schleidweiler, temple B<sup>425</sup> and Möhn.

Tungri tribal territory: Matagne-la-petite, temple A<sup>426</sup>.

Viromandui tribal territory: Chilly<sup>427</sup>.

Metzler expresses a strong suspicion that a pre-Roman sanctuary exists under a Gallo-Roman temple dedicated to Diana at Otzenhausen<sup>428</sup>.

In view of the fact that such a number of Gallo-Roman temples were established on the central temples of pre-Roman Gallic sanctuaries, in some cases literally four-square on top, following the design wall by wall, corner by corner, one can see that other Gallo-Roman temples, which have not yet been excavated to the pre-Conquest level, may have been built directly on earlier pre-Roman Gallic sanctuaries.

There have been objections to the proposal that the Gallic plan continued. Brunaux, although accepting that the Gallo-Roman temple plan was not Italic and that the Celtic plan is the nearest to it, claims that there are two problems: there is no evidence on the Celtic sanctuary for an ambulatory gallery; and the standard reconstruction of a Gallo-Roman temple has a central tower over the *cella* and there is no evidence for this on a pre-Roman temple. However, it is accepted that the gallery is a result of Roman acculturation and the tower dates only to the 1st century CE. These objections place too much emphasis on known products of the 1st century CE and ignore the similarity he himself accepts; this may explain why he eventually says “le fanum [the Gallo-Roman temple] apparaît comme une réinterprétation originale du temple celtique dont il reprend et l’emplacement et les dimensions et certaines fonctions”<sup>429</sup>.

Even though Derks accepts that La Tène cult places are known only because their traces were found under sanctuaries of the Roman period<sup>430</sup> and states that traces of a pre-Roman timber cult building have been found under the Gallo-Roman temple of Lenus Mars at Pommern<sup>431</sup>, both he and van Andringa reject the idea that the Gallo-Roman temple plan reflects and has its origin in the Gallic temple and is a continuation of the pre-Roman temple pattern. While exposing flaws in the theories of Koethe, Grimes and Schwarz, Derks, after examining the ideas of de Laet, Doorselaer and Desittere, claims that he has “deprived the Gallo-Roman temple of its alleged prehistoric roots and brushed aside the existing view on the long-term development of cult places”. He has not. The worst he says about the ideas of de Laet, Doorselaer and Desittere is that “their analysis is not watertight”<sup>432</sup>.

Derks<sup>433</sup> states that examples of cult buildings with stone foundations were simple, square or rectangular *cellae* with no ambulatory gallery and, in the 1st century CE,

this type “made way for temples of the Gallo-Roman type”. From this one can see that Derks does not consider a square or slightly rectangular temple with no ambulatory gallery to be a Gallo-Roman temple. This explains his statement that evidence of a pre-Caesarian prototype of a temple with an ambulatory gallery has not been found and seems to be the basis of his rejection of the continuation of the Gallic temple plan to Gallo-Roman temples. His reasoning is: only temples with an ambulatory gallery are Gallo-Roman; the ambulatory gallery is not found on pre-Roman temples; therefore, there is no connection between pre-Roman and Gallo-Roman temples. It is irrelevant that temples of the Augustan period resemble pre-Roman temples and continue their plan, because, with no gallery, they are not considered Gallo-Roman.

Van Andringa<sup>434</sup> proposes that, rather than a sanctuary of indigenous tradition, the Gallo-Roman temple design was a creation of the imperial period adapted to Gallic cults and sacrificial space, thus explaining why “ce plan original ne s’impose souvent que dans un deuxième temps.....succédant à un sanctuaire structuré de façon traditionnelle”.

Derks places excessive importance on the ambulatory gallery as a sign of Gallo-Roman status and van Andringa, seems determined to ascribe all aspects of Gallo-Roman culture to a Roman origin, as seen in his views on circumambulation and banquet sacrifices, and both ignore the similar, in some cases identical, shape of the two plans, the presence of a sacred space with a perimeter, the topographical characteristics and the superimposing of Gallo-Roman temples on those of the Gallic tradition.

The fact that this uniform temple plan rapidly spread and was used all over Gaul has prompted some theories. Derks suggests official promotion by the provincial administrators. If this is so, then it was another example of Roman diplomacy; just as the Romans officially recognised indigenous deities by associating them with Roman cults and, therefore, made them acceptable and redirected the Gauls towards Roman culture and as the Romans redirected the custom of headhunting, by officially sanctioning a temple plan which continued the indigenous temple plan, the Romans made the Roman and Gallo-Roman cults acceptable and, therefore, again redirected the Gauls to Roman culture. This was facilitated by constructing new temples either on top of pre-Roman temples or, in locations possessing their characteristics. Alternatively, the swift and wide diffusion in the use of this temple plan and

characteristics may have been due to its similarity to the pre-Roman plan, therefore appealing to Gallic culture and psyche.

Therefore, one can see that the general characteristic elements of the Gallic temple plan and the topographical relationships clearly continued in the Gallo-Roman temple and that, apart from the ambulatory gallery, the main forms of Roman acculturation were in construction techniques, embellishments, such as painted wall plaster and columns on their temples<sup>435</sup>, and building materials, such as the use of imperishable stone and tile instead of perishable wood and thatch.

## Chapter Five

# **Gallic Religious Rituals**

The majority of Chapter Five will be concerned the rite of sacrifice, specifically an anthropological analysis of the concept of sacrifice and of the individual Gallic sacrifices obtained from Greek and Roman literature and archaeology. Some authors question either the very existence of human sacrifice among the Gauls or, conceding its existence, its application to prisoners of war. It will be seen that archaeology confirms the practice of human sacrifice by the peoples of northern Europe and that the arguments regarding its application to prisoners are specious. However, it is proposed that, although human sacrifice was practised, not only was it performed in the most unusual circumstances, but, even then, it had become obsolete or regarded as unacceptable by the 1st century BCE. The other Gallic rituals examined are anthropomancy and the peculiarly Celtic circumambulation.

### **Sacrifice**

#### **General**

According to Reinach<sup>1</sup> “sacrifice is the crucial point of all cults, the essential bond between man and deity” and Wallace<sup>2</sup> lists sacrifice as one of the thirteen specific categories of religious behaviour which all religions have in common<sup>3</sup>. Most of this is accepted and followed by Wait<sup>4</sup>, who lists sacrifice as one of the nine minimal elements of religious behaviour<sup>5</sup>. Yerkes<sup>6</sup> points out that the concept of ‘sacrifice’ in the ancient world is contrary to that of the modern and lists features common to the Jewish, Greek and Roman religions<sup>7</sup> and this is reiterated by Aldhouse-Green<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Definition**

Beattie<sup>9</sup> states that sacrifice is extremely difficult to define because no definition perfectly covers every situation, which is known to be a sacrifice. Although every sacrifice somewhere lacks some element of any definition, some attempts have been made<sup>10</sup>.

The definition proposed for this study is: *Sacrifice is the consecration of a thing or person to a deity, an act in which the consecration is demonstrated and ensured by placing the consecrated thing or person beyond use in this world.*

According to Hubert and Mauss all sacrifices: can be divided into two types (personal sacrifices, which benefit a person, and objective sacrifices, which benefit

an object)<sup>11</sup>; are performed at specific sacred sites, which are usually traditional and are used repeatedly<sup>12</sup>; and either increase or decrease the amount of sacred force in a person or an object<sup>13</sup>.

### Elements of a sacrifice

Beattie<sup>14</sup> says that sacrifice is a rite, which means that something is said, and it is a ritual, which means it is a drama and, presumably, that something is done; there are a number of elements in every sacrifice.

### The Sacrifier

The sacrificer is the subject to whom the benefits of sacrifice accrue or who undergoes its effects<sup>15</sup> and who is responsible for supplying the victim<sup>16</sup>. The definition is applicable to a personal sacrifice and to an objective sacrifice. According to Classical sources, the sacrificer may be either an individual or the whole tribe, confirming the hypotheses of Hubert and Mauss and Beattie<sup>17</sup>. Caesar specifically distinguishes public and private sacrifices (**Caes.B.G.VI.13.4**) and says that individuals make sacrifices for themselves, either to cure disease or to avoid death in battle (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.2**). But there is more evidence for sacrifices which are of too great a scale to be for an individual and, therefore, have the community or tribe as the beneficiaries (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**; **Diod.V.32.6**; **Strab.IV.4.4**).

### The Sacrificer

Even though a sacrificer may be made sacrosanct, generally a sacrifice is performed by a religious specialist<sup>18</sup>, because it is considered too sacred a matter to be performed except by a priest<sup>19</sup>, the sacrificer. An organised priesthood preserving for itself the right to serve at the altar as a mediator between the deity and the people is an integral part of a well-developed sacrifice<sup>20</sup>. It is clear from Classical authors that Celtic sacrifices were conducted solely by the Druids; in a rather 'Alexandrian' approach to Druids Aldhouse-Green apparently claims that the ancient authors differentiate between Druids and priests<sup>21</sup> and that it was these lower status priests who actually killed the victims<sup>22</sup>. This is contested by some<sup>23</sup>, but accepted by many<sup>24</sup>. Caesar says the Druids *sacrificia publica ac privata procurant* (**Caes.B.G.VI.13.4**) and states that the sacrifice of a victim as a substitute was administered by Druids (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.2**). Diodorus Siculus, having already stated that the φιλόσοφοι are called Druids (**Diod.V.31.2**), says Ἔθος δ' αὐτοῖς ἔστι μηδένα θυσίαν ποιεῖν ἄνευ φιλοσόφου (**Diod.V.31.4**). Finally, Strabo says Ἔθρον δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ δρυιδῶν (**Strab.IV.4.4**), although it is possible to interpret

this statement as referring purely to what has been called a divinatory sacrifice<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, as Jullian accepts but contrary to Le Roux<sup>26</sup>, it seems clear not only that the rôle of a sacrificer existed in the Gallic religion, but also that the Druids were these sacrificers<sup>27</sup>. Green points out that, in the ritual described by Strabo (**Strab.**IV. 4.6) “the sacrifice consists of a cult-official”.

### *The Victim*

An essential part of the sacrifice is the victim<sup>28</sup>. It is best to say that the victim is anything, which is offered up. Méniel<sup>29</sup> calls selection the first stage of sacrifice. The choice of victim is usually prescribed; it may have to be of a certain age, gender or colour<sup>30</sup>. Its sacrificial value may be linked to its symbolic value rather than to its economic or practical value<sup>31</sup>. It is usual that it must be without any defect or suffering from any illness or infirmity; this is not just a Levitical requirement (*Exod.* 12:5; *Deut.*15:21; 17:1; *Malachi.*1:6-14), but is Vedic as well and is possibly a general one<sup>32</sup>. Certain sources report that the Gauls sacrificed criminals (**Diod.**V.32. 6; **Caes.***B.G.*VI.16.5); if true, this sacrifice of criminals contrasts with the Greek, Roman and, of course, Hebrew practice of offering up only the best quality (animal) victims, but can be explained. Sacrificial victims can be divided into three categories: human; animal; and material or inanimate offerings<sup>33</sup>. Green<sup>34</sup> points out that a living victim was not automatically more effective ritually than an inanimate one. It must not be assumed that human victims are of greater value than animals<sup>35</sup>. The choice of victim was not haphazard and was subject to rules regarding status, age, gender and physical condition<sup>36</sup>. Often in Greek<sup>37</sup>, Latin<sup>38</sup> and Hebrew literary evidence, the victim was usually someone who was of less worth to society or had not attained full worth<sup>39</sup>:

**slaves** (**Lact.Plac.***Comm. in Statii Theb.*X.793; **Serv.***ad Aen.*III.57; **Gloss.Luc.** ad Luc.X.334);

**prisoners of war**<sup>40</sup> (**Hom.***Il.*XXIII.175-184; **Hdt.**IV.62; **Verg.***Aen.*XI.81-82; **Diod.** V.32.6 and XIII.13; **Livy.**XXXVIII.47.12 and XLI.18.3; **Tac.***Ann.*XIII.30.3 and 57. ; **Flor.**I.iii.4.1, 2 and 3 and II.iv.12.24-25; **Plut.***Vit.Them.*XIII.2 and *Parallela Graec.Rom.*XXIII; **Athen.**IV.160e and XV.160; **Amm.Marc.** XXVII.4.4; **Min.Fel.***Oct.*XXX.4; **Oros.**V.23.18);

**children**<sup>41</sup> (*Jgd.*11:31, 34 and 39; 2 *Ki.*3:27; 17:31, 21:6 and 23:10; 2 *Chr.*28:3; *Ps.* 106:37-38; **Jer.**7:31, 19:5 and 32:35; **Ezk.**16:20, 20:31, 23:37 and 39; **Aes.** *Ag.*224-230; **Soph.***El.*570-572; **Eur.***I.T.*18-24, *I.A.*18-24, 1547-1550 and 1578-1583, *Hec.*220-225, *Tro.*622-623, *H.F.*408-409 and 492-493, *Ion.*278; **Hecat.***FGrHist.*i.F138a; **Hdt.**II.119 and VII.114 and 197; **Enn.***Ann.*VII.Frag

221; **Apollod.***Bibl.*I. 9.1 and III.15.4 and 8, *Epit.*I.7 and III.21-22 ;**Cic.***De rep.*III.9.15; **Livy.**XXXVIII.47.12; **Ov.***Met.*XIII.441-452; **Diod.**XIII.86.3, XX.14.4; **Sil.***Pun.*IV.765; **Curt.**IV.3.23; **Clemen.***Exhort. ad Gr.*III; **Paus.**III. 9.3 and IX.17.1; **Plut.***Ages.*VI.4-6, *Pelop.*XXI-XXII, *De Super.*XIII, *De Sera Num. Vind.*552A and *Reg. et Imp. Apoph.*175A; **Porph.***Abst.*II.56; **Lactant.** *Div. Inst.*I.21.4; **Tert.***Apol.*IX.2-3; **Min. Fel.***Oct.*XXX.3; **August.***De civ. D.*VII. 19 and 26; **Euseb.***Praep. evang.*I.10.45 and IV.16.11; **Justin.**XVIII.6.11-12; **Serv. Aen.**III.121 and XI.264; **Oros.**IV.6.3);

**criminals**<sup>42</sup> (**Caes.***B. G.*VI.16.5; **Diod.**V.32.6; **Strab.**X.2.9; **Plut.***Parallela Graec. Rom.*XIX); or

**foreigners** (**Eur.***I. T.*35-39 and 384; **Cic.***De rep.*III.9.15; **Diod.**XX.14.6; **Strab.**V. 3.12; **Livy.**XXII.57.6 and *Per.*LXIII; **Luc.**I.446; **Plin.***H. N.*XXVIII.12; **Sil.** *Pun.*IV.769; **Plut.***Marc.*III, *Quaest. Rom.*CXXXIII and **Plut.***Parallela Graec. Rom.*XXXVIII; **Sext. Emp.***Pyr.*III.208; **Clemen.***Exhort. ad Gr.*III; **Dio.**XII. 50.4; **Origen.***c. Cels.*V.27; **Tert.***Scorp.*VII.6; **Min. Fel.***Oct.*XXX.4; **Porph.** *Abst.*II.56; **Orosius.**IV.13.3)<sup>43</sup>.

The individuals, therefore, belonged to an excluded or marginalised group, such as foreigners, children, or prisoners of war, or people who had excluded or marginalised themselves, such as criminals,<sup>44</sup> and their value increased if they had royal status<sup>45</sup>; this dual status may have made them particularly worthy as victims<sup>46</sup>. Not only does the sacrifice of criminals have the advantage of pleasing the deity with highly expendable victims, while ridding society of undesirables<sup>47</sup>, but the very fact that they were criminals, excluded, possessed by malevolent spirits or possessing potent negative energy, which was released on their death, may have added to the efficacy<sup>48</sup>. The use of prisoners of war also had a multiple advantage, but here the victims were not undesirables, merely expensive to maintain<sup>49</sup>. While the sacrifice of slaves, criminals and prisoners of war is understandable, it seems strange that children, the future of the society, should be considered as potential victims. The explanation lies in their practical worth to society. A child only really acquires economic value and a place in society after puberty, when s/he is able to reproduce, help with food production or defend the society and even this is dependent on the child being healthy and able-bodied<sup>50</sup>. Until then s/he is expendable.

Archaeological evidence supports this. Many of the victims had a liminal status, such as pubescent adolescents or menopausal women<sup>51</sup> or were disabled or deformed<sup>52</sup>

and, therefore, were marginalised<sup>53</sup>. Perhaps it was a method of winnowing the weak and unfit from society.

### *The Place and the Time*

The sacrifice cannot take place at any time in any place<sup>54</sup>. The place for the ceremony had to be strictly demarcated, not only to shut out the worldly and unsanctified, but also to delineate between the killing of a human being inside the area, which would then be a sacrifice, and the killing of a human being outside the area, which would be murder<sup>55</sup>. The concepts of separateness, respect and particular rules of behaviour appear to be common to every sacred site in any culture<sup>56</sup>. There is ample evidence that the religious significance of sacred sites remains despite cultural change, social assimilation and religious conversion<sup>57</sup>.

The times of sacrifice may be *ad hoc*, such as at times of personal or group crisis, or periodic as laid down for the general good<sup>58</sup>. All rituals, and therefore sacrifices, can be divided into two types. There are those, which occur at regular times after a regular period, and the occasion is always a point in a natural cycle<sup>59</sup>; these are referred to as calendrical<sup>60</sup>. The others are those rituals, which are performed irregularly<sup>61</sup> and are called either non-calendrical<sup>62</sup> or crisis<sup>63</sup> rituals. The ceremony may have to be at a certain time or on a certain day.

### *To whom the Sacrifice is made*

A sacrifice may be directed only towards a supernatural being<sup>64</sup>, which separates it from any other form of ritual destruction, and involves communication with a god, gods or spirits<sup>65</sup>. According to Brelich<sup>66</sup> the need for a supernatural recipient separates sacrifice from any other kind of ritual destruction. The participants in the sacrifice need to have faith in the effectiveness of the sacrifice and in the power to whom or which the sacrifice is directed. Therefore, a sacrifice cannot be to please a human and for this reason sacrifice does not include the killing of wives and slaves to accompany the dead beyond the grave; this is contrary to Green<sup>67</sup>, who calls this “retainer-sacrifice”.

### *Functions of a Sacrifice*

For Beattie sacrifice of any type is almost always concerned with power<sup>68</sup> and may involve either access to power or removal of dangerous power<sup>69</sup>. The spiritual functions suggested for sacrifice<sup>70</sup> have been covering transgressions, re-establishing the bond with the deity and soliciting help from the deity. Beattie sets out three

psychological functions. Sacrifice provides a dramatic performance for the participants and witnesses, which can be a rewarding experience in itself<sup>71</sup>, a cathartic effect, which relieves their conscience, and a social function<sup>72</sup>, by which the society is renewed and the participant's membership of the society is reaffirmed.

Another view is that, whether the event is unusual, war, famine or disease, or mundane, harvest, rites of passage or meteorological or astronomical events, the function of a sacrifice was to bring benefits for the sacrificers<sup>73</sup> and that, crucial to sacrifice, are the notions of giving and of separation<sup>74</sup>. Giving may be as a request for something, a response to a crisis, a propitiation or a thanksgiving. The act of separation from the human world is equally important and may be real or metaphorical. Technically, as even Green<sup>75</sup> implies, a living victim may be consecrated and separated from the profane by being kept within a sacred enclosure until death. However, certain bases for the choice of the victim (age, colour or health) will or may change over time rendering the sacrifice unsuitable; therefore, the best solution would be to kill the victim thereby removing the offering at the point when it is most acceptable before it has a chance to deviate from its status, quite apart from the long-term economic investment needed for maintenance, which was probably an incentive to kill the victim. Bradley<sup>76</sup> suggests that the death of the victim created a bond between the deity and the offeror. The violent destruction of the victim may have been the most prominent element of separation and was essential, as a transforming agent to send the gift to the deity, for an animate offering to be a true sacrifice<sup>77</sup> and "an important factor in the sacrificial process"<sup>78</sup>. The usual means of removal for living victims was death, possibly with or by an added metaphorical removal, such as by immersion in water or by burial<sup>79</sup>.

Hubert and Mauss<sup>80</sup> divide sacrifices into regular and occasional. However, there is so little information about the frequency of Celtic sacrifices that this form of classification is useless. According to Wait, the combination of the nine elements of religious behaviour<sup>81</sup> and the seven units of belief<sup>82</sup> produce rituals, which may be grouped into functional categories determined by their intention. Four of these rituals may correspond to sacrifices for which we have information, literary or archaeological: fertility rituals<sup>83</sup>; rituals of technological magic<sup>84</sup>; worship rituals<sup>85</sup> and rituals of sanctification<sup>86</sup>. Therefore, the categories which will be used are: fertility; technological magic; worship; and sanctification; the category of technological magic will be sub-divided into: thanksgiving, which is a form of manipulation in which the sacrifice is offered after receipt of the deity's favour<sup>87</sup>;

expiatory, which cleanses away wrongdoing; propitiatory, which differs slightly from expiatory in that it attempts to win the goodwill, sympathy or approval of the deity; petitionary, which makes a request to the deity, and apotropaic. The common factor of all these categories is that each provides a means by which one may hope to influence forces outside of oneself<sup>88</sup>. Another division of sacrifices is also set out by Wait<sup>89</sup> and may be correlated with the seven types of ritual already mentioned. It is the objectives for the increase or decrease in sacred force and, therefore, for sacrifices. The objective of a sacrifice is:

1. Curative or
2. Propitiatory or
3. Confirmatory or
4. Divinatory.

In this section Gallic sacrifices have been classified according to a certain number of distinct categories<sup>90</sup>, despite the criticism of this approach by Hubert and Mauss<sup>91</sup>. For convenience and brevity, the sections dealing with the time, place and person to whom the sacrifice is dedicated will be discussed, if possible, in the analysis of the sacrifices.

### **Human sacrifice**

Human sacrifice was the most notorious and most controversial form of sacrifice in Celtic religion. There is a great deal of literary evidence for this, but very little archaeological<sup>92</sup> and none in Gaul dated to the 1st century BCE. Bodies subjected to ritual treatment *after* death are distinct from victims of sacrifice<sup>93</sup> and, even then, what evidence there is for ritual killing is often ambiguous; the ritual death of a sacrificial victim may really be the ritualised execution of a criminal<sup>94</sup>. Much has been written about this subject, both by ancient writers and by modern academics, in each case for the same reasons: A fascination with the brutal and the bizarre, accompanied by a propaganda motive- for the ancient authors the propaganda was to blacken the image of the Celts<sup>95</sup>, for some modern writers it is to whitewash the reputation of the Druids.

### Literary evidence

There are various literary references to the topic of human sacrifice<sup>96</sup> by the Celts in works by Greek or Roman authors. The subject is controversial, with some modern scholars accepting it<sup>97</sup> and others denying that the practice was connected with either Celtic religion or the Druids<sup>98</sup> both because it was a standard τόπος of Graeco-

Roman literature, when discussing the Celts, in order to highlight the Otherness of the Celts and to reinforce the self-image of the Greeks and Romans as both civilised and civilising and because the archaeological evidence is at odds with the literary. However, this denial is unrealistic. Human sacrifice was practised by some of the most civilised cultures in the Mediterranean<sup>99</sup>. Both the Greeks and the Romans have instances of human sacrifice in their mythology or history<sup>100</sup>; indeed, the Senate only prohibited human sacrifice in 97 BCE (**Plin.H.N.XXX.12**; **Porph.Abst.II.55**) and gladiatorial combat had its origins in human sacrifice (**Tert.De Spec.XII**; **Serv.Aen. III.67**). Varro (**August.De civ.D.VII.9**) gives the basis for human sacrifice as being that the human race is the best, that is the most fertile, and, therefore, human beings are sacrificed to promote fertility. This links up with the statement by James<sup>101</sup> that the principal direction of human sacrifice was the growth of crops. It is not surprising, therefore, if their cultural cousins, the Celts, also practised such rites.

The earliest reference is by Socrates, writing in the 4th century BCE about the Galatians (**Athen.IV.160**). The literary sources of the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE are not entirely consistent. The Consul Cn. Manlius, according to Livy (**Livy.XXXVIII.47.12**), and Cicero (**Cic.Pro Font.XIII.31**) use the reports of human sacrifice as anti-Gallic propaganda, as possibly do Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.XXXI.13**) and Tacitus (**Tac.Ann.XIV.30.3**), Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.32.6**) reports on it with condemnation, Pliny the Elder, somewhat biased against the Druids, reports the practice and condemns it (**Plin.H.N.XXX.13**) and Minucius Felix and Tertullian (**Min.Fel.Oct.XXX.4**; **Tert.Apol.IX.5** and **Scorp.VII.6**) use the reports as Christian attacks on the brutality of paganism. The Celtic custom of human sacrifice was remembered and condemned even in the 2nd century CE (**Plut.De Super.XIII**). On the other hand, the reports of Caesar and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (**Caes.B.G.VI. 16.2** and **4**; **Dion.Hal.Ant.Rom.I.38.2**) appear objective and even Cicero, in a non-forensic context, and Pliny the Elder say that the Gauls consider it a pious act, pleasing to the gods (**Cic.De re pub.III.9.15**; **Plin.H.N. XXX.4**) and Augustine explains the reason for human sacrifice (**August.De civ.D.VII.19**). Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cicero (**Dion.Hal.Ant.Rom.I.38.2**; **Cic.De re pub.III.9.15**) even state that it was also practised by other western nations. It was certainly practised by other “barbarians”, such as the Iberians (**Plut.Quaest.Rom.LXXXIII**), the Germans (**Tac.Germ.XXXIX.1-2**. and **XL.2** and **5**) and the Scythians (**Strab.V.3.12**; **Plut.De Super.XIII**; **Tert.Scorp.VII.6**; **Sext.Emp.Pyr.III.208**; **Porph.Abst.II.56**). Finally, while Cicero, Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus merely refer to the practice in general terms, Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.2-5**), Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**) and Diodorus

Siculus (**Diod.V.32.6**) provide the most details about the subject and one form of human sacrifice is described by two of the authors, possibly all three. Although human sacrifice in Irish vernacular literature was sometimes propitiatory, as when a person was buried in the foundations of a new building to propitiate the earth spirits<sup>102</sup>, it was originally performed to strengthen the deity who promoted fertility, as when the first-born were sacrificed<sup>103</sup>, and this was not forgotten<sup>104</sup>. MacCulloch and Green suggest that the different methods of human sacrifice may indicate either that some gods had a special method of sacrifice<sup>105</sup> or that a different method was performed for each deity or for the object being invoked<sup>106</sup>; for example, sacrifices involving the spilling of blood may be for particular ceremonies, other forms for others<sup>107</sup>. Powell<sup>108</sup> claims that the most common form of human sacrifice was by a weapon wound followed by the sprinkling of the victim's blood on sacred objects. This is inferred from passages of Lucan (**Luc.III.405**) and Tacitus (**Tac.Ann.XIV.30.3**). Not only, as will be seen, is the ritual in the passage by Tacitus possibly an example of a rite mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, but it is also presumptuous to declare a form of a practice the usual form on the basis of only two references, neither of which has a full explanation; on that basis one could declare the use of a huge wicker figure to be the usual method, since it is also mentioned in two references (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**; **Strab.IV.4.5**) and with more information.

The sacrifice by the Celts of prisoners captured in battle is mentioned as early as the 3rd century BCE by Sopater (**Athen.XV.160**); Brunaux, although claiming that Sopater's report on the Galatian act of sacrificing prisoners may be anti-Galatian propaganda<sup>109</sup>, says that the sacrifice was a thanksgiving offering as a result of a promise before combat and those people promised were offered up<sup>110</sup>. Livy refers to it in the speech of Consul Manlius in 187 BCE (**Livy.XXXVIII.47.12**) and recounts how in 176 BCE, when attacked by the Romans and fleeing to the mountains with captured cattle from Mutina, the Ligurians, a Celticised tribe, slaughtered some Roman prisoners of war (**Livy.XLI.183.3**). It does not say that the prisoners were sacrificed, but, in view of the fact that Livy says that they *pecora in fanis trucidant*, it is reasonable to think that this applied to the prisoners. Diodorus records how the Galatians sacrificed the most beautiful prisoners, shooting the rest (**Diod.XXXI.13**). Minucius Felix, a writer in the 3rd century CE, reports that the Gauls sacrificed such victims to Mercury (**Min.Fel.Oct.XXX.4**). The Celtic Scordisci allegedly sacrificed prisoners of war (**Flor.I.iii.4.1, 2 and 3**; **Amm.Marc.XXVII.4.4**; **Oros.V.23.18**). All of which contrasts with a sacrifice related by Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.17.3**), in which

only the captured horses are sacrificed. Non-Celtic peoples also sacrificed captured prisoners of war<sup>111</sup>.

Kendrick<sup>112</sup> says that the killing of prisoners of war may actually have had its basis in economic expediency and, therefore, as with the possibility that the ritual was actually a form of capital punishment, did not have any connection with religious observance but was occasional national purging of criminals and prisoners of war, although Le Roux<sup>113</sup> says that this is ridiculous. While there may have been an element of economic expediency or social cleansing, it should not be assumed that this type of sacrifice is entirely devoid of a religious basis, since Strabo (**Strab.**IV.4.4) states that it was to increase fertility<sup>114</sup>. Perhaps this explains why, after a defeat the Celts killed their wounded or the leader killed himself (**Diod.**XXII.9.2); it was not, as MacCulloch<sup>115</sup> says, to demonstrate the implacability of the gods, but was rather to deprive their enemy of the means of increasing their fertility.

Bayet contends that the evidence indicates that the sacrifice of war captives only happened in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE and, even then, the Gauls did not sacrifice all those captured. Bayet is correct in stating that two passages are incorrectly used as evidence for the practice of sacrificing prisoners of war by the Gauls. The first consists of two lines by Silius Italicus relating how Ducarius, chieftain of the Boii, called on his companions to kill the Consul Flaminius during the forthcoming battle (**Sil.Pun.**V.652-653). Bayet<sup>116</sup> rejects it as evidence of such, correctly pointing out that, when Flaminius is killed, there is no indication that the action was a sacrificial rite. Indeed, although *caput* can mean “life”, by the use of the phrase *hoc mactare caput* Ducarius seems rather to be urging his companions to take Flaminius’ head. The second is the passage by Pausanias relating the massacre of all Callian males of every age by the Gauls under Orestorius and Combustis (**Paus.**X.22.3) and the rape of the women (**Paus.**X.22.4). Pausanias gives a detailed description and does not seem to be expecting the reader to have read more in other works. Bayet<sup>117</sup> points out, first, that the report is that of an enemy of the Gauls and, therefore, propaganda and, as such, suspect, but also, more importantly, that, even if the report is accurate, there is no indication in Pausanias that the victims were being offered up to the gods or even that the massacre was part of a religious ritual. Moreover, the women, also prisoners, were not killed and there is no evidence that rape was a religious ritual. In short, it seems only to be a description of an atrocity. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report. The atrocity took place in Aetolia and it is clear that the massacre had no religious associations and was an

example of *Schreckkrieg* to fill the Aetolians with fear and make them return to Aetolia to prevent anymore atrocities (**Paus.X.22.2**) and it worked (**Paus.X.22.5**).

Bayet<sup>118</sup> questions the reliability of the reference to Sopater, because he was a comic writer and it is not clear how seriously he was expecting to be taken. Bayet<sup>119</sup> also casts doubt on the use of the speech of Manlius as evidence, suggesting, presumably on the basis of the use of the word *vix* instead of the word *non* in the clause *cum vix redimendi captivos copia esset*, that the Consul is implying that prisoners of war were ransomed, if only just, and were *not* sacrificed and, by saying that, according to Manlius, the people of Asia only *mactatas humanas hostias immolatosque liberos suos audirent*, implying that they did not actually witness it themselves and that such reports about human sacrifice were only anti-Galatian rumours. But this argument means that Manlius' reference to *mactatas humanas hostias immolatosque liberos suos* is unconnected to the *captivos*, which is difficult to accept. Bayet<sup>120</sup> accepts that the ritual recorded by Diodorus (**Diod.XXXI.13**) is a sacrifice, but argues that it proves that Celtic religion did *not* demand the sacrifice of all prisoners.<sup>121</sup> However, Diodorus' statement that τὸς δὲ ἄλλους πάντας κατηκόντισεν calls to mind Strabo's description of a human sacrifice by arrows (**Strab.IV.4.5**) and indicates that it is possible that the prisoners who were not beautiful or brave were still sacrificed, albeit to a different deity, for a different reason and by a different ritual. Moreover, it assumes that practices were common and identical to all the Celtic peoples; it is possible that the Celts in the East had forms of the same practice different from those of the Celts in the West. Therefore, while the Celts who became the Galatians had variations on certain Celtic rites, sacrificing only the most handsome and most beautiful, the Gauls sacrificed all the prisoners. Support for this is seen in the fact that, while the sacrifice of children seems to have been alien to the Gauls (**August. De civ.D.VII.9**), the Galatians seem to have had no such restrictions (**Livy.XXXVIII.47.12**).

Bayet<sup>122</sup> tries to argue that there are many instances, from the 3rd, 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, which prove that the Gauls did not sacrifice prisoners. Livy recounts that the Boii, who destroyed Postumius' army in 216 BCE captured some prisoners (**Livy.XXIII.24.11-12**). However, it does not say what happened to the prisoners and it also does not actually say that they *were* sacrificed, but, in view of the evidence from the 3rd century BCE, it is probable. Livy would not have left such anti-Gaul material as human sacrifice out, but this is assuming that Livy's source was not also silent about what happened. Secondly, after the defeat of a Carthaginian army in 200

BCE, 2,000 captives from Placentia were rescued (**Livy**.XXXI.21.18). But it seems that the 2,000 people were non-combatants and this may explain their different treatment. In negotiations with Q. Titurius Sabinus Ambiorix, co-king of the Eburones, says that he hopes that his men will be persuaded to spare the Romans' lives (**Caes.B.G.V.36.2**). However, Ambiorix, trying to obtain the Romans' surrender; would certainly not tell them that, if they surrendered, they would be sacrificed. Indeed, in view of what happened to Sabinus when he laid down his arms - he was surrounded and killed – it is almost certain that Ambiorix's statement was a trick. Vercingetorix kept prisoners of war alive (**Caes.B.G.VII.20.9-10**), but not only does this passage not refer to actual prisoners of war, but, even if they had been soldiers, it could be alleged that Vercingetorix only kept them alive to use for propaganda. The fact that Caesar does not mention the Gauls sacrificing prisoners of war after each battle is not significant because, if Caesar had won the battle, the Gauls would either not have any prisoners or would not have stayed to sacrifice them and, if the Gauls had won, Caesar would not have stayed to witness the sacrifice.

However, Bayet<sup>123</sup> does supply an instance from the 1st century BCE, in which prisoners of war were not sacrificed, but were kept as slaves by the Nervii (**Caes. B.G.V.42.2**)<sup>124</sup> and support for this idea is seen in Caesar's description of how, prior to a battle, the Gauls would generally dedicate the booty to a god and the deity to whom the spoils were dedicated, probably to procure victory, was the deity whom Caesar calls 'Mars'<sup>i</sup> (**Caes.B.G.VI.17.3**); yet, when he talks of the sacrifice of booty dedicated to the War-god in exchange for victory, Caesar mentions only *animalia capta*, not prisoners of war. Although accepting that the word *animalia* can mean all living things, a translation favoured by Carey and Koch<sup>125</sup>, Bayet<sup>126</sup> points out that, in the description of funerals, Caesar distinguishes between animals and humans burned on the pyre. This may explain the use of the adverb *plerumque*. It does not mean that the booty was usually devoted, implying that, in exceptional cases, it might not happen, but rather that the booty was mostly devoted, meaning that some of the booty, the prisoners of war, was not. Moreover, Brunaux<sup>127</sup> states that prisoners of war were the main source of slaves and, therefore, the sacrifice of prisoners was rare and not widespread. Therefore, in view of the fact that those references to Celts or Celticised tribes sacrificing prisoners of war were either from the 3rd or 2nd centuries BCE (**Athen.XV.160**; **Livy.XLI.18**; **Diod.XXXI.13**) or based on sources from those times (**Diod.V.32.6**) and the fact that the much later reports of such actions all concern the Scordisci, who may have been particularly

---

<sup>i</sup> Page 69.

incapable of change, it is possible that, as Bayet contends, by the 1st century BCE, the practice of sacrificing prisoners had ceased, possibly because of their economic worth; this would certainly explain the fact that Caesar refers only to the destruction of the animals as a thanksgiving sacrifice and that the Aedui and Nervii kept prisoners alive. The alternative is that the treatment of prisoners of war differed from tribe to tribe.

The first form of human sacrifice to be examined is described by Strabo (**Strab.**IV.4.5). The sacrifice consists of victims being shot by arrows and then impaled ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς which probably means their sanctuaries<sup>128</sup>. There is no indication of the deity to whom it was offered, the reason it was offered or the frequency with which it was performed, but it seems to be too large a sacrifice to be performed on behalf of an individual and so it could be proposed that the tribe was the sacrificer. Green says that the use of archery is interesting, in view of its absence in warfare<sup>129</sup> and the fact that there is little evidence for archery as a method of killing<sup>130</sup>, and that it may indicate the use of special weapons for special killing<sup>131</sup>; Spence<sup>132</sup>, who claims that the arrow is a symbol of rain in all parts of the world, thinks that the sacrifice may have been a rain-inducing rite, the shower of arrows symbolising a shower of rain. This interpretation would mean that the sacrifice was a stimulative/fertility one and probably a crisis sacrifice.

Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.**V.32.6) records two forms of human sacrifice, one of which also involves impalement. In this instance the victims are criminals and the impalement seems to be the actual means of killing rather than of displaying the victim. This and the fact that it is not a criminal execution, but is a sacrifice are indicated by the statement that the impalement was τοῖς θεοῖς. Powell<sup>133</sup> says that, whatever their crimes, they had infringed their ritual integrity. The ritual seems to have been calendrical<sup>134</sup>. Despite Bayet's statement that Diodorus' text is very clear, there are three different interpretations of the statement that the victims were guarded κατὰ πενταετηρίδα. Green<sup>135</sup> suggests that this may be a confusion by the Mediterranean Diodorus between human sacrifice and capital punishment and that he has applied the five year waiting period before execution, which Vercingetorix experienced according to Roman Law<sup>136</sup> and thereby added a Roman custom to a Gallic practice. If this is not the case, it may mean that the sacrifice was carried out annually, but the victims had been kept for five years<sup>137</sup>; Green<sup>138</sup> points out that this is reminiscent of the practice of keeping cattle aside for as long as ten years until their sacrifice<sup>139</sup>. Or it may mean that the rite was held quinquennially and all the

prisoners held over the years in between each sacrifice were impaled. Bayet and Webster<sup>140</sup> follow the latter interpretation. But while Bayet claims that all historians are forced to recognise that the phrase cannot be taken literally, Webster says that it suggests that it was practised infrequently. The fact that it is guilty persons who are being sacrificed seems to indicate that the sacrifice is expiatory, the death of the criminal cleansing any disturbance caused by his/her crimes, and that the sacrificer is the tribe. Both of these rites can be classed as blood sacrifices; in view of the Jewish concept that the life is in the blood (*Lev.17:11*) and that, according to Aldhouse-Green<sup>141</sup>, the Greeks held that the blood of the victim was the catharsis of the sacrifice and symbolised the life leaving and going into the earth, the Celts may have thought the same.

The second form of human sacrifice also has criminals as the victims and, as such, can also be regarded as expiatory in intention; the word used to describe the latter means “dedication by burnt sacrifice”, showing that the ritual was a religious process. Although there is no mention of any period of incarceration of the victims prior to the sacrifice, this does not rule out that the criminals were kept for the same five-year period as the first form of sacrifice. In fact, the object of both of the verbs ἀνασκολοπίζουσι and καθαγίζουσι is τοὺς...κακούργους κατὰ πενταετηρίδα and, therefore, almost certainly means that criminals are used in both sacrifices and that this sacrifice too is calendrical. Since the sacrifice is presumably to counter the infractions committed by the victims and so avoid divine punishment, the sacrificer must have been the tribe, which was the recipient of the benefits of the sacrifice.

An interesting point is that Diodorus Siculus says that the criminals are burnt μετ’ ἄλλων πολλῶν ἀπαρχῶν. This is significant for three reasons. Firstly, the use of the word meaning “first fruits” means that this sacrifice was not just an expiatory sacrifice, but, with the very common practice of offering the first fruits of the field and herd back to the gods after the completion of an enterprise<sup>142</sup>, was a thanksgiving or a prophylactic offering and, in order to promote fertility for next year, a stimulative one. Secondly, it suggests that the sacrifice was probably performed just after harvest time each year, which not only confirms that the sacrifice was calendrical, but also supplies the time of year at which it was held. Thirdly, the use of the word ἄλλων to describe the first fruits seems to indicate that the criminals were themselves considered as first fruits. If this is so, how can criminals be first fruits? The answer may lie in the fact that the beginning of the Celtic Year was at the end of

the modern month of October, at harvest time and the time for offering up the first fruits. Perhaps the criminals killed in this sacrifice were the first to commit a crime or the first to be caught or the first to be convicted in that year and, therefore, the time of their capture or criminal activity coincided with harvest time? Despite the use of words to state that this was a religious ceremony, it may be that these rituals were either originally or had become forms of capital punishment<sup>143</sup>.

However, by following this description of criminals being sacrificed with the statement that the Gauls used war prisoners as victims (**Diod.**V.32.6), Diodorus Siculus seems to imply that the victims in this sacrifice might also be prisoners taken as booty. There are three possible interpretations. The first is that, in order to qualify as first fruits, they would only be the first prisoners taken in the campaigning season and may be offered up, as an analogue to the agrarian first fruits, in order to encourage the tribal war god to give them more victories<sup>144</sup>. Another possible interpretation is that the prisoners are only offered up as an expiatory sacrifice as substitutes where the actual offenders have not been caught or the crime has been committed by a noble; the rationale would be that a crime has been committed and, as a result, a breach in the natural order exists and must be redressed by a human life, possibly derived from the 'doctrine' recorded by Caesar that *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur* (**Caes.***B.G.*VI.16.3). While sensationalism and personal and cultural chauvinism may have been his motivation, the sacrifices performed according to Tacitus by the Druids as the Romans attacked *Mona* [Anglesey] (**Tac.** *Ann.*XIV.30.3) may have been a form of this practice of sacrificing prisoners to stave off disaster.

According to Caesar (**Caes.***B.G.*VI.16.2-3) a Celt, when faced with a life-threatening event or circumstance, such as disease or war (the two examples given by Caesar, probably because those are the most common types of danger a Celt would face) could avert either the danger or, at least, the effect by offering up another human being as a substitute<sup>145</sup>; in the case of disease either to the personification of the disease or to a healing deity<sup>146</sup>. In this case the sacrificer would be the person wanting to avert the danger. An interesting point is that this sacrifice is the only one recorded where the sacrificer is a private individual. According to Caesar, this substitutionary arrangement was necessary, because it was thought that the Celtic gods accepted only an exact substitution, a human life for a human life, in a form of *lex talionis*. This rationale may have been created by Caesar alone or it could have been an actual Celtic concept<sup>147</sup>. Caesar points out that the same kind of sacrifice can be performed

in public affairs. This was a crisis sacrifice and a substitutionary one. Obviously, while the sacrificer was probably a Druid, the sacrificer was an individual in private matters and the tribe or a particular section of the tribe in public matters, possibly for the same reasons; this type of sacrifice for public affairs would not only mean that the tribe or a section would be the sacrificer, but that, to be consistent with the theory of one-for-one substitution, large numbers of people would have to be sacrificed. Bayet<sup>148</sup> is right that it does not mean a single sacrifice for many at the beginning of a new war. Examples of this type of sacrifice may be seen in a Gallic leader sacrificing prisoners of war (**Diod.**XXXI.13); the sacrifice of the most handsome prisoners may have been platory, to win victory, and the rest were killed as a substitutionary sacrifice. The massacre by the Gauls of their women and children to avert divine misfortune because of the bad auspices taken before the battle against Antigonus Gonatas (**Just.Epit.**XXVI.2.2) may also be an example<sup>149</sup>. According to Jullian and MacCulloch<sup>150</sup>, a Celt may commit suicide to bring about victory for their tribe. The description by Athenaeus (**Athen.**IV.154) of the spectacle of a person allowing his throat to be cut in exchange for gifts to his family may be an example of this substitutionary sacrifice. Related to this sacrifice may be the belief, certainly among the Britons, that eating a human being may result in good health (**Plin.H.N.**XXX.13). A practice, if it existed, of medicinal or sacramental cannibalism<sup>151</sup> may have been recorded by Strabo, and possibly Diodorus, (**Strab.**IV.5.4; **Diod.**V.32.3) in their descriptions of the inhabitants of Ireland; although Strabo admits that he has no trustworthy witnesses for this report and Diodorus may just have been copying without question, Solinus reports the Irish practice of drinking the blood of dead enemies (**Solin.**XXII.2-3). It certainly contrasts with the Classical methods of offering to build shrines or to sacrifice cattle to a particular deity. The substitution may be effected either before the life-threatening event or after, the latter secured by a vow on the part of the sacrificer; no doubt, the Druids ensured the performance of the vow.

Bayet<sup>152</sup> proposes various reasons for not taking Caesar seriously. If every Gaul performed this rite, the war of Vercingetorix would have been preceded by hecatombs of victims. Caesar does not give a single example<sup>153</sup>. But this is ignoring the possibility that this sacrifice is only performed by Gauls who are scared of death in battle. But, even if many Gauls used this rite before a battle or if the sacrifice was to avert disease, how would Caesar know of any instances? Not only would such information be too personal and outside the ambit of his work, but it must also be remembered that Caesar was not a social anthropologist, but a general dealing with

generalities. During the siege of Alesia, a critical point for the Gallic people, Critognatus advises the Gauls to resort to cannibalism but does not mention this substitutionary sacrifice (**Caes.B.G.VII.77.12**)<sup>154</sup>. The reason is that the victim of such a rite would obviously have been a slave and the only people in Alesia were warriors, who could not be spared. Finally, it is unreliable because no one else reports it; yet Bayet<sup>155</sup> accepts the idea of a Chief Druid and the assembly of Druids in the forest of the Carnutes, both known only from Caesar. Why accept one, but not the other?

Webster<sup>156</sup> uses this emergency sacrifice as evidence that all human sacrifices were only employed in emergencies; but not only is it wrong to use it alone, but the other human sacrifices suggest that they were held regularly, not exceptionally.

But the most notorious form of human sacrifice is recorded by both Caesar and Strabo<sup>157</sup> (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**; **Strab.IV.4.5**), indicating, Cunliffe<sup>158</sup> thinks, a common source<sup>159</sup>, and, perhaps, also by Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.32.6**), a view accepted as definite by Bayet<sup>160</sup>. This involves the burning of a gigantic hollow figure constructed out of flammable organic material in which the human victims have been placed. The words used by the authors to describe the figure, *simulacrum* and *κολοσσόν* respectively, indicate a huge construction and, despite Powell's<sup>161</sup> reservations, strongly imply that it is human in shape. The human shape possibly reinforces the nature of the sacrifice — human victims being burned in a burning human framework<sup>162</sup>. Although there is no suggestion of a date for the sacrifice or even of a regular practice, Jullian<sup>163</sup> says that it was held “à des dates fixes”. De Vries<sup>164</sup> says that the words used by Strabo and Caesar prevent the envisaging of just a simple cage, in which the victims were locked. The common factors in the descriptions of Caesar and Strabo — the enormous size of the constructions; the human shape of the construction; the material used in its construction being a strong, probably very available, but pliant form of vegetation; the placing of humans into the construction; and the burning of the figure — demonstrate that both were writing about the same subject and were possibly using the same source. Caesar says that the constructions were built *viminibus* and Strabo says that they were composed *χόρτου καὶ ξύλων*; but essentially they agree that the material is organic and flammable. Then Caesar lists only humans as the sacrificial victims, but Strabo includes cattle and wild animals too. Either Strabo or his source expanded the type of victims used or Caesar or his source ignored the presence of animals; but importantly, they both agree that humans were sacrificed. Caesar provides information both about the type

of people some and possibly all of the human victims are and, by implication, the function of the sacrifice; Strabo is silent on both counts. Caesar states that the victims were criminals and says, probably sarcastically, that these are considered more pleasing to the gods. Although criminals are the most expendable and the use of outsiders is the most economic approach to the need for human victims<sup>165</sup>, and less likely to cause internal social discord over the choice of victims, Le Roux<sup>166</sup> believes that it is the very fact that the victims were criminals, therefore excluded from society, or prisoners of war, therefore enemies, that the purificatory capacity was much greater. This detail indicates that the sacrifice is an expiatory one, by which the person who infringed the civil harmony redresses it by his/her death and prevents the tribe from suffering the divine punishment for the breach of order, and, therefore, the tribe was the sacrificer. Green<sup>167</sup> points out that, in Middle-Eastern religions<sup>168</sup>, fire sacrifice was associated with purification and atonement and suggests that, as the Druids must have chosen fire for a reason, it was to symbolise purification, expiation and as an appropriate medium for the thunder/sky god<sup>ii</sup>. However, Caesar's statement that, if no criminals are available, then innocent people are used suggests that this is not the case<sup>169</sup>. The answer probably lies in a passage in Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.4**). Here Strabo recounts the fact that the Druids judge cases concerned with murder and that the more murderers are convicted, the more crops are grown. Caesar is therefore saying that the Druids convict innocent people in order to increase the crops, which is possible since they act as both judge and sacrificer. Bayet<sup>170</sup> disagrees with this, arguing that Strabo's passage mentions harvests, but not human sacrifice, while the passages of Caesar and Diodorus are the reverse and that the connection between the two, and from it the theory that the sacrifices are intended to make the harvests richer, is based on a presumed omission by Strabo. However, MacCulloch, Spence and Aldhouse-Green<sup>171</sup> accept that this shows that the holocaust described by Strabo, and therefore Caesar, is actually a fertility rite to stimulate the land, the flames, representing the flames of the sun, increasing the power of the sun and, therefore, fertility; burning may also be associated with fertility since it replaces nitrates in the soil<sup>172</sup>. In Ireland the ashes of Brigit's midsummer fires were spread on fields as alleged fertiliser<sup>173</sup>. A writer in the 9th century CE records an Irish ceremony at Beltane at which the Druids drove cattle between two bonfires to purify them<sup>174</sup>; therefore Spence<sup>175</sup> proposes that these burnt sacrifices were held in the Spring, at Beltane. This would explain the connection between the rites and fertility. It is strongly implied by some that this sacrifice is to Taranis<sup>176</sup>. This is based on a combination of three points:

---

<sup>ii</sup> See page 166.

1. The human sacrifice to Taranis (*Comm.Schol.Bern. ad Luc. adI.446*) involved fire<sup>iii</sup>;
2. Any fire sacrifice involves the flames, smoke and ashes rising sky-wards;
3. Fire would be an appropriate sacrifice for a lightning-god.

If this is right, then the sacrifice was indeed at Beltane, the date Sergent and Birkhan give for the sacrifice to Taranis<sup>iv</sup>. It would then be a calendrical rite and the tribe would be the sacrificer. A fire of this size would certainly have stimulated nearly all the senses and, as Hamilton<sup>177</sup> says, would have created euphoria. Aldhouse-Green<sup>178</sup> suggests that this sacrifice would have been a collective shared experience and a catharsis for the spectators. The human shape would have helped to effect this.

Contrary to Aldhouse-Green<sup>179</sup>, who holds that Diodorus says that they were on special occasions, Jullian<sup>180</sup> says that the rituals described by Strabo and Diodorus Siculus are on fixed dates because the victims in the sacrifice Diodorus Siculus describes were held for five years; this means that Jullian seems to think that the sacrifices described by Strabo and Diodorus Siculus are the same. But both Bayet and Le Roux consider Caesar's report very unclear. Bayet<sup>181</sup> claims that, other than the claim that humans were present, there is confusion among the texts concerning the types and number of victims, and disagreement on the materials used, and the date, the frequency and the motive of the ritual are all unknown and that this lack of certainty is explained by the fact that none of the authors had access to a precise eye witness because this sort of sacrifice was extremely rare. With the common factors of criminals as victims, the infliction of death by burning and the statement that the victims were forms of first fruits, which are offered up to stimulate fertility, it is possible that the description by Diodorus Siculus, who was notorious for summarising his unacknowledged sources, is an abridged version of the same sacrifice mentioned in the source for Strabo and Caesar. Le Roux says that, if the usage of this form of human sacrifice was universal, Caesar would not have missed it during his years in Gaul, yet Caesar gives no indication of the place, the time of year or the participants to the ritual<sup>182</sup> and, therefore, it is too imprecise not to be suspect<sup>183</sup>; however, Caesar does start the passage describing the rite with the word *alii*, implying that it was not a universal custom.

Brunaux<sup>184</sup> proposes an interesting alternative interpretation based on excavations at Ribemont-sur-Ancre. The *simulacrum* of Caesar's, Strabo's *κολοσσός* and the phrase *πυρὰς παμμεγέθεις* used by Diodorus Siculus actually refer to the method

---

<sup>iii</sup> See page 166.

<sup>iv</sup> See page 167.

of preserving the bodies of dead warriors by smoking them over a fire to prevent decomposition until they can undergo the proper rites at the tribe's sanctuary.

Immediately following the example of human sacrifice based on the principle *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur* (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.3**), Caesar says *Alii* and then describes the holocaust of the colossus (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**), possibly meaning that, just as the first sacrifice was substitutionary, based on the principle *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur*, so the second sacrifice, the holocaust, was another form of substitutionary sacrifice<sup>185</sup> practised by another tribe. If this is so, although the sacrifice of prisoners of war is mentioned by earlier and later authors, only writers of the 1st century BCE mention the use of criminals<sup>186</sup>.

Burning certainly seems to be a means of execution in north Europe. Caesar recounts how the Germans were planning to burn C. Valerius Procillus, his envoy, and were only deciding the time, when Caesar rescued him (**Caes.B.G.I.53.7**). Caesar states that wives considered to have been involved in the death of their husbands are executed by being burned to death (**Caes.B.G.VI.19.4**). Finally, in order to enforce his authority and to ensure obedience and recruitment, Vercingetorix punished anyone showing reluctance to be conscripted with mutilation for minor offences and burning to death for serious ones (**Caes.B.G.VII.4.10**).

While the impression one gets from the descriptions of sacrifices by Strabo and Diodorus Siculus is that all the sacrifices described were practised by all Gauls, Green<sup>187</sup> warns against this. Indeed, as has been seen, Caesar implies that, while one group of Gauls performs one particular human sacrifice, others sacrifice people by another method. Caesar's remark, implying different sacrifices for different groups, is probably closer to the truth and it must be remembered that not all of these sacrifices were practised by all the Gallic tribes uniformly. Moreover, the sacrifices recorded by the various ancient authors were probably only some of the forms of human sacrifice in existence before, possibly well before, the Roman Conquest.

According to Lucan (**Luc.I.444-446**), human sacrifice is alleged to have been offered up to the three deities Teutates, Esus and Taranis, and, according to the Commentary on Lucan by the Berne Scholiasts, each deity received a different form of human sacrifice, which has been interpreted as peculiar to or indicative of the character or function of the deity<sup>188</sup>. The Commentary (*Comm.Schol.Bern. ad Luc. ad I.445*)

supplies the details and these are the only instances when human sacrifice is connected with a particular named deity.

In view of the fact that the Romans were well acquainted with blood sacrifices, the reference by Lucan to the sacrifice by which Teutates is pleased (**Luc.I.444-445**) as being *sanguine diro* must refer to human blood and human sacrifice. The Commentary on Lucan by the Berne Scholiasts confirms this when it states that the rite consisted of a person being immersed headfirst into a full vessel so that s/he was drowned. The *Adnotationes super Lucanum* says that it was Teutates *qui a Gallis hominibus caesis placatur* (*Adnot. super Luc. ad I.445*); but the clause just looks like either a paraphrase of the line from Lucan or a précis of the section of the Commentary and neither provides any new information nor even acts as independent confirmation of anything in the Commentary. The reference to Teutates by Lactantius (**Lactant.Div.Inst.I.21.4**) also alleges human sacrifice, but adds nothing. As regards the motivation for the sacrifice, it is proposed that Teutates is placated *sanguine diro* either because battles are conducted by the instigation of his divine will or because the Gauls were accustomed in times past to offer human beings as a sacrifice to him also just as to other gods. These alternate motives may be interpreted as trying to say that the human sacrifice either was made regularly, whether there was a war or not, in order to treat him with the same respect as the other deities, that is that it was, therefore, in the terminology of social anthropology, a calendrical ritual<sup>189</sup>, or was made only during times of conflict and was a non-calendrical<sup>190</sup> or crisis ritual<sup>191</sup>. Unfortunately, the Scholiasts merely offer the two options with no preference. Despite this, Birkhan<sup>192</sup> states that Teutates' day of celebration was the 1st of November. Bayet<sup>193</sup> interprets this second section not as an explanation for the human sacrifice in the first section, but as an alternate human sacrifice to Teutates, consisting of simply all the warriors falling in battle. Human sacrifice involving drowning is possibly present in the worship of the Germanic earth-goddess Nerthus (**Tac.Germ.XL.2 and 5**), although Green<sup>194</sup> points out that such killing may not strictly have been human sacrifice.

Deonna<sup>195</sup> shows that, from the context, with Esus being positioned between Teutates and Taranis (**Luc.I.445**), and from the use of the phrase *feris altaribus*, which recalls the phrase *fera sacra* (**Ov.Met.XIII.454**), which, from its context, the sacrifice of Polyxena, must mean human sacrifice, it is clear that human sacrifice, in which a human being was hung in a tree until the blood ran out and the limbs came apart<sup>196</sup>, was made to Esus and this explains the ethnocentric descriptor and value judgement

*horrens*. As with Teutates, the *Adnotationes super Lucanum* (*Adnot.super Luc.* ad I.445) and the reference from Lactantius (**Lactant.***Div.Inst.*I.21.4) supplies nothing further, their statements that Esus was placated *hominum cruore* or *humano cruore* respectively each having the appearance of a summary of the information in the Commentary. The Cimbri sacrificed the Roman prisoners taken after the battle of Arausio by hanging them in trees (**Strab.**VII.2.3; **Oros.**V.16.6) and de Vries<sup>197</sup> suggests that this was due to Celtic influence; this is undermined by the information that the Germans *proditores et transfugas arboribus suspendunt* (**Tac.***Germ.*XII.1), but the alleged Celtic influence may find support in Orosius' statement that the sacrifice by the Cimbri was *nova quadam atque insolita exsecratione*. Perhaps, over the time between the Cimbric invasion and Tacitus, the Celtic custom spread to Germany.

Lucan's comparison of Taranis to the Scythian or, correctly, Taurian Diana (**Luc.**I.446), to whom travellers wrecked on the coasts of the Black Sea are reputed to be sacrificed by her worshippers (Taurian: **Hdt.**IV.62 and 103.1; **Eur.***I.T.*35-39 and 384; **Cic.***De rep.*III.9.15; **Diod.**XX.14.6; **Sil.***Pun.*IV.769; **Hyg.***Fab.*120; **Juv.**XV.116-119; **Serv.***ad Aen.*II.116; **Lucian.***Sacr.*13 and *Tox.*2; **Athenag.***Leg.*XXVI.1; **Prud.***Symm.*I.395; **Clemen.***Exhort ad Gr.*III and *Protr.*II.42.3; **Min.***Fel.*Oct.XXX.4; **Orig.***c.Cels.*V.27. Scythian: **Strab.**V.3.12; **Plut.***De Super.*XIII; **Tert.***Scorp.*VII.6; **Sext.***Emp.**Pyr.*III.208; **Porph.***Abst.*II.56), indicates that human sacrifice was made to this deity. The work *Adnotationes super Lucanum* (*Adnot.super Luc.* ad I.446) merely states that Taranis is pleased *diro sanguine* and is appeased *sanguine..... humano*, although this again does not really confirm anything or give additional information since it merely reiterates, in essence, what Lucan says. As in the case of Teutates, the Commentary on the poem of Lucan by the Scholiasts of Berne supplies information about the sacrifice (*Comm.Schol. Bern. ad Luc.* ad I 445). The Commentary states that Taranis is placated by a number of human beings being burnt in a wooden basket or cage; *in alveo ligneo* is translated by Vendryes as "dans un mannequin de bois", by Duval as "dans un tronc d'arbre" and by Sjeoestedt as "in a wooden vessel"<sup>198</sup>. The human sacrifice pertains to Taranis' status as chief celestial deity, *caelestium deorum maximum*, the fire used in the sacrifice referring to and symbolising lightning. The resemblance of this sacrifice to the statements by Caesar (**Caes.***B.G.*VI.16.4) and Strabo (**Strab.**IV.4.5) that the Gauls burnt people and animals in huge wicker human images, something to which Diodorus may also be referring (**Diod.**V.32.6), has been noted. Another group of Scholiasts supplies a description of another form of sacrifice to Taranis. Taranis was accustomed to be

placated *humanis.....capitibus*. This group of Scholiasts reveals that *olim humanis placari capitibus, nunc vero gaudere pecorum*. If the word *caput* is used here in its extended meaning, that of human life, it is merely confirming that human sacrifices were offered to Taranis and means that human sacrifice to Taranis was replaced by the sacrifice of bulls; this is interesting because, according to Caesar and Strabo, if they are indeed referring to sacrifices to Taranis, cattle were already being offered up to this deity and suggests that human sacrifice to Taranis had already ceased by the Conquest.

The fact that the Commentary states that each of the three deities *placatur* by the sacrifices suggests that the sacrifices were all propitiatory<sup>199</sup>, although Le Roux<sup>200</sup> says that the sacrificial cauldron is expiatory. Neither Lucan's poem nor the Commentary on the poem supplies any information about the regularity or frequency of the sacrifices to these three deities; the statement in the Commentary that the sacrifice to Teutates was made because *proelia numinis eius instinctu administrantur* suggests that it was a crisis ritual<sup>201</sup>, but the next statement, that it was because the Gauls were accustomed to sacrifice human beings to Teutates *ut aliis deis*, suggests that it was a calendrical ritual<sup>202</sup>. Despite this, Sergent and Birkhan<sup>203</sup> allege that it is possible to fix the sacrifices in the calendar. The sacrifice to Teutates was linked to the myths of Samain (1st November), the one to Taranis is connected "incontestablement" to the rites of Beltane (1st May) and the last sacrifice at Lugnasad (1st August).

Florus reports that the Cherusci, Suebi and Sicambri performed human sacrifice of captured or kidnapped centurions *velut sacramento* (**Flor.II.iiii.12.24**). The sacrifice seems to have been to seal the alliance between the tribes against the Romans, perhaps as an offering to the deity who oversees oaths. The sacrificer would, therefore, be the three tribes and it could be classed as a crisis sacrifice. By involving all the tribes in the killing of Romans, it ensured that all the tribes would fight.

A final human sacrifice, related by 'Lactantius Placidus', by, according to Servius, Petronius Arbiter and by the *Glossae Lucani* (**Lact.Plac.Comm. in Statii Theb.X.793; Serv.ad Aen.III.57; Gloss.Luc. ad Luc. X.334**) is a form of *pharmakos*. The *pharmakos* rite for mass purification, similar to the scapegoat of Judaism (*Lev.16:21-22*) was practised by Athens and other Greek cities, including Ionian towns, to avert disease<sup>204</sup>. As with the Jewish rite, there is no death of the "scapegoat"<sup>205</sup>. The sacrifice is worthy of comment because Lactantius claims and, although he assigns

the rite to *Massilia* [Marseilles], Petronius implies that it was a Gallic custom to sacrifice a person to purify the *civitatem*, which is the word used to refer to tribal territory in Gaul; Brunaux<sup>206</sup> thinks that it was a Gallic rite, because it still contained the concept of a gift. It may be based on the alleged principal of *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur* (*Caes.B.G.VI.16.3*), but Brunaux<sup>207</sup> points out that the actual ritual is not unusual and versions of it are found across the world. The ritual of *pharmakos* is linked to human sacrifice only in *Massilia* [Marseilles]<sup>208</sup>. Apologists for the Celts suggest that the record of the death of the victim was an anti-Gallic fiction introducing barbarity and savagery, inspired by the “Otherness” of Gauls<sup>209</sup>. It is also possible that, due to Gallic influence on an originally Greek rite and the more accepting attitude to human sacrifice by the Gauls, the victim actually was killed<sup>210</sup>. In each version, the victim is chosen from among the most deprived and miserable, probably because he therefore has nothing to lose and will be more willing to die in exchange for the year-long luxury and excess. In view of the similarity between Lactantius’ phrase *anno toto* and Petronius’ *anno integro* and the use of identical phrases, *publicis sumptibus*, *purioribus cibis* and *per totam civitatem*, it is alleged that they must be from a common source<sup>211</sup>. The only similarities between these sources and the *Adnotationes super Lucanum* are the phrases *cibis delicatis* and *anno finito*. Petronius states that the ceremony was performed when the city was struck by an epidemic, yet the ritual lasts a year and this is a very long time to take to cure an epidemic. Despite Petronius’ statement, which suggests that it was a crisis ritual, it seems more likely that it was calendrical, a view held by Brunaux<sup>212</sup> and supported by the *Adnotationes super Lucanum*, which gives as the reason for the sacrifice was that *Massilienses dum frequenter tempestate laborarent*. The tribe or citizen body would have been the sacrificer. The ritual performs two of Wallace’s categories of religious behaviour: sacrifice and, since the victim suffers on behalf of the community and, therefore simulates the community, simulation<sup>213</sup>. It also has a cathartic value<sup>214</sup>.

An example of human blood sacrifice may also be found in a separate passage of Strabo, ascribed to Posidonius (*Strab.IV.4.6*) concerning τὰς τῶν Ναμνιτῶν γυναικῶν, who lived on an island in the mouth of the Loire. Although Grenier<sup>215</sup> says “le travail ne s’achève jamais sans qu’une d’elles...n’ait été ainsi sacrifiée”, Ross<sup>216</sup> says that the death of the woman is the result of her failure to perform the ritual, presumably meaning that the dropping of material was an act of sacrilege punished by death; but Webster<sup>217</sup> points out that Posidonius or Strabo implies that the woman who is killed in this way is both chosen beforehand and is deliberately

pushed so as to drop her load and that this happens every time of the rite<sup>218</sup>. Therefore, this passage seems to describe a form of human sacrifice in which the victim is, as is usual, chosen beforehand, but, unusually, is from among the worshippers. It may be analogous to the sacrificial concept of burying a victim in the foundations of a new building<sup>219</sup>. The rite is calendrical, since it is performed annually, and is perhaps a form of propitiatory rite performed at the beginning of new circumstances, in this case the erection of a new roof. The rending of the woman's body is obviously the basis for the *interpretatio Romana* of the rites as Dionysian, although in Dionysian rites the victim is from outside the cultic group and is eaten, whereas here she is a fellow worshipper and there is no indication that she was eaten<sup>220</sup>. The part of the passage describing the screams of the women with the Greek word Εὐῶι is equally obviously inserted as a result of this *interpretatio Romana*, but that is no reason to dismiss the record of the killing of the woman.

Bayet<sup>221</sup> considers the custom of killing slaves and clients at the funerals of their master and patron (*Caes.B.G.* VI.19.4) to be the best established example of human sacrifice; but, ironically, it does not fall within the boundary of the definition of a sacrifice: no deity is involved; the victims are not being made sacred, just reduced to the same state as the deceased; and the motive is not one of offering, but to provide the deceased with company.

### Archaeological evidence

A major point of controversy is that clear archaeological evidence of human sacrifice, incapable of misinterpretation, is rare<sup>222</sup>. A typical example is the lack of evidence for the human sacrifice by the incineration of the colossus made of interwoven twigs. If the practice was indeed performed by all Gallic tribes, as is implied by the literary sources, and even if it was practised, as one interpretation has it, only every five years, over even only a couple of centuries such constructions would have left evidence. Yet there is no trace of them. Brunaux<sup>223</sup> states that, unlike the archaeological evidence for headhunting and the fixture of heads on doorways, which supports the literature, the absence of archaeological evidence for human sacrifice seems to indicate that these practices were not only not as common as the ancient writers suggest, but were in fact quite rare, a view which Le Roux<sup>224</sup> expresses.

In northern Gaul there was the custom of depositing in some empty grain storage pits parts of or even whole human bodies, the latter possibly sacrificed<sup>225</sup>. Cunliffe<sup>226</sup>

interprets this as chthonic propitiatory sacrifices. At Danebury, Britain, 25 complete skeletons, some of which seem to have had their arms bound and some of which were smashed, were found alone or in groups of two or three in disused grain silos, having been placed there very soon after each pit's clearance every six years from the 7th to 1st centuries BCE, probably for propitiation<sup>227</sup>. However, it is necessary to be careful to distinguish between ritual killing of humans and ritual applied to dead humans<sup>228</sup> and Delattre provides an alternate interpretation<sup>229</sup>. As regards the inhumations in northern Gaul, there is no evidence of any infliction of death<sup>230</sup>. In the case of Danebury the evidence does not point unequivocally to human sacrifice, although the method of deposit is identical to some animal pit-burials, which *were* sacrifices<sup>231</sup>.

There appears to be a great deal of evidence for human sacrifice among the Galatians of Gordion from the 3rd to the 2nd centuries BCE<sup>232</sup>, which supports the claims made about the Galatians at that time by the consul Cn. Manlius (*Livy*.XXXVIII.47. 12). A ritualised massacre, dated to 6th century BCE, was performed at Býčů Skála, the Czech Republic, at which forty people, mainly women, were violently killed in a blood sacrifice and dismembered, with their heads, feet and hands going missing<sup>233</sup>. Examples of human sacrifice have also been found in areas, which, although not formal, demarcated sacred spaces, are areas which were probably considered as sacred, because of their liminal nature, marshes or rivers. One such example from Britain is the Lindow Man II, dated to *circa* 300 BCE<sup>234</sup>, 1st century CE<sup>235</sup> or 1st or 2nd century CE<sup>236</sup>, who had had a special meal and was then killed by a blow to the head, garrotting and the cutting of his throat<sup>237</sup> before being placed in a marsh; the use of three methods of inflicting death is not only obviously ritual<sup>238</sup>, but is also “the best criterion on which to propose human sacrifice”<sup>239</sup>. Green<sup>240</sup> suggests that he was chosen as a victim because of his vestigial second thumb. Ross<sup>241</sup> suggests that the three-fold death from Irish myth<sup>242</sup> supports the idea of sacrifice and Cunliffe<sup>243</sup> notes a similarity between the use of three methods of inflicting death and the concept of the Three-fold Death in Irish legends. Or it may just be an example of the Celtic fascination with the number three<sup>v</sup>. A thirty-year old male victim, dated to c.250 BCE, from Grauballe in Denmark, had had a meal of seeds and had then had his throat cut<sup>244</sup> and was placed in a bog; in Todd's opinion<sup>245</sup>, this is also the mark of ritual sacrifice. Also in Denmark, a body from the marsh at Tollund, dated to 200 CE had signs of garrotting<sup>246</sup>, as did one from Borre Fen<sup>247</sup>; according to Todd<sup>248</sup>, the Tollund man, with his distinctive meal of seeds and grains, has all the marks of a

---

<sup>v</sup> Page 42, footnote 34.

sacrifice, his status of victim being linked probably with the fact that he shows signs of noble rank<sup>249</sup>. At Gallagh in Ireland a young man, dated to the later part of the 1st millennium BCE, was found in a marsh with pointed 1.8m stakes on each side, as if restraints, and a symbolic garrotte on his neck<sup>250</sup>; the latter items strongly indicate human sacrifice. Elsewhere in Ireland a woman was found at Derrymaquirk with a large stone on her pelvis and at Kinnakinelly a body of the same date, Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, was buried possibly attached to an upright timber<sup>251</sup>. In Switzerland bodies dated to the Iron Age have been found weighed down with timbers, one, which had been garrotted, in the lake of La Tène<sup>252</sup> and one in water at Cornaux<sup>253</sup>.

Several Iron Age bodies have been found drowned in bogs in Denmark, weighed down with timbers. An adolescent girl and a man were both weighed down in a marsh at Windeby, the girl with branches and a stone, the man with branches<sup>254</sup>; a fifty-year old woman from the Juthe Fen bog had a stake driven through her knee while she was alive<sup>255</sup>. Despite suggestions that the hurdles could have been rescue equipment<sup>256</sup>, these weights indicate deliberate drowning in all these cases. Tacitus records that the slaves who attend to the goddess Nerthus seem to have been sacrificed by drowning (**Tac.Germ.XL.5**). However, it could still be argued that these are examples, not of human sacrifice, but of executions for crimes, since Tacitus (**Tac.Germ.XII.1**) states that those convicted of certain crimes with drowned with hurdles.

Webster holds, and Brunaux used to hold,<sup>257</sup> that the evidence for human sacrifice in Gaul comes only from literature. Certainly few human bones have been found in Iron Age sacred sites, but, when found<sup>258</sup>, they do indicate human sacrifice<sup>259</sup>. At Acy-Romance, 19 young men were buried in a seated position, after a set of rituals involving the desiccation of each body, below the terrace in front of the largest of the five temples on the western edge of the enclosure ditch in the early 2nd century BCE and at regular intervals over 100 years or less<sup>260</sup>; Aldhouse-Green states that their seated position, the repetition of the procedure, the central location and the fact that the normal burial procedure at Acy Romance was cremation means they were clearly sacrificial victims<sup>261</sup> and the lack of grave goods and their bound hands suggest they were slaves, criminals or prisoners of war<sup>262</sup>. The discovery in Gallic sanctuaries of human remains, which have been subjected to cuts, appears to provide evidence of human sacrifice.

## *Sites*

### Acy-Romance (Remi tribal territory)

On the basis of the ritual of mummification and inhumation of young men performed at this site<sup>263</sup>, Lambot and Méniel accept that the conclusion that human sacrifice was practised at here is inescapable and Aldhouse-Green says that the young men were clearly sacrificial victims<sup>264</sup>.

### Estrées-Saint-Denis (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Human bones were found at the site<sup>265</sup>.

### Fesques (Ambiani tribal territory)

The small ditch contained some human remains dated, by accompanying weapons, to the Middle La Tène, the line of pits contained human leg and foot bones, which Méniel claims, came from individuals suspended vertically in the open air facing the centre of the sanctuary and the large ditch had some human bones Méniel considers to have come from neighbouring deposits<sup>266</sup>.

### Gournay-sur-Aronde (Bellovaci tribal territory)

The limbs and particularly the heads of young men of fighting age were hung from the entrance, from which they fell into the ditch, while the rest of the bodies were disposed of elsewhere<sup>267</sup>. There are no marks of carving which correspond to those for removing flesh<sup>268</sup> and the marks are of decapitation on a body stretched out and already dead<sup>269</sup>; the object of the cutting was to detach the limbs and to remove the head<sup>270</sup>.

### Montmartin (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Human skulls and jaw-bones or the front of human skulls<sup>271</sup>.

### Nanteuil-sur-Aisne (Remi tribal territory)

Human bones were present in the pits scattered everywhere<sup>272</sup>; this is possibly evidence of human offerings.

Certainly Brunaux<sup>273</sup> states that the human skeletal remains in such scrupulously cleaned sacred areas are not the product of chance. But an examination of such remains reveals that, unlike the bones of the animals, none of the human bones show evidence of a violent death of a sacrificial type<sup>274</sup> or of preparation for consumption<sup>275</sup>. Moreover, there is no analogy between the human and animal

remains<sup>276</sup>; the cuts are rare and are not those associated with the infliction of a wound or of death on a living person<sup>277</sup>. At Ribemont-sur-Ancre the bodies were also already stretched out and dead before decapitation<sup>278</sup> with no marks of carving for removing flesh<sup>279</sup>; according to Brunaux<sup>280</sup>, the remains are probably of warriors killed in battle collected in the sanctuary for a peculiar rite but which has nothing to do with human sacrifice or consumption. The method of the infliction of death is unknown and cannot be gleaned from the remains<sup>281</sup>. One cannot exclude the possibility of natural death or that they were killed, but there is no evidence of violent death. Therefore, if they were killed, the method left no trace and so must have been either by asphyxiation, exsanguination or poison<sup>282</sup>; but, in Brunaux's<sup>283</sup> opinion, with no evidence of a blow to the head or of piercing or cutting instruments, the existence of human sacrifice in these sanctuaries is not actually established. Although these remains bear no similarity to human remains in the burials of the Gauls of the last three centuries BCE and no complete human skeleton has ever been connected with a burial or a cremation<sup>284</sup>, Brunaux<sup>285</sup> still believes that the bones from the sanctuaries bear witness to funerary treatment and one is tempted to see the remains of a funerary practice; this leads one to ask, if it was part of a funerary rite, why are the bones in the sanctuaries? Brunaux<sup>286</sup> says that evidence that the bodies were not the result of human sacrifice is the fact that there seems to have been no selection process, that several women and an adolescent were found and that the discovery of only adult males would comply better with the image of human sacrifice supplied by the ancient texts. However, all the ancient texts use the word for "human being"<sup>287</sup> and, therefore, both can and should be interpreted as referring to men or women; moreover, some of the victims of sacrifices are criminals (**Caes.B.G.** VI.16. 5; **Diod.** V.32.6) and it is both sexist and incredible to think that only men commit crimes. Consequently the presence of female skeletons does not, in itself, prove that the remains were not sacrificial victims.

Various reasons may be produced to explain the paucity of archaeological evidence to support the literary sources' claims that human sacrifice was abundant. Hubert<sup>288</sup> contends that the sacrifices were not as bloody as is made out by the literary sources and that the victim was considered divine and died transcendently; this argument is based on that fact that there are very few allusions to human sacrifice in Irish vernacular literature<sup>289</sup>. However, the force of this argument is reduced by the possibility that the absence of references to human sacrifice may be the result of contamination by Irish Christian monks who, for reasons of cultural chauvinism, did not want their Irish heroes and Druids portrayed as performing human sacrifice,

although Kendrick<sup>290</sup> believes that this would not have happened and it seems unlikely in view of the fact that the monks did not eliminate references to headhunting.

Vendryes<sup>291</sup> seems to suggest that, just as in the Gallo-Roman period effigies of body parts were offered at temples to represent the parts and organs afflicted by disease, an animal came to be substituted for the human victim, as in other religions<sup>292</sup>. Le Roux<sup>293</sup> suggests that the substitution of animal for human victim was often realised, although, even when this happened, the human was considered as the real victim and, in some cases, substitution was impossible. Or perhaps the reason for the rarity of evidence is that, even if it was very common to begin with, human sacrifice in Gaul ceased to be acceptable, as happened among the Greeks and Romans; this, rather than the nationalism of Christian Irish monks, may also have been the reason for the very few references to human sacrifice in Irish myths.

Brunaux<sup>294</sup> claims that human sacrifice did, indeed, exist in Gaul, but only up to the 3rd century BCE, that, from the end of the 3rd century, it became essentially a form of capital punishment and from the 2nd century BCE on many Gallic tribes viewed human sacrifice in a way similar to that of the Romans and that this change in attitude came about through the philosophical influence of the Druids. Not only is there no evidence that human sacrifice changed to capital punishment after the 3rd century BCE, there is no evidence that it changed at all. In addition, the suggestion that such a change was produced by the Druids not only has no support, but may be both the product of 'soft' cultural primitivism and a form of neo-'Alexandrian Tradition'<sup>vi</sup> and is contrary to the literary evidence<sup>295</sup>, which clearly states that sacrifices, which surely include human sacrifices, had to be conducted by Druids<sup>296</sup>. MacCulloch<sup>297</sup> sarcastically and rightly points out that it took the intervention of the Romans to stop the philosopher Druids from conducting human sacrifice.

The literary evidence supports the case that human sacrifice, particularly that of prisoners of war, existed up to the 3rd century BCE at least and possibly the 2nd century, but the statements by Caesar that some Gallic tribes had taken prisoners, the absence of any eye-witness accounts by Caesar himself, at least one of which, if human sacrifice had been as prolific as it appears from his ethnographic section, would have happened<sup>298</sup>, indeed, the complete absence of any definite instance of human sacrifice in his narrative section<sup>299</sup>, the fact that it is only mentioned in his

---

<sup>vi</sup> Page 24.

ethnographic one and, in particular, the paucity of archaeological evidence all strongly indicate that human sacrifice had ceased by the 1st century BCE. Therefore, the most satisfactory conclusion is that proposed by Bayet<sup>300</sup>, that human sacrifice was performed by the Gauls, but in the 3rd century BCE and possibly the 2nd, and always very rarely, as much as the Greeks and Romans practised it, and that indeed, by the 1st century, the Gauls, like the Romans (**Plin.H.N.XXX.12; Porph.Abst.II.55**), had renounced it and that the reports of huge numbers of victims are hostile propaganda. It would certainly explain the literary passages and the lack of archaeological evidence. Perhaps the practice of human sacrifice decreased as urbanisation increased or as a result of contact with the Romans. Added to this is the fact that Greek and Roman literature portrays human sacrifice, even among the arch-enemies of Rome, as a rite which is performed only in crises or the most extreme emergencies<sup>301</sup>; this may also have been the case with the Gauls in the 1st century BCE. It suggests that the statements by Strabo and Pomponius Mela (**Strab.IV.4.5; Pompon.III.2.18**) and the accepted wisdom<sup>302</sup> that the Romans stopped human sacrifice was false pro-Roman propaganda and that Roman acculturation was much less. It could even be said that the Gauls were no worse than the Romans. The Gauls offered up a life to redeem the life of one threatened by illness or for the sake of the tribe; when Caligula was ill, some offered up their lives for his health (**Suet.Calig.XIV.2**) and, when Rome was in danger, humans were sacrificed (**Livy.XXII.57.6**), Pliny the Elder provided the formulas for such occasions (**Plin.H.N.XXVIII.3.12**). At least the Gauls did not consider human sacrifice a form of entertainment, whereas the Romans enjoyed the spectacle of an activity having its origins in human sacrifice (**Tert.De Spec.XII; Serv.Aen.III.67**).

### **Animal sacrifice**

The evidence for the practice of animal sacrifice is, unlike that for human sacrifice, almost entirely archaeological, although there is a little literary evidence<sup>303</sup>. While the archaeological evidence indicates different forms of animal sacrifice and, therefore, possibly different motives and deities, the literary sources refer almost exclusively to one type.

### Literary evidence

On the basis of Classical literature “the suggestion that the Celts practised animal sacrifice is unarguable”<sup>304</sup>, but, unlike human sacrifice, there is little detail<sup>305</sup>; since the Romans used animal sacrifices in their own religion<sup>306</sup>, these practices would have been unremarkable to the Romans<sup>307</sup>. Webster<sup>308</sup> points out that the descriptions

by Caesar, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus all refer to mass sacrifices of captured animals by communities. This is also true of the animal sacrifice performed by the Ligurians, described by Livy, and the Cimbri, the Teutones and their allies, described by Orosius. However, two other Gallic sacrifices in Classical literature, recorded by Pliny the Elder and Arrian are sacrifices by individuals.

Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.17.3**) says that, after victory, the Celts sacrificed the captured animals<sup>309</sup> as a thanksgiving sacrifice and in fulfilment of their vow. In view of the reason for the sacrifice, it was presumably non-calendrical or crisis; the sacrificer was probably a Druid with the tribe being the sacrificer.

The Ligurians sacrificed the animals taken from Mutina (**Livy.XLI.183**); in view of the fact that the Ligurians were the target of a war of, if not extermination, at least ethnic cleansing and had taken refuge in the mountains, while those who could not were killed, the sacrifice was probably both a thanksgiving sacrifice, for being saved, and a propitiatory one, for help against the Romans, and, therefore, was, in every way, a crisis sacrifice. The sacrificer was the Ligurian people.

The Cimbri, Teutones and allies performed a similar sacrifice by drowning the horses captured after the battle of Arausio (**Oros.V.16.6**); as has been seen, de Vries<sup>310</sup> suggests that the Cimbri were influenced by the Celts; MacCulloch<sup>311</sup> sees the dedication of such valuable victims in water as a thanksgiving sacrifice to a river deity. However, if there was Gallic influence, it is possible that the use of water and the use of fire indicate that, while the principle was common to all Gallic tribes, the method may have varied from tribe to tribe. The sacrificer was probably a Druid with the tribe being the sacrificer.

The only reference by Strabo to an animal sacrifice is his version of the holocaust of the colossus described by Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.4**); Strabo includes animals, both domestic, such as cattle, and wild, in the contents of the figure (**Strab.IV.4.5**) and for this reason the sacrifice is classed as both a human and an animal sacrifice. The inclusion of wild animals by Strabo, according to Brunaux<sup>312</sup>, is due to a mistake in identifying the bones.

Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.32.6**) appears to give a list of three examples all pertaining to animals captured as booty but with no indication of the reason or the frequency. By his use of the word *τινῶς* to prefix the list of examples, he implies that these

were performed by only some tribes and were not universal to Gaul. In the first captured animals are sacrificed with human beings; since this follows immediately the statement that prisoners of war can be sacrificed, Diodorus Siculus seems to be saying that the captured animals are sacrificed along with enemy prisoners, possibly as a thanksgiving. The second sacrifice, in which the captured animals are burned, is problematic; it may refer to two different sacrifices. It may be the rite of thanksgiving described by Caesar; or, since Caesar does not mention incineration in connection with the captured animals, it may be the same as the holocaust described by Caesar and Strabo. There are three steps in this argument. The first is that the classification of this sacrifice as an animal sacrifice as well as a human one is acceptable because, although Caesar only mentions human victims, Strabo includes animals as well as humans. Second, as proposed earlier, Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.32.6**) seems to have set out a summarised version of this sacrifice using πυράς instead of κολοσσόν. Finally, in both sacrifices Diodorus Siculus uses verbs meaning burning with the connotation of burning as a sacrifice<sup>313</sup>. As regards the third type of sacrifice, Diodorus Siculus merely states imprecisely that the animals were killed τισιν ἄλλαις τιμωρίαις with no other information.

In the 1st century CE Pliny the Elder, as part of his exposition on the importance laid on the mistletoe by the Gauls and their Druids (**Plin.H.N.XVI.250-251**), describes the sacrifice of bulls at a mistletoe ceremony. Since it is proposed that this sacrifice arises as a result of Roman acculturation, it will be examined later in the chapter<sup>vii</sup>.

Arrian, also writing in the 1st century CE, reports the Gallic custom of offering an annual sacrifice to Artemis<sup>314</sup> of a goat, sheep or a calf which has been bought and kept for a year; the amount of money is determined by the game animals killed for each of whom the hunter is fined, an obol for a hare, a *drachma* for a fox and four *drachmae* for a deer (**Arr.Cyn.23.2**). This appears to be a calendrical thanksgiving sacrifice combined with one which gives life back to the goddess, the life of the domestic animal, for the life of the wild animal<sup>315</sup> and is consistent with the Gallic concept of a life for a life reported by Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.2-3**). It is unclear whether the sacrificer was a Druid or the hunter himself, but the fact that the money was handed over to another suggests that this was the procedure with the domestic animal. Brunaux<sup>316</sup> reasonably suggests that the monetary fine is a later evolution of the rite, the money replacing the sacrifice of the domestic animal.

---

<sup>vii</sup> See page 209.

### Archaeological evidence

Remains of animal sacrifice have been found at Celtic Iron Age sites, such as the site of Libenice in Bohemia, dated to the 4th century BCE<sup>317</sup> and it seems that at Gallic sanctuaries a skinned animal carcass would be offered to the deity and would remain on the altar until it had decomposed<sup>318</sup>. There has been scrupulous anatomical and statistical analysis of the animal and bird remains found at some Celtic sanctuaries in Belgic Gaul. These data can be used as the basis on which to reconstruct the forms of animal sacrifice, which were practised at the various sanctuaries. Brunaux<sup>319</sup> says that Gallic animal sacrifice is the best attested, presumably meaning archaeologically, and the best known cult practice, because, although they cannot tell the colour, the bones can supply many other details, such as the age, gender and morphology of an animal, whether it was ever used for work and how it was put to death, cut up and eaten. Méniel advises that these archaeological traces permit only a partial reconstruction of them<sup>320</sup>, but does say that the animal bone remains allow a restoration of two main categories of practice, according to which the animal victims were eaten or not and that excavated sanctuaries offer one of the rare opportunities of knowing the end reserved for animals which are not eaten<sup>321</sup>. The fact that the bones of consumed animals were deposited in the central pits at Acy-Romance suggests that the remains of banquets in the sanctuary did not leave the sacred area because they came from a sacrifice<sup>322</sup>.

A distinction is drawn between two types of animal sacrifices. The sacrifice, after which the animal/s is consumed at a ritual meal in the sanctuary between the community and the god/s, one of the forms of religious behaviour common to most religions<sup>323</sup>, and in which some parts were eaten and others buried or burnt<sup>324</sup>; this is the most frequent type. The sacrifice where the whole animal is either burnt or left to rot with great economic loss<sup>325</sup>, a practice well illustrated by the deposit of animal bones showing knife marks and the effect of fire. The knife marks do not indicate eating, but dismemberment so that different parts of the victim may be left to rot in different places. Respectively these are, according to the division of religious festivals laid down by Plato (*Pl.Leg.VIII.828C*), rites to the supernal deities, including thanksgiving and propitiatory sacrifices, which are called Uranian, held at the majority of Gallic sanctuaries<sup>326</sup>, and rites to the infernal deities, which are called Chthonic<sup>327</sup>. The first type, of a ritual meal, provides remains, which are hardly different from those in the typical Gallic diet, and it is difficult to distinguish the sacred meal from the secular<sup>328</sup>. The second type is that, in which the bones are integrated with those deposits intended to remain exposed over a number of years<sup>329</sup>.

Both types were practised at Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>330</sup>; indeed, the best example of the second type is from this site<sup>331</sup> and will be examined later. The category of victims, which are uneaten, consists of cattle and horses and they acquired this status due to long careers either for haulage or for riding respectively<sup>332</sup>. Méniel<sup>333</sup> posits that the fact that their remains may have been mixed with weaponry demonstrates that they had been used in conflicts, either for transport or for battle and says that this recalls a passage by Caesar (*Caes.B.G.VI.17.3*).

It is difficult to differentiate between ritual feasts and ordinary food consumption<sup>334</sup> and, superficially, the animal remains in the sanctuaries do not differ very much from those found in the middens of the dwelling areas<sup>335</sup>. Indeed, the first impression of animal remains from a sanctuary is their similarity to those from a rubbish tip, with burnt, broken, carved and mixed up bones<sup>336</sup>, evidence of the consumption of meat as part of a banquet or ritual meal limited to the social élite is not very different in nature from the kitchen waste of ordinary life<sup>337</sup>, aspects of such meals, broken bones, carved bones and, sometimes, burned bones, are not very spectacular<sup>338</sup> and not only is the list of species, particularly domestic mammals<sup>339</sup>, found in the sanctuaries often identical to those in the dwelling places<sup>340</sup>, but there are also no anatomical traits peculiar to sacrificial animals<sup>341</sup>. While particular attention should be drawn to certain associations or to complete remains, it must be remembered that not everything that is not kitchen rubbish, is automatically the result of cult activity<sup>342</sup>. But closer analysis and the study of animal remains buried in the sanctuary reveals the differences between the remains found in the sanctuaries and those found in the dwelling areas<sup>343</sup>. The quantity of animals eaten, the context and the bases of selection differentiate a domestic kitchen midden from ritual banquets after a sacrifice<sup>344</sup>.

Beattie<sup>345</sup> says that the sacrifice, which is intended to obtain or maintain closer contact with the deity or spiritual being, may involve a shared meal. The tribe was sacrificer but, since the sacred area in which the sacrifice and meal took place was too small for the whole tribe, the Druids, as sacrificers, and the aristocracy and other social élite, as representatives of the tribe would be the ones who attended the sacrifice, partook of the meal, communed with the deity and received the benefits on behalf of the tribe.

It is possible to postulate that these Celtic rites involving the consumption of a sacrifice were either worship rites or sanctification rites. In the worship rite the

sacrificer shared a meal with and communed with the deity and thereby maintained contact with the deity and received benefits from this contact, such as blessings, both material and spiritual, and protection and, by doing so, each member's sense of belonging to a larger group and the psychological well-being resulting from this was reinforced.

### *Animal Selection*

From the end of the 4th century BCE until the beginning of the 2nd BCE domestic animals such as cattle, pigs and sheep were sacrificed<sup>346</sup>; it seems that only the sacrificed animals were eaten in the sanctuary. Green points out that none of the Classical sources mentions substitution of animals for humans<sup>347</sup> and that it must not be assumed that animal sacrifice was a substitute for human<sup>348</sup>.

One is able to establish the standards and values regarding the sacrificial animal from an analysis of species, gender, age and strength<sup>349</sup>, but the basis of their selection is unknown<sup>350</sup>; Méniel<sup>351</sup> also admits that, unfortunately, comparisons between animals in the sanctuary and those in the living area cannot narrow the basis of selection to a local level and one must rely on regional data to answer any questions about the origin of the animals for sacrifice. The choice, as Méniel<sup>352</sup> says, may have been made according to criteria, which escape modern scholarship, and, in view of Pliny's record of the sacrifice of white oxen, whose *cornua tum primum vinciantur* (Plin. *H.N.*XVI.250-251), suggests that both the colour of their hide and their age or unworked status were criteria. Although Brunaux and Méniel<sup>353</sup> grant that there may have been other considerations, such as the colour of their hides, the shape of their horns or the character of the animal, there are no morphological characteristics which distinguish them from other cattle of this period and the criteria for the choice of the oxen is revealed by an examination of their remains, which show, from the marks, that the animals were normally used for work and, therefore, were not only not maintained in the sanctuary all their life, but reasonably stayed there only for some time. One of the considerations, based on the traces of work, is that these animals may have been connected with war, perhaps as booty taken from the enemy<sup>354</sup>.

### Age

One principal criterion of selection for sacrifice, even more than species, is age<sup>355</sup>. This can be ascertained by an analysis of teeth, because the head was treated differently from the rest of the carcass, which was eaten<sup>356</sup>. But the bones equally allow an estimate of age<sup>357</sup>. According to Méniel<sup>358</sup>, the forty animals at Gournay-

sur-Aronde were selected according to some very specific criteria regarding age and gender from a much more vast group; from estimates based on ratio of gender and on the distribution of ages, the cattle sacrificed were selected from a group of more than 150 head of cattle. Méniel<sup>359</sup> points out that the ages of the majority of bovine victims, very old, shows that a common trait of these practices is that they concern animals, which, although having prestige value, had little nutritional value; in domestic sites very old animals were not eaten as much as young or full-grown cattle, which indicates that they had little value as food and, therefore, their value as an offering had no economic implications and was based on their prestige. At Fesques the remains of very young and very old animals are present<sup>360</sup>. Half of the horses and cattle deposited in the ditch of the cult enclosure at Acy-Romance were less than seven years old and 34% were more than nine years old, which has led Lambot and Méniel to conclude that old animals had an important place and that the consumption of mediocre meat was normal<sup>361</sup>.

## Gender

### Cattle

Cows, so numerous in herds, are very rare as victims, forming only 8%, while bulls and oxen form 54% and 38% respectively. Méniel<sup>362</sup> says that, while the ratio of one ox to one or two bulls is unsurprising, the ratio of three cows to twenty bulls is much more remarkable.

### Pigs

The differences in results are evidence, in Méniel's opinion<sup>363</sup>, of successive selections, first of all, according to sex, counting, apart from pieces, about twenty sows for about forty boars.

## Domestic animals

The animal bone remains were predominantly from domestic animals<sup>364</sup>. Aldhouse-Green says that this is because they had greater affinity to humans<sup>365</sup> and were closest economically to people<sup>366</sup>. In Méniel's<sup>367</sup> opinion, of all Gallic livestock, cattle are undoubtedly the animals with the most diversified use and this diversification is demonstrated by the principal economic orientation of various communities. Cattle are a fundamental part of human food production in general, as a producer of milk or meat, and a central support of the Gallic agricultural economy, or as a beast of burden for agriculture or transport, which, for Méniel, explains the important role cattle have in some ritual practices<sup>368</sup>. Although Bruanux and

Büchsenschütz<sup>369</sup> say that cattle seem to have been used only in the chthonic sacrifice and Brunaux<sup>370</sup> says that, while people feasted on lamb and pork, the infernal deities dined on old cattle, Méniel<sup>371</sup> says that the sacrifice of cattle is a frequent practice, but the procedure is not always uniform. Moreover, although Brunaux and Büchsenschütz<sup>372</sup> say that cattle were not eaten, cattle were consumed at various sanctuaries<sup>373</sup>. Pigs and sheep were the two animals predominantly used for food<sup>374</sup>, with first place going to pork, with approximately three-quarters of the remains, then sheep, with a fifth, then cattle, with less than a tenth, and with no horse remains, so that, on the spectrum of frequency of consumption, pork was at one end and horses were at the other<sup>375</sup>. While the meat consumed in the sanctuaries was mainly from pigs<sup>376</sup>, showing that, as at the necropoleis, the Gauls seem to have preferred pork<sup>377</sup>, more precisely, the consumption of lamb seems to have been in the earliest sites, while pork was preferred at later ones<sup>378</sup> and the animals consumed in sanctuaries in the last two centuries BCE are above all pigs<sup>379</sup>. At Gournay-sur-Aronde, in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, shoulders and legs of lamb were consumed, while, in the 2nd and 1st centuries, it was of pigs<sup>380</sup>. From the remains Brunaux<sup>381</sup> has estimated that the number of animals at the meals was more than 150. Horses appear to have been buried, but are never eaten<sup>382</sup>; according to Brunaux<sup>383</sup>, consumption was forbidden. Of the six domestic animals, the dog appears to have had a different status from the others. It appears that, not only was it not a sacrificial victim, but it was also forbidden access to the sanctuary and, Méniel<sup>384</sup> states clearly, to the bones of animal sacrifices. It seems that a dog was allowed entry to a sanctuary only to be eaten<sup>viii</sup> at the time of a sacrificial meal<sup>385</sup>, and even then in a very small amount<sup>386</sup>, and, apart from this, whatever the means of control was, access to the sanctuary for dogs was limited.

### Wild Animals

Despite Brunaux's<sup>387</sup> statement that one never encounters the remains of wild animals on any cult *locus* and that the Gauls sacrificed only domestic animals, wild animals and fish, such as pike and sturgeon<sup>388</sup> in small numbers<sup>389</sup>, were also used for sacrifices and feasts in the sanctuaries<sup>ix</sup>, although the remains of domestic mammals are in the majority<sup>390</sup> in comparison with the remains of wild mammals; as with domestic animals, the proportions are the same in the sanctuary as in the dwelling area<sup>391</sup>, to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish the remains excavated in the sanctuary from those excavated in the living area<sup>392</sup>. Unfortunately,

---

<sup>viii</sup> See page 184 and 185.

<sup>ix</sup> See pages 184.

the number of remains of wild animals is too small for any reconstruction of ritual practices<sup>393</sup>.

### Birds

Bird remains are few in number<sup>394</sup> but are more frequent at Ribemont-sur-Ancre, Mirebeau and Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin than at Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>395</sup>. As well as cockerels, *corvidae*, such as crows and rooks, have often been found, but all these birds are equally well represented in the dwelling areas<sup>396</sup>. Indeed, as regards bird remains, in most cases, as usual, there is little difference between those in the sanctuaries and those in the dwelling areas<sup>397</sup>. Generally the remains of birds deposited in the sanctuaries are in pieces and often allow one only to draw up a list of domestic species, which the cockerel dominates, and a list of wild birds, in which the *corvidae* are placed<sup>398</sup>. Méniel<sup>399</sup> raises two possible explanations for the fact that in the sanctuaries, as in the dwelling areas, birds and wild mammals are rare. The first is that the practices were only occasional. The second is that the remains of the more important practices were totally destroyed, principally by dogs, meaning that, except at Gournay-sur-Aronde, dogs had access to them and devoured them.

### *Sites in Belgic Gaul*

#### Acy-Romance (Remi tribal territory)

There were deposits of cattle and horse bones in the ditch of the cult enclosure<sup>400</sup>. 70% of the deposits and 77% of the feet were from cattle and 18% and 20% of the feet were from horses<sup>401</sup>; it has been estimated that there are the remains of 89 horses<sup>402</sup>. There was similar treatment for the remains of the horses as for those of the cattle<sup>403</sup>, but the remains of these two types of animals were distributed in a symmetrical manner, with the cattle in the ditch to the north and the horses in the ditch to the south<sup>404</sup>.

#### Acy-Romance-“La Croizette” (Remi tribal territory)

In a triple pit under the temple there were deposits of burnt bones<sup>405</sup>. There were deposits of cattle and horse bones in the ditch of the cult enclosure<sup>406</sup>.

#### Estrées-Saint-Denis (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Animal bones were found at the site<sup>407</sup>, 5,000 badly preserved and very fragmented bones were found, half of which have been identified and the majority of the remains, except the remains of horses, which were not eaten, can be assigned to kitchen waste<sup>408</sup>.

### Fesques (Ambiani tribal territory)<sup>409</sup>

The part of the small ditch excavated contained calf bones and an abundant quantity of heads and feet of cattle, all aged from two years old, from at least 120 animals, leading to an estimate that thousands must be contained in the rest of the ditch. The large ditch also contained animal remains, mainly cattle and pork, from different periods, which do not seem to have come from banquets. The ditch around the centre contained animal remains, contemporaneous with those in the small ditch, but which show both signs of having come from banquets and bear witness to the massive consumption of heads of pork, sides of beef and shoulder and legs of sheep; foot bones are absent. Pigs formed 75% of the animal remains, while the use of cattle increased during the sanctuary's use from 10% to 16% and that of sheep decreased from 18% to 9%

### Gournay-sur-Aronde (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Only lambs and pigs were consumed, with sheep dominating<sup>410</sup>; it was not until the end of the Late La Tène that beef and dogs were consumed<sup>411</sup>. Up to the 3rd century BCE the remains of eaten animals consist of shoulder and leg bones of hundreds of lambs between three and four months and bones of dozens of pigs<sup>412</sup>. More than 3,000 pieces of remains were heaped in the enclosure ditch of the sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde over several dozens of years<sup>413</sup>. Horses are well represented, but they have not been cut up; the only traces found, on a skull, are evidence of unknown practices<sup>414</sup>. Dogs were cut up and consumed<sup>415</sup>.

### Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin (Bellovaci tribal territory)

The upper parts of the limbs are very well represented<sup>416</sup>. Beef was important<sup>417</sup> and ribs of beef are abundant<sup>418</sup>. Pig bones form almost 45% of the total weight of the remains, but beef is still important<sup>419</sup>. Wild animals, such as boar, wolf, hare and deer, have been found in abundance in this sanctuary<sup>420</sup>, which is a notable exception. The deer is the most common of all, forming 85% of the remains of the wild animals, although in the villages the hare is the game animal eaten above all else<sup>421</sup>. For Méniel<sup>422</sup> the presence of hare and deer is not surprising since these animals occur frequently in the depictions of hunting from this period, but the presence of the wild boar and, especially, the wolf is much more remarkable. The relative abundance at this site highlights the paucity of examples of particular species at other sites; for example the wolf is rarely present archaeologically<sup>423</sup>, but, although there is no evidence, was surely very common in this period. Domestic birds are most numerous with cockerels, geese and pigeons forming 90% of the birds<sup>424</sup>. It is

during the Roman period that the domestic pigeon appears in Gaul<sup>425</sup>. Apart from them the other birds, the remaining 10%, are from the *corvidae* family, such as rooks, crows and jackdaws<sup>426</sup>. The remains of horses do not normally bear the marks of cutting<sup>427</sup>.

#### Mouzon-Flavier (Remi/Treveri tribal territory)

There is evidence at this site of animal sacrifice, suggesting the existence of a ritual comprising the sacrifice of goats and pigs<sup>428</sup>.

#### Nanteuil-sur-Aisne (Remi tribal territory)

The animal bones present in the pits scattered everywhere and in the ditch<sup>429</sup> are possibly evidence of animal offerings.

#### Saint-Maur-en-Chausée (Bellovaci tribal territory)

There were deposits of animals as offerings<sup>430</sup> in the ditch and there is evidence that offerings of animals were hung on the palisade<sup>431</sup>.

#### *Sites in Lugdunensian Gaul*

##### Mirebeau-sur-Bèze

Pork is more than half of all the animal remains and beef and sheep are again secondary<sup>432</sup>. Here also horse and dog are well represented, particularly the former, but the consumption of these animals is rather exceptional<sup>433</sup>. The deer and the hare were present with the former having a slight numerical advantage, but either no selection process was followed by the Gauls or, if it was, the evidence is too little to detect it<sup>434</sup>. With 25 remains out of 36, the cockerel is the most common bird at this sanctuary, followed by the crow, the goose, the duck and the pigeon<sup>435</sup>. These remains form less than 1% of the animal remains and have been devoured by dogs giving only a modest impression of the use of birds in sacrifice at this sanctuary<sup>436</sup>. The remains of horses do not normally bear the marks of cutting<sup>437</sup>.

It may also be proposed that the ritual involving a sacrifice and a meal was to confirm and consolidate the tribal unity, since the whole tribe benefited from the ritual, even if only by proxy, and, by doing so, to strengthen tribal identity, the identification of each person with the tribe and his/her belonging to it distinct from other tribes. These effects would be particularly useful in the typical Gallic context of potential inter-tribal conflict; the tribe's unity would be enhanced and its differences and separateness from other tribes would be emphasised. In a

sanctification rite religious authority may have been imparted onto the tribe heightening the possible discord with the divine powers, which would result from discord with the secular ones. Caesar describes a form of punishment imposed by Druids on Gauls who ignore their judgements in law cases; they are prohibited from participation in sacrifices, which is considered an extremely severe form of punishment (*Caes.B.G. VI.13.6-7*). This socio-religious exclusion has been referred to by some modern academics as excommunication, but this is not only an inaccurate term to use but has certain purely religious connotations connected with the Roman Catholic Church<sup>438</sup>. In light of these encumbrances perhaps a better term to describe this socio-religious exclusion is the term “shunning”; while this too has religious overtones, since it is a term used by the Amish, the advantages of the term are that these overtones are not as widely known as those attached to the term “excommunication”, the act of shunning has no bearing on salvation or the Afterlife, is regarded as irreversible and affects the social aspects of the punished person’s life as well as the religious, since s/he will be avoided by the others in the community.

Modern scholars, possibly because it is felt that the application of the term excommunication to the penalty is sufficient, do not explain the basis of its power. The Gauls, and the Celts in general, seem to have believed that access to one form of the Afterlife, and the most pleasant form, was automatically available without any necessary adherence to any religious or moral code or behavioural or dietary regimen<sup>x</sup>; in addition, there is no evidence of a Celtic equivalent to Hell or damnation and even the worst Celtic concept of an Afterlife, the House of Donn, the gloomy god of the Dead, was merely a continuation in every respect of one’s life before death and was more pleasant than the Roman Land of Shades or the Jewish Sheol. Therefore, if the Druids could not stop a Celt from access to the Afterlife and there was no fear of punishment after death, why was this interdict considered so very serious? Perhaps the reason lies in the sacrifices involving the consumption of the cooked sacrifice.

Baumeister and Leary postulate that all “human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and impactful (sic) interpersonal relationship”<sup>439</sup> and state that isolation from other people or social loneliness, which occurs when a person does not belong to any group which provides opportunities for social interaction, can lead to acute psychological discomfort<sup>440</sup>. By being excluded from all sacrifices and from all personal contact, the shunned person

---

<sup>x</sup> See page 261.

was socially and religiously isolated, was excluded from the legal, military and divine protection associated with membership of the tribe and, in effect, ceased to be part of the tribe. Although it is not certain, the social exclusion may have involved loss of all property. If shunned, it is highly unlikely that s/he could just go and join another tribe and, therefore, as a result of this penalty, the person was totally alone, socially and spiritually, and was at the mercy of all natural, artificial and divine circumstances which may arise without any divine or human recourse. Looked at in this way, it is not surprising that such a penalty was considered so awful.

The bone deposits concentrated at the entrance in the ditch of Gournay-sur-Aronde supply evidence for a cattle sacrifice, on which the chthonic deities “feasted”<sup>441</sup>. To the best of my knowledge, it has not been noticed previously that Livy’s description of the sacrifice by the Ligurians of cattle, in which they butcher the cattle and spread the remains all over the sanctuaries (**Livy**.XLI.18.3) may be a corrupted description of this cattle sacrifice, which the Ligurians may have acquired from the Celts. Livy’s statement that it was unlike their usual rite is probably because Livy ethnocentrically assumes that the usual Ligurian procedure would be like the Roman.

Méniel<sup>442</sup> lists two possible scenarios regarding the frequency of the sacrifice and deposit, but makes no decision either way. The oxen were sacrificed in each ten year period either one every year or all together at the end of the period. The first scenario would mean that the rite had a periodic nature, that is calendrical, and was regular, thus needing a regular supply of oxen; the problem this scenario raises is that a place is needed for the accumulation of remains after the decomposition of each animal and the deposit of all the remains in the ditch<sup>443</sup>. The second scenario, favoured by Brunaux<sup>444</sup>, would mean that, while the ritual is still calendrical, there is a long period between rites and seems to require a haphazard method of procurement, such as war booty<sup>445</sup>. Brunaux<sup>446</sup> suggests that the cattle sacrifice at Gournay-sur-Aronde, with the decomposition in the central pit, is chthonic, possibly connected with fertility, the earth being fed by the decomposing flesh, an idea accepted by Green<sup>447</sup>. If the victims were booty, the sacrifice may also be an act of thanksgiving to the tribal deity<sup>448</sup>.

As regards the deposit of cattle, dogs horses, pigs, sheep and ravens in grain storage pits, Cunliffe<sup>449</sup> suggests that the first three were offered for the food value and the last three for a ritual significance. There seems to have been a fixed, seasonal pattern of one deposit followed a year later by another<sup>450</sup>. Cunliffe<sup>451</sup> explains the first

offering as a propitiatory offering, once the grain is removed in anticipation of a good harvest, and the second as a thanksgiving one, for a good harvest.

### **Offerings of Inanimate Objects**

The third category of sacrifice is the offering of inanimate objects. This may seem strange and Bradley<sup>452</sup> considers the sacrifice of living things, which involve killing something, to be distinct from the offering of inanimate objects. However, if it is possible for the offering of living things to be considered as a sacrifice, then so can the offering of non-living things. Randsborg and Aldhouse-Green<sup>453</sup> see no difference between the sacrifice of a living being and the deposit of an offering. It is still a matter of something of value being dedicated to the gods and being put out of use permanently as far as the donor is concerned; the fact that it is inanimate is not relevant. Although the concept of offerings concerns primarily inanimate objects, some offerings involved the killing of humans and animals. This category can be contrasted to the two previous ones because the evidence for it is both literary, unlike that of animal sacrifice, and archaeological, unlike that of human sacrifice. Although Le Roux<sup>454</sup> says that it is an error to treat the military devotions as sacrifices, just as living creatures are killed in a sacrifice to consecrate them and put them beyond human use, so, when inanimate objects are given up as an offering to a deity, there are rites of passage by which they are consecrated to the deity, such as burial, deposit in a watery location or ritual breakage<sup>455</sup>, and, therefore, are put beyond the use of human beings just like a living victim. This will be seen clearly later with weapon deposits. Many objects deposited are pertinent to persons of high-status, such as weapons and jewellery<sup>456</sup> and, as Henig<sup>457</sup> points out, may be a way of demonstrating one's wealth and increasing one's prestige. The standard categorisation used by historians of religion of offerings, as being all the gifts of a material nature offered to a deity as opposed to the gifts of an animal or human nature, will be followed, but divided, according to Brunaux's principle<sup>458</sup>, into deposits intended to remain for a long time and vegetable offerings, which will disappear in time, and are themselves divided into freshly cut vegetation, such as aromatic herbs, branches, cereals, flowers, fruits and plants, and products of vegetables, such as beverages and cakes<sup>459</sup>. Brunaux<sup>460</sup> classes offerings of vegetables as non-chthonic.

#### Literary evidence

Caesar, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus (**Caes.B.G.** VI.17.3-5; **Strab.**IV.1.13; **Diod.**V.27. 4) report the depositing of booty and other valuables in sacred enclosures. Since their source, Posidonius, wrote in approximately 70 BCE, the

descriptions go back to at least the 2nd century BCE<sup>461</sup>. Webster<sup>462</sup> subdivides this category into offerings of war booty and offerings of treasures and precious metals.

### *Weapons and War booty*

Inanimate spoils were dedicated to the Gallic war god to secure victory (**Caes.B.G.** VI.17.3), as in Archaic Rome<sup>463</sup>. Having stated that the captured animals were sacrificed, Caesar states that the Gauls gathered everything else<sup>464</sup>, obviously meaning the rest of the booty, together in one place and that in many tribal territories one is able to see heaps built out of captured items in consecrated places (**Caes.B.G.** VI.17.3-4); it is not stated, but there is an implication<sup>465</sup> from the rest of Caesar's report that the *reliquas res* are all inanimate objects. Despite Caesar's use of the imprecise phrase *multis in civitatibus*, Brunaux<sup>466</sup> considers Caesar's report more accurate. As Powell<sup>467</sup> says, these collections must have been spectacular. Although Caesar does not actually mention weapons, contrary to Powell's<sup>468</sup> claim, it is reasonable, as Webster<sup>469</sup> thinks, to assume that weapons formed a part, possibly a large part, of the *reliquas res*. The act of piling up consecrated booty is reported by Livy as having been done by the Gauls after the battle of Allia in 390 BCE<sup>470</sup> (**Livy.** V.39.1); from the use of the phrase *ut mos eis est* Livy seems to think that it is practised in his time and it is interesting that Livy, like Caesar, uses the word *cumulos*. Aelian, in the 2nd century CE, using facts going back to the 4th century BCE<sup>471</sup>, reports that the Celts raised up trophies in the manner of the Greeks (**Ael.** V.H.XII.23), that is on the battlefield, which seems to refer to this custom. If the objects were mainly weapons, they may have been damaged beyond repair. This was the procedure followed by the Cimbri, Teutones, Tigurini and Ambrones after the battle of Arausio (**Oros.**V.16.6) and was presumably the method they had for consecrating or 'sacrificing' the armour to a deity. Plutarch mentions that the Arverni hung Caesar's sword in a temple (**Plut.Iul.**XXVI.8). Brunaux<sup>472</sup> says that, since booty was a source of enrichment for the Gallic warrior, its dedication to the gods was an example of Celtic piety. It is uncertain what Caesar means by consecrated places, which is such a vague, almost all-encompassing phrase. Reinach, followed by Webster,<sup>473</sup> says that the booty, being dedicated to a deity, made the place sacred.

Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.**V.27.4) mentions a practice of leaving large amounts of gold on open display ἐν γὰρ τοῖς ἱεροῖς καὶ τεμένεσιν. Diodorus Siculus must be referring to the same practice as Caesar; Webster<sup>474</sup> points out that, while only Caesar explicitly mentions dedication to a deity, Diodorus implies it. Somehow, possibly due to carelessness on his part, this information about offerings of booty,

probably from Posidonius<sup>475</sup>, became separated from the other details concerning human and animal sacrifices. Not surprisingly Diodorus Siculus considers this custom to be strange, which may explain the Classical interest<sup>476</sup>. The words used by Diodorus Siculus are also capable of a wide interpretation, but it is possible that they were referring to artificial, constructed sanctuaries, a view held by Brunaux<sup>477</sup>, although he considers the riches of which Diodorus Siculus speaks to be suspect, because it contradicts Brennus' statement that *quos [the gods] nullis opibus egere, ut qui eas largiri hominibus soleant, affirmabat* (**Justin.Epit.XXIV.6.5**)<sup>478</sup>, although Brunaux overlooks the fact that people will justify crimes by any argument.

However, Caesar's use of the phrase *multis in civitatibus* implies that not all tribes practised leaving valuable booty visible and accessible. Some tribes seem to have collected weapons and placed them in definitely formal religious structures. Livy states that in 216 BCE the Boii, having defeated the Romans, took the spoils to their temple (**Livy.XXIII.24.11**) and Plutarch says that the Arverni placed a sword which had belonged to Caesar in a temple (**Plut.Iul.XXVI.8**), which, because of this, Caesar ἱερὸν ἡγούμενος. Diodorus Siculus says that the custom was practised among the Celts as a whole and not just *multis in civitatibus*, but this may have been the result of Diodorus' editing.

Florus (**Flor.I.ii.4.4 and 5**)<sup>479</sup> recounts the consecration by two chiefs of the Insubres of booty to deities before the battles of Telamon in 225 BCE, Ariovistus devoting a torque made from the spoils of the Roman soldiers, and Clastidium in 222 BCE, Viridomarus consecrating all captured Roman armour. The deities were the gods equated to Mars and Vulcan<sup>480</sup> respectively. It is unclear whether the offerings were going to be placed in a pile or in a formal sanctuary. Florus' accounts suggests that, as far as the promise of inanimate objects is concerned, the tribal chief acted as sacrificer. It seems obvious that such a vow could only be performed if victory was achieved, because not only would that mean that the deity had performed his/her part of the arrangement, but also only by victory could such booty be acquired. However, Jullian<sup>481</sup> says, and Reinach<sup>482</sup> agrees with him, that the majority of suicides by conquered Gallic chiefs can be explained by the belief that, even if victory was not granted, the chief must still devote something valuable, himself.

Strabo (**Strab.IV.1.13**) says that no one dared to touch the dedications made to the temple in Tolosa, Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.27.4**) says that no one dares to touch the piles of valuable objects and Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VI.17.5**) says that it rarely happens

that anyone dares to remove anything. Webster says that, since Caesar has not actually mentioned a formal structure, he is stressing a “conceptual inviolability”<sup>483</sup> and that “religious scruple rendered treasures, like booty, inviolable”<sup>484</sup>. However, Caesar implies that such violation sometimes happens when he says that such a crime was punished very severely, since if it never happened, no punishment would be needed. Webster<sup>485</sup>, in claiming that religious scruples and the conceptual inviolability of the consecrated items ensured that they would not be touched and that the Romans had no such scruples, implies that the consecrated places were not violated until the Romans came, but Caesar’s statement regarding punishment of this act suggests that examples of removal happened before the Romans arrived.

### *Treasures and precious metals.*

Strabo (**Strab.**IV.1.13), following the report by Posidonius, says that the Tectosages, with their capital at Tolosa, left unwrought gold and silver ἐν σηκοῖς and that many treasures were in τὸ ἱερόν because it was holy. The words used by Strabo indicate a formal sacred enclosure. The Celts did not deposit valuable objects as offerings only on the surface of the ground, but also, according to the ancient authors, in watery places. Strabo and Justin (**Just.Epit.**XXXII.3.9) record that the Tectosages of southern Gaul deposited unfashioned gold and silver in sacred lakes; it may be thought that this is merely evidence only of a custom of tribes in the *Provincia*, but, Orosius records the same practice by the Cimbri, Teutones, Tigurini and Ambrones after the battle of Arausio (**Oros.**V.16.6), unless one accepts that the northern tribes practised southern customs out of politeness. From Strabo it seems that individuals made offerings, while in the report by Orosius the army was the sacrificer. As with the sacrifice of the booty, this sacrifice was either one of thanksgiving or possibly in the execution of a vow, although Strabo certainly states that the intention of those Tectosages who made offerings was to invoke and propitiate the deity and the report by Justin implies that the gold and silver were thrown into the lake to appease the anger of the gods; in each case the deposits can be categorised as a crisis ritual. The χρυσᾶι σημοῖαι kept by the Insubres in their temple to the goddess whom Polybius interprets as Athena (**Polyb.**II.32.6) may have been gold treasures consecrated to the goddess. It is these treasures deposited in sanctuaries, which Caesar plundered (**Suet.***Jul.*54.2).

Webster<sup>486</sup> states that the skull of the Consul L. Postumius taken and gilded by the Boii (**Livy.**XXIII.24.11) and used *sacerdotibus ac templi antistitibus* (**Livy.**XXIII.24.12) can be categorised as both booty and treasure. But it was taken because of the

value attached to it both as a head in itself and as the head of a general, not as booty and it can only be considered as a treasure after it was gilded and it was only gilded because it was the head of a general. Therefore, Webster is wrong not only to place it in both categories, but also to include it in either category, but is correct to say that the context of the report should be decapitation<sup>487</sup>.

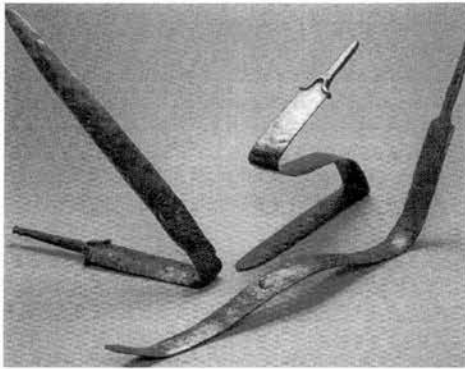
### Archaeological evidence

Brunaux<sup>488</sup> states that these reports of deposits are “en parfait accord” with archaeological evidence dated to the beginning of the 3rd century BCE from an area marked by a certain archaism and conservatism and van Andringa<sup>489</sup> says that archaeology, finding deposits of arms, essentially from the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, confirm Caesar’s report. The deposits of valuable objects on the surface have not been found, but deposits of weapons have been found at some sanctuaries and hoards of offerings have been discovered deposited in lakes and rivers. Iron weapons are rarely found with precious metals or jewellery<sup>490</sup> and few weapons are found at sites where there are many remains of ornamentation<sup>491</sup>. There is archaeological evidence for valuable items being taken in the booty<sup>492</sup>. Archaeology shows that the practices of these Gallic sanctuaries resembled Greek trophies of the 4th century BCE, when real weapons were used,<sup>493</sup> and confirms Aelian’s (*Ael.V.H.XII.23*) information.

### *Weapons*

One-third of a collection of 2,500 objects found at La Tène in Switzerland were swords, spears, lances and shields<sup>494</sup>. Raftery and Müller<sup>495</sup> argue in favour of deliberate rather than accidental deposition Raftery basing his argument on the military nature of individual deposits, Müller on the fact that the items are a mixture of La Tène C1 and La Tène D1. The river Shannon has produced brooches, swords and spear ferrules, most in perfect condition, and the river Bann bronze scabbard plates, bridle-bits and spear ferrules<sup>496</sup>; indeed large amounts of weapons have been found in European rivers and there is no indication that the location had any specific significance, although the river itself may have been sacred<sup>497</sup>. Many Gallic sanctuaries have examples of weaponry, which either were or may have been deposited as offerings<sup>498</sup>; large deposits of weapons are usually found in ditches<sup>499</sup>. These were deliberately damaged or broken<sup>500</sup>. As Brunaux<sup>501</sup> says, the use of the word sacrifice with reference to the weapons displaying thousands of traces of violence is very appropriate<sup>502</sup>. Brunaux<sup>503</sup> states that, although it may seem strange that inanimate objects should undergo ritual treatment, in the majority of ancient

religions, the destruction of the offering is not limited to living beings and the weapons were the object of the sacrifice. Even miniature weapons, such as shields, spears and swords, were deposited as offerings at Gallic shrines, some of which were



Ritually damaged weapons found at Gournay-sur-Aronde

deliberately broken by being snapped or bent in half<sup>504</sup>. Fichtl<sup>505</sup> sets out the three main stages in the offering of weapons. In the first the weapons were exposed in privileged places<sup>506</sup> in complete panoplies while the weapons were in good condition and lasted until the organic materials had rotted.

Müller<sup>507</sup> thinks that the trophies at Gournay-sur-Aronde were erected on the interior of the palisade turned towards the temple and

that, over time, they fell into the ditch in front of the palisade. Brunaux points out that this was contrary to the literary reports, which give the impression that they were piled up on the ground<sup>508</sup> and that the Gallic practice of leaving the trophies to rot and to refrain from repairing them resembles the Roman prohibition regarding repairing weapons suspended in Roman cult places (*Plut. Quaest. Rom. XXXVII*)<sup>509</sup>. Only in the second were the weapons sacrificed by the swords being bent or by sword, axe or spear blows inflicting many breaks, particularly noticeable on the shield-bosses, which were separated from the shield without violence afterwards and even damaged on the inside. Finally, once destroyed, they were thrown into the ditch



Reconstruction of the sanctuary at Gournay-sur-Aronde at the Musée de Compiègne. It must be remembered that the exact appearance of the site is a matter of interpretation, not of established fact.

not far from their exposure point, either at the entrance or spread with the other remains. The treatment of the weapons and of human remains followed the same logic- they were exposed as trophies and, while new trophies were erected, the old ones rotted before ending up in the ditch<sup>510</sup>. Brunaux<sup>511</sup> says that this should be seen as a public cult, a major function of which was the maintenance of the unity and protection of the community and that, since the most ancient offerings correspond chronologically with the establishment of the sanctuary, they can be seen as a foundation rite. Schwab<sup>512</sup> thinks that, because A. Rapin, in a personal communication, has drawn attention to the fact that the wood of the bucklers recovered from La Tène had been exposed to the air for a long period before arriving in the water, this suggests that the weapons found in the collection were exposed on a sanctuary in the village, although Müller<sup>513</sup> thinks that they were exposed on the bridge.

### Belgic Gaul

Estrées-Saint-Denis (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Weapons and armour identical to those at Gournay-sur-Aronde were deposited in pits at this site<sup>514</sup>, although the weapons are few<sup>515</sup>.

Fesques (Ambiani tribal territory)

The small ditch contained weapons dated to the Middle La Tène<sup>516</sup>.

Gournay-sur-Aronde (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Some 2,000 deliberately broken weapons, in which there were 200 swords, 250 shields and more than 500 scabbards, had either been placed in the ditch as offerings<sup>517</sup>; they had been standing on the platform of the gateway or hung from poles around the enclosure<sup>518</sup> and, when the leather and wood rotted after years of exposure, they were ritually destroyed and thrown into the ditch<sup>519</sup>. The deposits covered a period of approximately 200 years<sup>520</sup>. The first deposits were in the second quarter of the 3rd century BCE<sup>521</sup> and, interestingly, several weapons had been repaired when they were placed in the sanctuary<sup>522</sup>. The number of weapons certainly indicates, as Brunaux<sup>523</sup> says, that they were the sacred objects of an important community, which had fought a number of battles.

Montmartin (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Weapons were fixed on the walls of the temple as offerings<sup>524</sup>. Types of weapons found at this site did not exist at Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>525</sup>.

Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Different types of weaponry, La Tène swords and lance points, shield bosses and miniature axes, which may have been offerings, have been found at this site<sup>526</sup>.

Nanteuil-sur-Aisne (Remi tribal territory)

Bent and broken weapons have been found at this site and may be evidence of weapons, which have been sacrificed, that is ritually destroyed, to render them taboo<sup>527</sup>.

Roizy (Remi tribal territory)

Bent weapons were deposited at this site<sup>528</sup>.

Saint-Maur-en-Chausée (Bellovaci tribal territory)

There were numerous fragments of weapons deposited as offerings<sup>529</sup> in the ditch and there is evidence that offerings of weapons were hung on the palisade<sup>530</sup>. The weapons, some of which go back to the La Tène C2, are the oldest materials in the ditch<sup>531</sup>.

### Lugdunensian Gaul

Mirebeau-sur-Bèze

Large quantities of fragments of weaponry, dated to the 2nd and 1st century BCE,<sup>532</sup> and weapons<sup>533</sup>, which Guillaumet & Barral<sup>534</sup> say had been sacrificed, have been found at this site.

### Britannia

Frilford

Miniature shields and weaponry have been unearthed at this site in Berkshire<sup>535</sup>.

Worth

Miniature shields and weaponry have also been found at this site in Sussex<sup>536</sup>.

This demonstrates that the custom not only of offering weapons to the deities, but also of offering miniature ones was practised outside Gaul.

### Outside the Roman Empire

Manching

This site has evidence that the deposit of weaponry in a sanctuary was practised at sites outside the Roman Empire; there appear to be deposits of weapons as offerings

in Structure A<sup>537</sup>, although there were very few weapons in Structure C, which Sievers<sup>538</sup> considers to be a sanctuary.

Webster<sup>539</sup> says that the archaeological evidence possibly reflects the textual evidence. Brunaux remarks that one does not know if the weapons belonged to enemies or to warriors of the tribe<sup>540</sup> and that it is not certain that the weapons at Gournay-sur-Aronde were random booty and suggests rather the appearance of a deposit of complete sets of armour which were either taken from the enemy or offered to the deity by the victors and that, whichever they were, these offerings were exposed on the porch of the sanctuary as decoration<sup>541</sup>. Human, animal and weapon remains have been found associated at sites such as Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>542</sup> and Ribemont-sur-Ancre<sup>543</sup>; Webster<sup>544</sup> says that the texts do not preclude this.

As can be seen, there are some contradictions regarding the deposition *loci* both within the literary evidence and between the literary and archaeological. Reinach and Brunaux<sup>545</sup> have tried to explain the difference between Caesar and Diodorus. Reinach's<sup>546</sup> explanation is that, early in Gallic history, during their migratory phase, the Gauls would leave the booty dedicated to a deity piled in one place. But later, when the various tribes settled in defined territories, the practice came to deposit the spoils in a specific sanctuary. This is supported by the fact that the battle of Allia, after which the spoils were left on the battlefield, was in the 4th century during the alleged migratory phase, but the instances of the Boii and the Arverni were in the 3rd and 1st centuries respectively. Moreover, the Insubres in the 3rd century had a fixed sanctuary at *Mediolanum*. Brunaux<sup>547</sup> suggests that the spoils were placed in a pile only if the Celts were too far from home or were not going home soon, hence the piling of booty after Allia; Webster<sup>548</sup> considers this argument plausible. Webster<sup>549</sup> claims that the examples of Postumius' spoils and Caesar's sword were taken to the temple because they were *spolia opima* and, therefore, received special treatment. Perhaps the explanation for the difference is already given by Caesar, that the custom of piling up booty was only practised *multis in civitatibus*, while others put them in sanctuaries.

Brunaux<sup>550</sup>, possibly to reconcile the reports of Caesar with archaeological evidence, contends that the evidence of weapon deposits and many weapons from the La Tène C2 and D1, that is 2nd century BCE and the beginning of the 1st century BCE, indicates that in the course of the 2nd century BCE the practice of the whole trophy, containing the human spoils and their weapons, being left on the battlefield was

slowly abandoned, while the custom of placing weapons in cultic places persisted; literary evidence for this is the report about Caesar's sword (**Plut.***Iul.*XXVI.8).

### *Jewellery and pottery*

There have been a number of discoveries, described as votive deposits, of objects dated to the La Tène period in marshes or swamps<sup>551</sup>. Individual finds from peat bogs and rivers have been suspected of being offerings<sup>552</sup>; larger deposits have been found, *inter alia*, at Flag Fen in Cambridgeshire, dated to between 1200 and 200 BCE, 2,000 deposits, mainly brooches and bracelets, in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE around the "Giant's Spring" at Duchov in the Czech Republic<sup>553</sup>, at Llyn Cerrig Bach in Anglesey, dating from mid-2nd century BCE to mid-1st century CE, at Port in Switzerland and, most importantly, the collection found at La Tène in Switzerland<sup>554</sup>, although Filip is not convinced that the latter was a ritually deposited hoard<sup>555</sup>; certainly one must be careful to distinguish between a sacrificial deposit and a trader's wares. However, everything indicates that these large finds are not one deposit, but were formed over a period of time, and deposits were made either seasonally or when propitiation was particularly necessary<sup>556</sup>. This seems to corroborate the report by Strabo concerning the deposits in the sacred lakes at Tolosa, although, as Webster<sup>557</sup> points out, this reference mentions only the deposit of unwrought gold and silver, which is rarely supported archaeologically. Some deposits were made at a specific point distinguished by a natural feature or an artificial structure, while others were less definite in their location<sup>558</sup>. Cunliffe says that the reason for a deposit at a specific location must have been different from that for a deposit along the length of a river and that, whatever the reason for the location of each deposit, the reason for all the deposits was propitiation<sup>559</sup> and interprets these great deposits as a 'tribal' response to the deities arising from an event or a process<sup>560</sup>. The remains of cult activity were placed in the interior or at the limits of the sacred space<sup>561</sup>. Deposits of hoards of precious metals decline by the 1st century BCE<sup>562</sup>. While the deposit of arms continues, it is no longer predominant and pottery begins to replace them in the ditches<sup>563</sup>.

### Jewellery

Estrées-Saint-Denis (Bellovaci tribal territory)

There were large quantities of brooches and bracelets<sup>564</sup>.

Morvilliers-Saint-Saturnin (Bellovaci tribal territory)<sup>565</sup>

Pearls, bracelets and rings have been found at this site

## Pottery

Acy-Romance-“La Croizette” (Remi tribal territory)

There were deposits of shattered vases in the triple pit<sup>566</sup>.

Estrées-Saint-Denis (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Some of the movables at this site consist of ceramic ware<sup>567</sup>.

Gournay-sur-Aronde (Bellovaci tribal territory)

Vases were deposited symbolically at this site even after cult activity and the deposit of weaponry had ceased after approximately 100 BCE<sup>568</sup>.

Saint-Maur-en-Chausée (Bellovaci tribal territory)

The same quantity of pottery was deposited as of weapons and seems to replace weapon deposition little by little<sup>569</sup>.

## *Vegetable offerings*

Brunaux<sup>570</sup> claims that indirect literary evidence of vegetable offerings is deduced from the report on a sacrifice, which Strabo interprets as resembling the sacrifices to Demeter and Kore in Samothrace (**Strabo.IV.4.6**) on the grounds that, because these deities principally receive vegetable, therefore non-chthonic, offerings, the rite reported by Strabo must have been a vegetable offering and the absence of its description can be explained by its similarity to Greek rites. However, his statement that these deities principally receive vegetable offerings is false; the best-known sacrifice to Demeter and Kore is the *Thesmophoria*, which was not only a chthonic rite, but was also one in which the principal ingredient was an animal<sup>571</sup>. Moreover, Brunaux himself contradicts this proposal when he not only claims that the Gallic sacrifices involving the deposit of an animal in a central pit, such as at Gournay-sur-Aronde, corroborates and, therefore, is similar to this ritual, which he claims to be a non-chthonic vegetable offering<sup>572</sup>, but also suggests that the chthonic Gallic animal sacrifices revealed by archaeology corroborate the rite recorded by Strabo, indicating that this sacrifice was chthonic and animal.

The archaeological evidence for vegetable offerings is obviously very limited and only exists through the most fortunate circumstances. There is evidence of offerings of food<sup>573</sup> at Mirebeau, where grains of corn were fossilised due to their proximity to a shield rivet<sup>574</sup>; Brunaux<sup>575</sup> suggests that the seeds must have been covering the shield while it rusted and that this indicates that the fruits of the earth, perhaps in

great quantity, were placed in the sanctuaries in their natural form or, possibly, in the form of cakes, bread, porridge or beer. Birkhan<sup>576</sup> agrees that the offerings were simply deposited on the ground.

Once again Woolf's contention that Gallic religion was different from Roman is brought into question. Both religions practised animal sacrifice; indeed, there is a similarity between the Gauls preference for pigs, sheep and cattle and the Roman *suovetaurilia*. Both religions allowed human sacrifice at crises, although the Gallic one may have permitted some calendrically; even if this latter point is true, both religions ceased human sacrifice by the 1st BCE. Both religions had the practice of depositing valuable inanimate objects as an offering in the sacred space. Van Andringa contends that, while both polytheistic religions were neighbours and shared the practice of animal sacrifice, Gallic religion differed from Roman religion in the actual ritual and states that, although animals were sacrificed during the La Tène period, the sacrifices differed fundamentally from Mediterranean sacrificial customs and gives the chthonic cattle sacrifice as the basis for this conclusion<sup>577</sup>. The argument is wrong on two counts. First, the Greek animal sacrifice of the *Thesmophoria* involved the sacrifice of pigs and their deposit in a pit to rot and has been compared to the Gallic cattle sacrifice at Gournay-sur-Aronde<sup>578</sup>. Secondly, van Andringa is comparing a chthonic sacrifice<sup>579</sup> to the well-known Mediterranean sacrifices, which were Uranian.

### **Anthropomancy**

Although Pausanias (**Pau.X.21.1**) wonders if a form of Celtic divination even existed, Brunaux<sup>580</sup> points out that the other ancient authors contradict this idea. The only source of information about Celtic divination comes from ancient literature and it must be remembered that the information found in these ancient ethnographic passages is limited to a visual knowledge and, even then, only to activities which the ethnographer could interpret easily<sup>581</sup>. Although there is literary evidence that the Celts practised different methods of divination prior to the Roman Conquest<sup>582</sup>, only one, which may be termed anthropomancy<sup>583</sup>, is known to have been affected by the Conquest and is discussed here.

Some scholars<sup>584</sup> consider anthropomancy to be a form of human sacrifice, presumably because there is a ritual killing of a human being. Webster<sup>585</sup> suggests that this rite is an extension of the sacrifice of sacred animals. However, it is posited that such a ritual commonly regarded as divination by human sacrifice should not be

included in the category of sacrifice. Ritual killing of a living creature in a religious context is not automatically a sacrifice; the Etruscan and Roman practice of haruspicy involves killing an animal and is not considered to be a form of sacrifice and there is no element of giving or offering. Although both Classical sources describe the victim as being sprinkled with water, which indicates a symbolic cleaning, presumably to wash off the profane and to make the victim holy, the purpose may not have been to make the victim holy for offering as a sacrifice, but rather to make his/her body holy enough for the gods to communicate through it. Finally, in the context of practices prohibited by the Romans as contrary to Roman custom, presumably because they involved the killing of human beings for religious reasons, Strabo, or Posidonius according to Zwicker<sup>586</sup>, refers to those practices κατὰ τὰς θυσίας καὶ μαντείας (**Strab.IV.4.5**); the source clearly differentiates between the killing of humans for sacrifice and the killing of humans for divination.

The ritual is described in detail by both Diodorus Siculus and Strabo (**Diod.V.31.3**; **Strab.IV.4.5**) and is mentioned by Tacitus and Aelian (**Tac.Ann.XIV.30.3**; **Ael.V.H. II.31**)<sup>587</sup>. The versions of Diodorus Siculus and Strabo differ so slightly that they were probably derived from the same source. Zwicker and Tierney<sup>588</sup> contend that Posidonius is the source for Diodorus Siculus, yet Zwicker<sup>589</sup> does not ascribe the same details in Strabo to Posidonius. The officiants were, according to Diodorus Siculus, *Vates* and, in the opinion of Wait<sup>590</sup>, both Druids and *Vates*; Webster<sup>591</sup> points out that in connection with this particular rite, Strabo does not assign officiation of the practice to any group. According to Strabo οὐάταις [*Vates*] δὲ ἱεροποιοί (**Strab.IV.4.4**), but ἔθνον δὲ οὐκ ἄνευ δρυϊδῶν (**Strab.IV.4.5**); this suggests that the ascription of responsibility to *Vates* or Druids is dependant on whether one considers the practice to be a ἱεροποιός or a sacrifice. However, the fact that Divitiacus practised augury (**Cic.De Div.I.41.90**) shows that, although, according to Diodorus Siculus, a special class of men allegedly practised divination, Druids dealt with it too<sup>592</sup>.

Brunaux<sup>593</sup> says that this ritual provokes the liberation of the soul, which escapes and is able to contact a divine power; on the basis, presumably, that the convulsions and blood are under the direction of the soul or the divine power. In view of Diodorus Siculus' statement that the ritual was περί τινων μεγάλων, it was possibly only invoked, as Brunaux<sup>594</sup> suggests, for a question involving the destiny of the nation, extraordinary circumstances or for threats to the tribe of a natural/divine origin, such

as disease, crop failure, or a human origin, such as military activity of an extraordinary type or magnitude<sup>595</sup> and can be classed as a crisis ritual and, therefore, very rare. Jullian<sup>596</sup> ascribes this practice to all the Gauls, but Webster<sup>597</sup> claims that this ritual was performed only in the *Provincia*. This latter point seems to be based on the assumption that Zwicker and Tierney are right and that the source for Diodorus Siculus, and possibly Strabo, because of the close similarity of the details, was Posidonius; but this, in its turn, is based on two assumptions. The first is that Posidonius was the only possible source, whereas Timagenes of Alexandria was an equally possible source. The second assumption is that Posidonius travelled only within the *Provincia*, although this is debatable. Moreover, there is literary evidence that the practice existed outside the *Provincia*; as de Vries suggests<sup>598</sup>, Tacitus refers to this form of divination in his account of the Roman assault on and destruction of the groves on *Mona* [Anglesey] (**Tac. Ann. XIV.30.3**). Justin (**Just. Epit. XXVI.2.2**) records the practice performed by the Celts fighting Antigonus Gonatas. De Vries<sup>599</sup> says that something similar was also practised by the Cimbri, whose priestesses predicted the future by examining the gushing blood and entrails of prisoners of war (**Strab. VII.2.3**); this custom is claimed to have been acquired by the Cimbri from the Celts<sup>600</sup>. The Lusitanians had the same form of divination (**Strab. III.3.6**). There is also possible archaeological evidence. Webster<sup>601</sup> refers to the archaeological find on the island of Uist dated to c.200 BCE of the skeletal remains of a boy who had been killed by two blows by a sharp metal blade at the same point on the small of the back<sup>602</sup>. Although sceptical that the interpretation of the find as a prediction rite, because it is based entirely on literary sources and not archaeological and, without the texts, would never have been raised, Webster says that the idea is nevertheless worthy of consideration. Contrary to both of these views, Brunaux<sup>603</sup>, presumably relying on Justin, claims that the evidence for the practise of this ritual by the Celts is rare and appears to concern the Galatians rather than the Gauls and that nothing is certain that this particular form of divination was developed in Gaul. Jullian<sup>604</sup> even goes so far as to claim that this procedure and augury were considered as important methods of divination among the Romans, although there is no evidence that it was ever practised by the Romans.

When Cicero says that Divitiacus made predictions by augury and also by conjecture (**Cic. De Div. I.41.90**), were these *coniecturae* the other means of divination? If the *coniectura*, by which Deiotarus predicted the future as well as by birds (**Cic. De Div. I.15.26**; **Val. Max. I.4.2**), refers to this killing of a person, Cicero presumably did

not go into detail, in order to avoid disgust, which would have been directed at him for associating with a person who practised such a custom.

### **Circumambulation**

There are two references in ancient literature, one Greek and one Latin, to a religious custom of circumambulation. According to Athenaeus (**Ath.IV.152**), Posidonius reports that the Gauls worshipped their gods ἐπι τὰ δεξιὰ στρεφόμενοι, which has been interpreted<sup>605</sup> as indicating that the Gauls performed a custom of walking around a focal point, their gods, with their right side towards the point of worship in what would today be called a clockwise direction. Macbain<sup>606</sup> says that this is known as *deiseil (dexstralis)*, ‘right-hand-wise’ or ‘sunwise-turn’ and is known in India as *dakshiman kri*, the ‘right-hand-turn’. Pliny the Elder also mentions circumambulation, but states that the Gauls walked in the opposite direction (**Plin.H.N.XXVIII.25**). These statements are only contradictory if one accepts, as the ancient authors obviously do, that religious customs were uniform and universal to all Gauls, which is highly unlikely and almost certainly not the case; it is probable that it was merely the case that the Gauls whom Posidonius met practised the clockwise custom and Pliny the Elder’s source was concerned with the Gallic group who practised an anti-clockwise custom. The main point is the fact that both sources agree that a custom of religious circumambulation around a sacred focal point as a demonstration of reverence and worship existed among the Gauls. A third reference may be from Strabo. In his description of the rites of the Samnitae women Strabo says that, after dismembering the victim, the women carry τὰ μέρη περι (**Strab.IV.4.6**). This suggests circumambulation.

However, van Andringa<sup>607</sup> considers circumambulation to have been not a Gallic ritual, but a Roman practice. He says that Athenaeus and, therefore, Posidonius, simply says that the Gauls worshipped by turning right and makes no attempt to understand what is meant by this enigmatic statement. Not only does he omit to compare it to the report by Pliny, he fails to mention Pliny’s passage altogether. He dismisses the report by Strabo by saying that the rite was only reported because of “son caractère pittoresque” and it does not mention circumambulation. The first statement is probably true, but does not in any way undermine its validity; many of the details in the ethnography are mentioned precisely because they are “pittoresque” but are considered reliable, unless one has decided not to do so. The second statement is only partly true in that Strabo does not actually use the word circumambulation, which is a modern term, however, Strabo does use the phrase

περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν, which is a good description of circumambulation; moreover, van Andringa omits to explain what περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν does mean, if it does refer to this ritual. His basis for saying the practice is Roman in origin is a report by Plutarch. However, not only does Plutarch say that the Romans turn around *themselves*, not around temples or shrines or any other kind of cult site, but it sounds as much like circumambulation as the descriptions by Athenaeus and Pliny and less like the practice than Strabo's phrase. Van Andringa seems to prefer the Roman origin, although it in no way resembles circumambulation merely because it is a Roman activity. Finally, circumambulation or any structure for this practice is alien to Roman architecture.

The ritual of circumambulation may explain an episode reported by Plutarch (**Plut. Iul.XXVII.5**), also not mentioned by van Andringa, in which Vercingetorix, after the defeat at Alesia, having ridden out dressed in full armour to Caesar, rides around Caesar while he is seated and then throws all his battle gear at Caesar's feet as an act of surrender. It is possible that, if this process around an object was a sign of great reverence, Vercingetorix was demonstrating complete submission and obeisance to, and possibly worship of, Caesar in a typically Gallic manner. Unfortunately, Caesar (**Caes.B.G.VII.5**) summarises the entire episode in just four words and there is no indication about the direction. The references in Athenaeus and Pliny the Elder explain the presence of galleries or ambulatories at the sites of some of the Celtic sanctuaries mentioned and described already.

The second part of this chapter is concerned with the effect of Roman acculturation on human and animal sacrifice and the deposit of inanimate objects in sacred spaces.

## **Sacrifices**

### Human Sacrifice

Strabo, Pomponius Mela, Pliny the Elder and Suetonius clearly state that human sacrifice was one of the Gallic practices ended by the Romans (**Strab.IV.4.5**; **Pompon.III.2.18**; **Pliny.H.N.XXX.13**; **Suet.Claud.XXV.5**). It has always been accepted as having been the case, particularly since Strabo uses the past tense<sup>608</sup>. Certainly, from Pomponius' passage, it seems that human sacrifice has been replaced by a non-lethal blood sacrifice consisting of a small amount of blood-letting. However, there are two problems with the statements by these four authors. The first is the possibility that the practice actually continued, illegally, under Roman rule.

### *Literary evidence*

Various ancient writers, of whom Origen, Minucius Felix and Tertullian were born in North Africa claim that the sacrifice of children continued in Africa under Roman rule at least until Tiberius' principate and even for a long time after that and imply that it was still practised in their times, the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE (**Justin.Apol.II.12.5**; **Origen.c. Cels.V.27**; **Min.Fel.Oct.XXX.3**; **Tert.Apol.IX.2-3**; **Porph.Abst.II.57**). Certain of them make the same claim regarding Gaul (**Min.Fel.Oct.XXX.4**; **Tert.Apol.IX.5**). "The Romans apparently encountered many difficulties in subduing the Celts' belief that human blood was desired by the gods, and faced as many problems altering the Celts' behaviour as they did the Phoenicians"<sup>609</sup>. Certainly, it is a reasonable point that, if the ancient pre-Roman practices continued in Africa after two or three hundred years of Roman acculturation, then it is possible, indeed likely, that human sacrifice persisted, albeit in secret, in Gaul. Lucian in the 2nd century CE says that there was human sacrifice to a Syrian goddess (**Lucian.Syr.D. LVIII**). Various Christian writers and Porphyry claim that even the Romans still sacrificed human beings to a Jupiter Latiaris (**Justin.Apol.II.12.5**; **Lactant.Div.Inst. I.21**; **Min.Fel.Oct.XXX.4**; **Porph.Abst.II.56**; **Tatianus.Ad Gr.XXIX**; **Tert.Scorp. VII.6**), although the existence of this form of Jupiter is otherwise unknown. What is interesting is that, despite the fact that Pliny claims that the Senate outlawed human sacrifice in 97 BC and Suetonius reports that Claudius banned Druidic activities (**Pliny.H.N.XXX.13**; **Suet.Claud.XXV.5**), Hadrian had to outlaw human sacrifice in the entire empire (**Lactant.Div.Inst.I.21**; **Porph.Abst.II.56**; **Euseb.Praep.Evan.IV. 15.6-9**) again; if the prohibitions by the Senate and Claudius were so effective, what caused Hadrian to issue this edict? The explanation is that, for all the prohibitions and Roman influence, these old, indigenous and deeply-ingrained customs continued clandestinely<sup>610</sup>.

### *Archaeological evidence*

Fauduet<sup>611</sup> states that "il n'y a ... aucune trace de sacrifices humains" in Gallo-Roman temples and any bones come pre-Conquest times. However, there is archaeological evidence that this may have been the case in Britain or that at the very least "the preconception that the killing of human beings was not normal religious practice in Britain during AD 43-410 deserves re-examination"<sup>612</sup>; Green<sup>613</sup> accepts that some evidence hints at the continuation of the practice. Some bog burials in Britain are dated to the Roman period; there were two in Cumbria, two in North Yorkshire<sup>614</sup> and one from Lincolnshire,<sup>615</sup> all classed as Romano-British on the basis of the style of clothes, four from Cheshire, dated to 1st to 5th century CE by

Carbon-14,<sup>616</sup> one from Lancashire, dated to the 2nd to 4th century CE by Carbon-14, and one from Norfolk, classed as Romano-British by the style of pottery. It should be mentioned that few are securely dated<sup>617</sup>. At Worsley a male victim was strangled and put in a marsh during the Roman period<sup>618</sup>. At the gate of a Roman fort at Colchester, dated to 44-49 CE<sup>619</sup>, the remains of six people (various bones, parts of limbs and six crania) were found mixed with large quantities of animal bones and dog skeletons, in a legionary ditch<sup>620</sup>; Isserlin<sup>621</sup> points out that, contrary to Crummy's proposal that it was an execution<sup>622</sup>, the presence of the dog bones is evidence of a structured deposit and ritual<sup>623</sup>. A skeleton was found across the ambulatory of a Romano-Celtic temple at Cosgrove, in Northamptonshire<sup>624</sup>. At Aldwinckle, near Cosgrove, a body was found in the construction cut under the foundation of a bridge<sup>625</sup> dated to 95 CE<sup>626</sup>; Green<sup>627</sup> considers it possible that the skeleton belonged to a person killed in the process of construction and was buried to avert bad luck. A smashed skull and some disarticulated bones were found under the south-east corner of the basilica of the *principia* of the fortress at York; its deposit in the hollow dates from the rebuilding of the fortress in late 4th century CE and, in view of the fact that the back filled feature was sealed by the flooring<sup>628</sup>, the deposit must have been made during the building work<sup>629</sup>. Isserlin<sup>630</sup> points out that the disarticulation suggests that the presence of the skeleton was not an industrial accident, but had purpose. On their own, these deposit of human remains date mostly to the 1st century CE, but even later in the 4th, there is evidence for the continued practice of human sacrifice in Britain; the evidence is strengthened if one accepts the bog bodies. Since the human remains, at Aldwinckle, Cosgrove, Colchester and York, "enjoy a depressingly intimate acquaintance with a structure or major topographical feature"<sup>631</sup>, a bridge, a temple, a gate and a basilica, this suggests foundation sacrifices. Four infant-burials, one of which was decapitated, were found under Shrine IV at Springhead in Kent<sup>632</sup>; these certainly appear to have been foundation sacrifices and even Green<sup>633</sup> accepts that this is suggestive. Infant-burials have been found in association with late Roman-British rural buildings, as at Barton Court Farm in Oxfordshire and the Star villa at Shipham in Somerset, particularly corn-drying facilities concerned with malting, such as an aisled building at Winterton in Lincolnshire, beside the walls of which four children were buried<sup>634</sup>; they suggest, as Scott<sup>635</sup> contends, foundation sacrifice with a fertility connection and even Green<sup>636</sup> considers this more likely than fortuitous peri-natal deaths.

If human sacrifice "happened in Britain AD 43-410 (and it is a big *if*, but perhaps not so great as it was!)"<sup>637</sup>, it is possible that it still continued in Gaul under Roman rule.

This is supported by an example from Belgic Gaul, dating from early Roman times, of burials of a man, a woman and a child in an well at *Bagacum Nerviorum* [Bavay] from after the well's use ended<sup>638</sup>, possibly to stimulate the well's water. It is possible that Caesar, as part of his image of bringing Roman civilisation to Gaul to justify his adventurism, propagated the idea or, at least, let it be thought. It also means that the effect of acculturation from Rome on this aspect of Gallic religion was almost nil. "Almost" because it is possible that the introduction of the Romans' own institutionalised form of human sacrifice, the gladiatorial games, although practically sanitised of all religious associations, was considered to be a substitute. Pomponius Mela, referring to Gaul, states that the killing of a human being for sacrifice was abolished and describes the substitute ritual of merely drawing the victim's blood as s/he is being led to the altar (**Pompon.**III.2.18). If human sacrifice had ceased to be practised by the 1st century BCE, as contended<sup>xi</sup>, it is possible that this substitutionary ritual was instituted by the Gauls and that Pomponius is ascribing its introduction to the Romans.

### Animal Sacrifice

Fauduet<sup>639</sup> states that, in lieu of any description of a sacrifice, one must examine the remains in the sanctuary, specifically the entrance and court and that animal sacrifice by a priest was the accepted form. Van Andringa makes two attempts to show that Gallic sacrificial practices had been superseded. First, he says<sup>640</sup> that in the Roman period the sacred space of the sanctuaries begins to be swept and scoured and that this indicates not just a change of habit, but a transference of the practices from the enclosure to the interior; however, he implicitly concedes that the practices continued. Secondly, stating, reasonably, that the fact that banqueting furniture has been found in temples, such as the temple to Ritona in the Altbachtal temple precinct at *Augusta Treverorum* [Trier/Trèves]<sup>641</sup>, indicates that the sanctuaries were sometimes endowed with arrangements suitable for a banquet, he claims<sup>642</sup> that this is an example of acculturation; the endowment of furniture was an example of acculturation, but the rite of a banquet was pure Gallic and, therefore, the archaeological evidence actually supports the continuity of Gallic practices. Animal sacrifices remained unchanged up to the early Empire to such an extent that archaeozoologists cannot differentiate between pre-Roman and post-Conquest faunal deposits<sup>643</sup>; Woolf<sup>644</sup> accepts that animal sacrifice continued and that the deposition of portions of animals in pits was a continuation of local Gallic rites, if not on the scale of Gournay-sur-Aronde. Indeed, It seems that, as in pre-Conquest

---

<sup>xi</sup> Page 174-175.

times, pigs dominate, although on some sites goats and cattle form an important part<sup>645</sup>. Here are some sites:

### *Belgic Gaul*

#### Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «Orméon»<sup>646</sup>

This Gallo-Roman site, whose related sites of Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «Le Bois Harlé» and Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «La Queue de Rivecourt» are dated from the end of the 1st century to the middle of the 3rd century CE<sup>647</sup>, is interesting because the deposits of animal bones at l' Orméon can be viewed as the final evidence of occupation of the valley after the general abandonment in the middle of the 3rd century CE<sup>648</sup>. Equine bones, more than 10,000 coming from at least forty horses, are the most numerous, then canine, about thirty, from at least four dogs, caprine and bovine with ten each, seven porcine and three human<sup>649</sup>. In view of the fact that the remains of neither dogs nor horses are found in the rubbish of dwellings and, although the cattle fragments had no nutritional value, those of the sheep and pigs could constitute kitchen remains, Gaudefroy and Lepetz<sup>650</sup> accept that the bovine, ovine and porcine remains may not be directly linked to the deposit. The equine remains are dispersed, but there is no evidence of chopping in the case of the dogs<sup>651</sup> or the horses<sup>652</sup>. Gaudefroy and Lepetz<sup>653</sup> propose that the horses, once killed, were left to rot, buried or not, which explains the dispersal and the absence of the very small bones. The killing and exposure of these animals in the sacred enclosure recall the pre-Conquest Gallic practices<sup>654</sup> and, therefore, indicate the survival of Gallic rituals long after the Conquest. Gaudefroy and Lepetz<sup>655</sup> state that the site has no proto-historic equivalent and question whether one can speak of it being a cult of indigenous tradition. In fact, this strengthens the idea of the continuation of pre-Roman rites, because it shows that the indigenous rituals were not performed at the site merely because they had always been performed there, but rather that they were introduced to a post-Conquest temple, because they were a living tradition. Gaudefroy and Lepetz<sup>656</sup> point out that, before the Conquest, horses were very rarely victims of such rites, cattle or sheep being preferred. This probably indicates Roman acculturation on a Gallic rite. Prior to the Conquest the horse was the principal weapon of war and, therefore, due to the endemic inter-tribal warfare, too valuable for sacrifice and food<sup>657</sup>; however, after the imposition of the *pax Romana*, horses were no longer needed as warfare declined and became acceptable as sacrificial victims.

### Prosnes<sup>658</sup>

This site, dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, has a collection of pits, several of which were containing a number of bones of goats<sup>659</sup>.

### Sogny-aux-Moulins<sup>660</sup>

The twenty-six pits have produced twenty-seven horses, between a year and a half and two years old, sixteen dogs, ten sheep or she-goats, all below a year old, buried with pottery dated to the 2nd century CE<sup>661</sup>.

### Vassimont-et-Chapelaine «L'Ouche-Jacot»<sup>662</sup>

Six pits contained equine remains amounting to eight horses, seven of which were less than a year old, and at least ten dogs<sup>663</sup>. Only one horse and one dog skeleton have been found connected, the rest of the bones being disconnected, which suggests that the two animals had been buried complete<sup>664</sup>.

### *Aquitania*

#### Saint-Marcel<sup>665</sup>

Forty of the sixty enclosures at the site, dated to between the end of the 1st century BCE and the beginning of the 2nd century CE, are connected to the cult area and have delivered up numerous animal bones<sup>666</sup>. Thirty-five of these have been studied with a total of 103,102 bone fragments being examined<sup>667</sup>, only 45% of which have been identified<sup>668</sup>. The domestic species, pig, sheep, goat and cattle, dominate with no more than 1% of the remains being birds and wild animals and pork forms the greatest proportion of the remains, followed by cattle, sheep and goat with dog forming less than 4% of the bones<sup>669</sup>. The ages of the victims from the three dominant domestic species are similar to those of the majority of Gallo-Roman sites, that is animals exploited for their meat when they had finished growing and those kept for work, milking and reproduction but unable to continue these tasks<sup>670</sup>. The amount of males, females and castrated males is the same among the cattle as among the swine<sup>671</sup>. Quarters of veal and pork are more numerous than other meat<sup>672</sup>.

It seems that for Gaudefroy and Lepetz the deposits at Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «Orméon», displaying the ritual of exposure and the use of the pits, correspond to Iron Age practices<sup>673</sup>. This interpretation can be applied to the other sites, which suggests that Gallic pre-Roman animal sacrifices and procedure continued for centuries after the beginning of Roman acculturation.

The Commentary on Lucan states that human heads were offered to Taranis (*Comm. Schol. Bern. ad Luc. ad I.445*), but that, by Pliny's time, bulls were offered. This suggests that headhunting had been stopped or, at least, re-directed. It is proposed that the animal sacrifice described by Pliny (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.250-251**) is this substitute sacrifice. The fact that there is a connection between the celestial deity Taranis and the oak and mistletoe has already been seen<sup>xii</sup> and the connection between heads and fertility will be demonstrated<sup>xiii</sup>. The Druids held that the mistletoe stimulates fertility in an animal (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.251**); perhaps the plant was perceived as the semen of the oak. Pliny states that the victims, the Druids' clothes and the cloak which catches the cut mistletoe were all white (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.250-251**); if Celtic religion is similar to Greek and Roman, this indicates a sacrifice to a celestial deity. This is reinforced by two points. Pliny says that mistletoe was considered to be *e caelo missum* (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.249**). Secondly, the Druids prepare a sacrifice and a banquet beneath the oak tree from which the mistletoe is to be harvested (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.250**), which suggests that, after the sacrifice, the victims were eaten; this is typical of a sacrifice to a Uranian or celestial deity<sup>xiv</sup>. Finally, bulls are a universal symbol of virility and their sacrifice is performed *after* the harvesting (**Pliny.H.N.XVI.251**). It is proposed that, originally, heads, as receptacles of semen and with their power to promote fertility, were offered up to Taranis, represented by the oak, to replenish the fertility stimulating *mana* lost by the harvesting of the mistletoe; with the suppression or re-direction of headhunting, bulls were sacrificed as replenishment. Although it is not clear whether the ritual was calendrical or not, the sacrificer is clearly a Druid. If the ceremony is a fertility sacrifice then the sacrificer is the whole tribe. The phrase *cornua tum primum vinciantur* must mean that the bulls are either young or have been kept apart from normal activities specifically for this occasion.

### Offerings of Inanimate Objects

#### *Weapons*

A Celtic practice mentioned in literature and confirmed by archaeology is the deposit of weapons as a votive offering to the gods<sup>xv</sup>. As stated, these deposits were all prior to the Roman Conquest. This is understandable because, prior to this Conquest, inter-tribal rivalry and conflict, which were endemic in Gaul and ultimately helped Caesar in his conquest, would not only have made the weapons for such deposits easy to

---

<sup>xii</sup> Page 47.

<sup>xiii</sup> See pages 239-242.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pages 147, endnote 30, and 178-179.

<sup>xv</sup> Pages 189-192 and 192-199.

acquire, but would have made the deposits of them as thanksgiving offerings to the deity for his aid in war obligatory. Fauduet<sup>674</sup> asks if this custom continued after the Conquest and states that the practice seems to have disappeared by the end of the 1st century BCE, isolated deposits in Augustan temples or later being individual offerings. However, while the imposition of peace by the Romans meant that the source of such deposits, inter-tribal war, was terminated, this did not necessarily release the Gauls from their obligation to render such votive deposits to their particular tribal or war deity, who may have come to expect such offerings regardless of the political factors. There is evidence from the following Gallo-Roman temples of the practice of depositing miniature weapons; Fauduet<sup>675</sup> says that this is seen in the second half of the 1st century BCE, but it is difficult to determine whether such deposits were a substitute for an older practice since it is seen even in areas where there had never been the dedication of weapons. But there is also evidence that the practice of the deposit of real weapons continued.

### Belgic Gaul

#### Baâlons-Bouvellement<sup>676</sup>

First cult centre (South-west). Occupied from the end of the Celtic period to the principate of Tiberius, when it was abandoned: Real weapons, often clearly offerings, consisting of a dozen spear-heads and about 30 pieces of chain mail and 170 iron miniature weapons and some bronze in three of the four deposits:

Deposit A- Some miniature weapons deposited in pots or in connection with some real weapons.

Deposit B- Some miniature weapons deposited in pots or in connection with some real weapons.

Deposit D- More than 90% of the miniature weaponry in this deposit.

Second cult centre (Centre-West). Occupied from the abandonment of the first cult centre, the principate of Tiberius, to the end of the Late Empire: Some bronze miniature weapons. Fauduet<sup>677</sup> points out that the most recent of these miniatures dates to the 1st century CE like those at Mouzon.

#### Dhronecken<sup>678</sup>

There were votive weapons in the interior of the sanctuary<sup>679</sup>; these were nine lance points, one of which was 22cm and one 20cm, five arrow points and one axe-head with a cutting edge of 14cm<sup>680</sup> and a miniaturised sword<sup>681</sup>. Since the date of the construction of the temple cannot be earlier than the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century CE<sup>682</sup> or was at the beginning of 1st century CE<sup>683</sup>, this

shows that even after the Conquest and the organisation of the Gallic provinces under Augustus, the Treveri at this sanctuary continued the Celtic practice of dedicating weapons to a deity; even Fauduet<sup>684</sup> accepts that these discoveries are from the 1st century CE.

Gusenberg<sup>685</sup>

There were thirty-five votive offerings of spear and arrowheads<sup>686</sup>. Dating of the temple varies<sup>687</sup>; the largest proportion of the objects appears to be from the 2nd century CE<sup>688</sup>. This supplies further evidence that the Treveri continued with the Celtic practice of giving weapons to a deity as an offering either at the beginning of 1st century CE or, more likely, since this was the period of the greatest proportion of objects, even as late the 2nd century CE.

Möhn<sup>689</sup>

Möhn has the main temple with a smaller temple extending from it. There were offerings of weapons (lance-heads, arrowheads and a sword) deposited at the sanctuary<sup>690</sup>. The first version of this sanctuary was founded at the end of Gallic independence<sup>691</sup>, but was destroyed in the disturbances of 68-70 CE<sup>692</sup>; the next version was built during the Flavian period, which is the version referred to by Bertin<sup>693</sup> and the Raepsaet-Charliers<sup>694</sup>, and continued in use until the end of the Roman period. Fauduet<sup>695</sup> accepts that the weapons date from the 1st century CE. This again demonstrates that, although under Roman rule and the *pax Romana*, the Treveri still dedicated weapons in a sanctuary.

If the temples were dedicated to a Gallic compound of Mars<sup>696</sup>, this would explain the dedication of weapons (*Caes.B.G.VI.17.3-4*). The deity to whom the weapons were dedicated may have been Mars Smertrius, to whom Gusenberg and Möhn were consecrated and who was present at Dhronecken, or Mars Iovantucarus. Or the votive offerings of weapons at the three Treveran sites may have been dedicated to Teutates, the god of the tribe. Offerings to him would understandably be found at sanctuaries of Mars, who was god of war and protector. This may support the identification of Teutates with Mars that has been proposed by some (*Comm. Schol.Bern. ad Luc. ad I.445*)<sup>697</sup>.

Mouzon<sup>698</sup>

The site of Mouzon has two temples. Many bronze miniature swords, daggers and shields were found in connection with the temples<sup>699</sup>. These miniature weapons were

unearthed through the period of the excavation; the miniatures are present in all the stratigraphic levels and consequently it is difficult to date precisely the various deposits<sup>700</sup>. The 578<sup>701</sup> miniature weapons were discovered in the interior and exterior of the sacred precinct, in and, especially, around the temples<sup>702</sup>, several dozen units at the corners before the walls of the second phase temple A, temple B and temple A of the 2nd century<sup>703</sup>, with a concentration at the outside north and east corners of temple A<sup>704</sup>. It is claimed<sup>705</sup> that the proportions of the weapons reflect the proportion of the frequency of their use; the sword and shield is most commonly used, then the lone sword, then the lance and then the axe. The rarity of miniature bows and arrows reflects the rarity of the use of real bows and arrows by the Celts. Although, as has been said, the various deposits are difficult to date, they seem more frequent in the 1st century CE, especially in the first half, and, after that period, offerings of coins take the lead<sup>706</sup>.

Otzenhausen<sup>707</sup>

18 arrowheads and lance points have been found<sup>708</sup>.

### Aquitania

Saint-Marcel<sup>709</sup>

This site has produced miniature weapons, such as a 12.6cm sword and sheath and a flat, bronze 15cm shield; both are replicas of Celtic weaponry, the sheath combining the forms of La Tène I and La Tène III, and deposited in a mid 1st century CE pit.

It is suggested that the deposits at the corners of the temples of full-sized and miniature weapons were part of foundation rites<sup>710</sup> and the votive offerings of miniature weapons were made by pilgrims<sup>711</sup>. If so, the deity, to whom the offerings were dedicated and to whom temples were consecrated, seems to have been a warrior-god<sup>712</sup>, whose name is unknown<sup>713</sup>. Moreover, this provides very good evidence for the idea that a century after the Roman Conquest, there was a good persistence of Gallic traditions<sup>714</sup> and, despite the Roman Conquest, the Celtic practice of depositing weapons continued. In addition to this, in conjunction with the excavations at the three Treveran temples examined earlier, it also indicates that it was not just the Treviri in the east of Belgic Gaul who continued the practice of offering weapons to a deity, but the Remi in the west.

What is possibly more interesting is the fact that the weapons found in the first occupation of temple A, dated to before the Principate of Augustus, were proper,

full-sized weapons, whereas those found in temple B and the second occupation of temple A, dated to after the Conquest and the establishment of the *pax Romana*, were miniature. A possible explanation may be that, since real, full-sized weaponry was unable to be obtained by warfare, due to the *pax Romana*, and, since the warrior-god still had to be worshipped, miniatures were offered up as a substitute; in this way the deity still received his offering with no breach of the peace. The miniatures were not broken or twisted for two reasons. First, they were so small that any attempt to distort them would have resulted in them being unrecognisable as weapons. Secondly there was no need to break them to prevent them being stolen and used again, because they were so small that they could not be used as weapons.

These sites seem to indicate that the Gallic practice of the dedication of weapons continued, at least among the Treveri and the Remi, after the Roman Conquest into the 1st century CE, possibly even into the 2nd century CE or later.

### *Pottery*

It has been seen<sup>xvi</sup> that the consecration of pottery and other types of ceramic ware in the sanctuary was a Gallic religious practice. Ceramic products deposited at Gallo-Roman temples, such as the following sites, are abundant<sup>715</sup> and supply evidence that this practice continued long after the Conquest, although Tuffreau-Libre<sup>716</sup> seems to believe that, except at sites such as Baâlons-Bouvellement and Saint-Marcel, pottery forms a small part of ritual deposition. Ceramic products do not appear to have a specific function in a sanctuary<sup>717</sup> and may have had a double function, that of a domestic vessel, for the officiant, and of a receptacle, for offerings<sup>718</sup>, although some types of pottery can be considered as specific for a ritual or a religious use<sup>719</sup>. Pottery from different epochs, ritually broken, has been found in the pits in the sacred area and the fountain of the sanctuaries at Argenton<sup>720</sup>. Tuffreau-Libre<sup>721</sup> says that the concept of a destroyed offering was not limited to animals, but could be applied to inanimate objects and that, as with deposited weapons, the deposit of broken pottery is a case of the “sacrifice” of pottery in the same way. Forcey<sup>722</sup> claims that the theory that damaged goods in Romano-Celtic temples are votive offerings “ritually killed” to assist their passage to the Otherworld involves a confusion between grave goods and votive offerings; the objects are more likely to have been grave goods, broken either in the cremation or as an act symbolising the breaking of the body by cremation; and it is unnecessary to resort to “mystical metaphysics”. This argument is based on the fact that breaking votive offerings is contrary to “the universal

---

<sup>xvi</sup> Page 197-198.

practice of the classical world”, where votive offerings were *never* broken. The basic flaw in Forcey’s explanation and classification of broken artefacts is the fact that in Greek sanctuaries votive offerings were regularly broken when they were removed from the temple, in periodical clear-outs, and deposited in *favissae*. Moreover, Forcey assumes that it was the practice of the *classical world*, which was applied in a Romano-Celtic temple; broken votive offerings are consistent with Celtic practice and there is as much reason to assume that Celtic practices may have been applied as to assume Roman ones, yet Forcey, possibly as a result of Graeco-Roman bias, does not consider this possibility, which would render his own explanation as unnecessary and not the metaphysical ones he dismisses so scornfully.

#### Belgic Gaul

Bellovaci tribal territory

Estrées-Saint-Denis<sup>723</sup>

Some ceramic ware from the 3rd to 4th century CE.

Leuci tribal territory

Sorcy-St Martin<sup>724</sup>

Local ceramic material from the 4th century CE.

Mediomatrici tribal territory

Bierbach-Klosterwald<sup>725</sup>

Ceramic ware of 2nd to 4th century CE.

Nervii tribal territory

Hofstade-lès-Alost<sup>726</sup>

Ceramic ware from the Flavian period.

Velzeke<sup>727</sup>

Fragments of pots and bowls.

Remi tribal territory

Baâlons-Bouvellement<sup>728</sup>

Pottery, examples in the thousands and constituting the majority of the offerings, has been found in four different deposits, forming half of the material in deposit A, dominating deposit B, comprising the only material in deposit C, at the entrance to the temple, but with little in deposit D.

Treveri tribal territory

Fließesem/Otrang<sup>729</sup>

Ceramic ware from the end of the La Tène up to the last third of the 4th century CE has been found in the context of the temples.

Graach<sup>730</sup>

Roman ceramic ware from the 2nd to the end of the 4th centuries CE.

Heckenmunster<sup>731</sup>

Temple A: *terra nigra* ceramic ware.

Temple C: Ceramic ware from the second half of the 2nd century CE.

Hochscheid

Fragments of urns, goblets, bowls, plates, mortars, pitchers and cups<sup>732</sup>; there are ten examples of “incense cups”<sup>733</sup>.

Hottenbach<sup>734</sup>

Ceramic material from the 2nd century CE.

Idenheim<sup>735</sup>

Ceramic material from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

Izel<sup>736</sup>

Fragments of urns, goblets, plates, mortars, pitchers, *amphorae* and lids.

Newel<sup>737</sup>

Fragments of ceramic material.

Otzenhausen<sup>738</sup>

Ceramic material from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

Steinsel<sup>739</sup>

Fragments of ceramic ware primarily from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

Wederath<sup>740</sup>

The ceramic work dates from the 1st to the 4th centuries CE.

Tungri tribal territory

Clavier-Vervoz<sup>741</sup>

Temple A: An Augusto-Claudian urn and a Tungrian urn from the 3rd century CE from the foundations of the ambulatory.

Temple B: Urns, bowls, plates, jugs and *amphorae*.

Matagne-la-Grande<sup>742</sup>

Temple B: Fragments of ceramic material, such as urns, from the first half of the 4th century CE.

Matagne-la-Petite

Fragments of urns, goblets, bowls, mortars and pitchers have been found in connection with both temples<sup>743</sup>. Some examples of “incense cups”<sup>744</sup>.

On the Bellovaci-Lugdenensian Gaul border

Beaumont-sur-Oise<sup>745</sup>

Hundreds of miniature vases, dated to between the end of the 2nd century and the first half of the 4th, have been found; the fact that they were accumulated in the embankment and some were sealed in the walls indicates the ritual nature.

On the Tungri-Nervii border

Fontaine-Valmont

Temple 1: Fragments of urns, bowls, pitchers, plates and other ceramic ware from the Claudian period to the beginning of the 3rd century CE<sup>746</sup>.

Temple 2: Fragments of an urn, plate, pot and bowls<sup>747</sup>.

On the Bellovaci-Suessiones border

Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «Orméon»

The site, dated to a time from the end of the 1st century to the middle of the 3rd century CE<sup>748</sup>, has produced the remains of at least 450 vases, of which miniature vases with a bulging belly are represented the most, and two goblets, a plate and a fragment of an *amphora* with handles; more than twenty miniature vases have been discovered intact<sup>749</sup>. Gaudefroy & Lepetz certainly consider the disposal of several whole and completely functional vases at Longuiel-Sainte-Marie «Orméon» must be a ritual gesture<sup>750</sup> and state that the element determining the ceramic ware is the presence of small receptacles destined for a specific use and whose symbolic value is determined by the liquid which they can contain<sup>751</sup>.

On the Treveri-Mediomatrici border

Tholey<sup>752</sup>

Ceramic ware present, but there are no details.

Mouzon (Remi or Mediomatrici<sup>753</sup>, on the Remi-Treveri border<sup>754</sup>, originally Treveri and then Remi<sup>755</sup> or Treveri<sup>756</sup>)

Both temples produced ceramic ware in great quantity dating from the 1st to the 3rd century<sup>757</sup>.

## Aquitania

Bituriges Cubi tribal territory

Saint-Marcel<sup>758</sup>

Identical pitchers, associated with antlers, a lamp and some miniaturised weapons, came from the well in the enclosure of the fountain.

It can be seen that, except for the area of human sacrifice, the temples “témoignent de la persistance de pratiques religieuses ancestrales”<sup>759</sup> and, while the Gallic deity may have been combined with a Roman one, the method of worship during the Roman period may have been little different from that of the pre-Conquest era<sup>760</sup>.

## **Anthropomancy**

Another practice, which Strabo claims the Romans stopped, was anthropomancy (**Strab.IV.4.5**). However, since Strabo’s statement about the Roman prohibition of Gallic human sacrifice has been shown to be probably false, can one trust this point? The similarity between the evidence for anthropomancy before and after Roman rule is even more difficult than for human sacrifice. There is no indisputable archaeological evidence for anthropomancy, not only for the 1st century BCE, but for any time. There is only literary evidence, probably supplied by Posidonius and, therefore, possibly referring to the late 2nd century or early 1st century BCE. There are two possibilities. The first is that the rite, like human sacrifice, had ceased to be performed, probably for the same reasons that human sacrifice died out; if so, then Strabo’s statement is false and this aspect of Gallic religion was not affected by Roman acculturation. The alternative is that the custom was, indeed, practised in the 1st century BCE, but either the extraordinary military circumstances never arose because of the Roman Conquest or the extraordinary natural ones were dealt with by Roman intervention and so the need for the rite never arose. If so, then Strabo’s statement is true as regards the ultimate cause.

## **Circumambulation**

The most likely reason for the construction of ambulatories around temples was the fact that circumambulation was still practised. There is certainly no reason to think that it would have died out or been suppressed, since it not only involved nothing contrary to the *mos maiorum*, but it actually resembled the Roman custom of lustration. As Brunaux<sup>761</sup> states, the most remarkable change had already happened at the end of the 2nd century BCE, the Middle La Tène, with the abandonment of putting human remains with weapons.

## Chapter Six **Headhunting**

There is a great deal of evidence for headhunting, in which the head is acquired for permanent possession by an individual or the tribe as opposed to the mere retrieval of a head either as proof of identity or to humiliate, both in the literary sources, such as the Classical authors, who consider it outlandish and barbaric and mention it for those very reasons, and the Irish vernacular sources and in archaeology both of buildings and of iconography<sup>1</sup>. The severed head appears on the oldest representations of the plastic arts<sup>2</sup> and “les têtes coupées sont un motif fréquent de la plastique celtique à l’époque de l’indépendance”<sup>3</sup>. This chapter will demonstrate that, contrary to propositions of some modern scholars, the custom of headhunting was practised throughout Gaul and, although not peculiar to the Celts, was not imported into Celtic culture from the Scythians, but possibly rather had its origins in the Indo-European roots of the Celtic peoples, which would explain any similarities with the Scythian custom; using evidence from social-anthropology, it will also attempt to explain the practice’s personal, magical and, primarily, religious significances. Green<sup>4</sup> says that the importance of the ritual regarding the head is unquestionable, that the cultic importance of the head is seen all through Celtic religion, but that the Celts only venerated the head and did not worship it; Brunaux<sup>5</sup> says that, once acquired, the skull was considered as more of a relic than a cult object. The severed head could be called a theme of Celtic culture<sup>6</sup> and even a symbol, which sums up and represents pagan Celtic religion<sup>7</sup>. Green<sup>8</sup> states that the emphasis placed on the human head in even Gallo-Roman art demonstrates its importance in Celtic rites, Birkhan<sup>9</sup> says that the Celtic interest in the human head is striking and Aldhouse-Green<sup>10</sup> says that there is a considerable mass of evidence that the human head was special in Iron Age Europe and among the Gauls.

Classical literature states that Celtic warriors cut the heads off their dead enemies, sometimes hanging them from the necks of their horses or fixing them on the points of their spears as they rode off from battle (**Polyb.**II.28.10; **Diod.**V.29.4-5 and XIV.115.5; **Strab.**IV.4.5; **Livy.**X.26.10-11; **Sil.Pun.**IV.213-215; and, according to MacCulloch and Sterckx<sup>11</sup>, **Just.Epit.**XXIV.5.6); there is a record that Celts in the Roman army, who were deserting to Hannibal after the battle of Ticinus, attacked the Romans and cut off their heads (**Polyb.**III.67.3). For Lambrechts<sup>12</sup>, the two most important texts are those of Strabo and Diodorus Siculus (**Strab.**IV.4.5; **Diod.**V.29.4-5). Strabo has obviously used Posidonius of Apamea as his source, since in the

details he mentions Posidonius' feelings about the activity; the similarity between Strabo's information and Diodorus Siculus' suggest that the latter used Posidonius too. For Brunaux<sup>13</sup> the taking of the head is the uncontested privilege of the nobility. The practice of taking the head of a dead enemy seems to have been such an accepted part of Celtic culture that even members of Celtic society who would not be expected to practise the custom followed it. Polybius and Valerius Maximus recount the story of a Galatian woman who was captured and raped by a Roman centurion after the Galatians were defeated at Olympus; having tricked him into ransoming her to the Galatians, she ordered a fellow Galatian to cut his head off and she then took the head and gave it to her husband (**Polyb.**XXI.38.4-6; **Val.Max.** VI.1.Ext.2). In Wait's<sup>14</sup> opinion references in the Classical ethnographies to headhunting by the Celts both provide oddity value and emphasise Celtic primitive practices, thus distinguishing them from the Romans. This motive may also apply to the references in historical works.

Lambrechts<sup>15</sup> points out that the decapitation of enemies was practised by a large number of ancient peoples. Indeed, Le Roux<sup>16</sup> states that the severed head was currency in the entire ancient Indo-European world, such as the Germans, Dacians, Iberians, Scythians, Latins, Archaic Greeks and Indo-Iranians. Some headhunting practices of the Gauls parallel those among the Scythians<sup>17</sup>. According to Herodotus (**Hdt.**IV.65), as well as scalps, Scythians would take the skulls of their most hated, and therefore, as Koch and Carey suggest<sup>18</sup>, presumably their most formidable, enemies or of relatives whom they had fought and beaten in the king's presence, therefore presumably making the skull an object of significant remembrance. This is similar to the Celtic practice of taking the heads of the bravest warriors (**Diod.**V.29.4). The Scythian who took the skull sawed off the part of the skull below the eyebrows and cleaned out the inside of the cranium. It was then used as a drinking cup. If the Scythian was poor, the exterior was covered merely with leather; but if he was rich, the interior was covered with gold. As with the Gauls (**Strab.**IV.4.5; **Diod.** V.29.5), the Scythians would show these skulls off to visitors, relating how they obtained them. Indeed, headhunting was practised by peoples before and, contrary to Beranek<sup>19</sup>, contemporaneous with them. It seems that the Hittites also practised headhunting since there is a representation of a horseman holding a head in his hand<sup>20</sup>. Brunaux<sup>21</sup> says headhunting was practised by the Germans, presumably based on Tacitus (**Tac.***Ann.*I.61.4), and the Thracians, presumably based on a passage of Livy (**Livy.**XLII.60.2). The Carmanians of the Persian Gulf had this custom (**Strab.**XIV.2.14). Reinach<sup>22</sup> points out that one can see on Trajan's column

representations of heads on stakes on the ramparts of the Dacians (**Fig.6.1**). Le Roux<sup>23</sup> refers to the Scandinavian myth of the head of Mimir being cut off by the Vanir, given to the Aesir and embalmed by Odin to whom it would give advice, resembling the legend of Bran. It seems that headhunting was a practice common to many Indo-European peoples. Both Duval and Brunaux<sup>24</sup> even claim that the Romans also practised headhunting, for Brunaux it was up until the Gallic war, but for Duval it was even later.

Duval<sup>25</sup> bases his assertion on the fact that the Romans decorated the triumphal arch of Orange, dated to either 21 CE<sup>26</sup> or 26/27 CE<sup>27</sup>, with skulls. But the images of severed heads on the arch can be explained by the fact that, according to Reinach<sup>28</sup>, the arch, which had been vowed by Caesar to commemorate the siege of *Massilia* [Marseilles] in 49 BCE<sup>29</sup>, depicts the headhunting practices of Caesar's Gallic auxiliaries. In view of the fact that the arch was built near a colony of veterans of the legion II *Gallica* and the fact that the colony had been established by Octavian, it is possible that the veterans were the auxiliaries of Caesar who had been given Roman citizenship and recruited into the Legions and the arch was built near their colony to commemorate their activities. This strengthens Reinach's suggestion. Indeed, Lambrechts<sup>30</sup> states that the arch depicts an ancient indigenous tradition and Tierney certainly believes that the illustrations on the arch depict the Celtic custom<sup>31</sup>.

The only evidence Brunaux supplies for his claim is the taking of the head of the Treveran chief Indutiomarus (*Caes.B.G.V.58.5-6*)<sup>32</sup>. But the reason his head was brought to Labienus was because Labienus had specifically ordered him to be killed and, to ensure this, had put a big price on his head; therefore, the taking of the head was not true headhunting, but was actually a means of confirmation of death to obtain the reward. In the same way, the decapitation of Cicero and Brutus was to identify that the victim was definitely dead, to terrify others, to humiliate the dead and, in Cicero's case, to humiliate the parts for which the person was famous, his hands and mouth, which had composed and delivered the *Philippics* respectively. None of these are motives for the activity recognised as headhunting<sup>33</sup>.

Since, as Kenner<sup>34</sup> points out, the mysticism surrounding the human head was not unknown among the Greeks and the people of the Italian peninsula, it is possible that the Romans had headhunting as a custom in their very early history, but it is unlikely that such a custom persisted much later. The only definite instance of a Roman taking a head was in the mythical period of Rome's past and, significantly, was

against a Celt. This is the fight in single combat between T. Manlius, T. Manlius Torquatus after the fight, and a huge Gaul (**Livy.VII.10.5-6 and 11**)<sup>35</sup>, at the end of which Manlius decapitated the dead Gaul (**Gell.N.A.IX.13.17-18**); although the decapitation is not mentioned by Livy, Brunaux<sup>36</sup> demonstrates that, because Manlius killed the Gaul with two swift thrusts into the abdomen, the only explanation for Livy's description of the torque retrieved from the Gaul as being covered in blood is that Manlius decapitated him *post mortem*. The decapitation was neither connected to the infliction of death nor to confirm death. The simplest explanation is that the only way to remove the torque without damaging it was to cut the man's head off, a point accepted by Brunaux<sup>37</sup>, who claims that Propertius' description of the killing of the Insubrian chief Viridomarus by M. Claudius Marcellus (*cos.*222 BCE) (**Prop.IV.10.39**) accurately expresses the inevitable link between the acquisition of the torque and decapitation. However, the story may also either be a case of the Roman, having killed the Celt, exercising the Celtic custom on the Celt or, since headhunting seems to have been a custom among many Indo-European peoples, indicate the vestige of the practice among the Romans. Both of these explanations would explain why Livy did not consider the decapitation to be an abuse of the corpse, although it would not explain Livy's apparent reluctance to refer directly to the decapitation.

Although it is generally accepted that the Celts practised headhunting<sup>38</sup>, some modern authors argue that the custom either did not originate or was not widespread among the Celts. Brunaux<sup>39</sup> asserts and Birkhan<sup>40</sup> considers quite possible not only that headhunting was not originally a Celtic practice, but that it came from the Scythians, transmitted, according to Brunaux, to the Danubian Celts or from Asia Minor about the 3rd century BCE or, in Birkhan's opinion, through contacts with Siberian shamanic cultures. The bases for these assertions are the following. The first is the fact that the practice of headhunting by the Celts is not mentioned in literature prior to the 3rd century BCE, the most ancient of which is claimed to be the battle of Clusium or Sentinum in 295 BCE (**Livy.X.26.10-11**), and Greek authors in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE who speak of the Celts make no mention of the practice of headhunting. Conversely, there are numerous references to headhunting by Gauls in the last three centuries BCE, as has been shown and there is no archaeological evidence of this practice before this time. As regards the Scythians as the source for the custom, Brunaux<sup>41</sup> claims that Herodotus' description of the Scythian custom of headhunting, that is the skull, once severed, being carried on the warrior's horse and presented to the king as a deposit for part of the booty, being carefully cleaned, often

decorated with gold, sometimes turned into a drinking cup, but especially used in the home of the warrior who had acquired it, being evidence of his past glory (**Hdt.IV.66**), is in the same terms and has the same sense as the description of the Gallic customs concerning the head of an enemy. To support the argument Brunaux<sup>42</sup> uses the statement by Silius Italicus that gilding a skull is customary among the Celts (**Sil.Pun.XIII.482-483**) and claims<sup>43</sup> that these customs are not found in the headhunting cultures of Polynesia and South America.

Lambrechts<sup>44</sup> accepts that the first record of this practice was at the beginning of the 3rd century BCE, but has no doubt that it goes back to the very origins of the Celtic people. But, contrary to Brunaux's statement, there is, in fact, an example of headhunting by Celts in the 4th century BCE at the siege of Rome in 387 BCE (**Diod.XIV.115.5**). The fact that the authors writing on the Celts in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE fail to mention headhunting may be due either to ignorance of their customs or to what Piggott calls 'soft' primitivism on their part. According to Piggott<sup>45</sup>, 'soft' primitivism arises due to distance in time or space with the result that a favourable impression of a culture is created and the idea that laudable behaviour is practised by it, is looked for, found and idealised; however, closer contact, either in time or space, produces 'hard' primitivism, in which the view is realistic, factual, less idealised and often unflattering. Having little contact or knowledge of the Celts, the writers typically overlooked or did not know of the unpleasant aspects of Celtic culture and portrayed them as almost Noble Savages. By the 3rd century BCE knowledge of the Celts was such that one could no longer be ignorant of or overlook the practice of headhunting. The lack of archaeological evidence before the 3rd century may merely reflect the limitations of archaeology. Indeed, in view of the fact that, in the opinion of Birkhan<sup>46</sup> himself, the Indo-European foundations for the mystical value of the human head and the fact that many Indo-European tribal-oriented peoples followed the custom of headhunting, it would be strange if the Celts did not. Anyway, even if it is accepted that the Gauls acquired the custom from outside, why should the source be the Scythians?

However, the evidence for Brunaux's theory that the custom was acquired from the Scythians, that is the alleged similarity between the Scythian and Gallic customs and the claim that none of the Gallic and Scythian practices exist among other headhunters, is easily disputed. In view of the fact that horses played a major role in the culture and fighting techniques of the Gauls and the Scythians, it is not surprising that warriors of both cultures would have the habit of carrying the heads of their

enemies on their horses. Contrary to Brunaux's statement, the Gauls did not emulate the Scythians in cleaning their severed heads. The Gauls preserved those of *esteemed* enemies (**Diod.V.29.5**; **Strab.IV.4.5**) and let the flesh rot off the other heads, which are nailed up; the latter point can be ascertained from the report that Posidonius was able ταῦτα φέρειν πρῶω, which suggests that what Posidonius saw was not clean skulls but heads covered in varying degrees with decomposing flesh. While the practice of gilding may have been regular treatment for a skull among the Scythians, there are only two references to the custom among the Celts. The first, the gilding of Postumius' skull (**Livy.XXIII.24.11-12**), is exceptional and, as even Brunaux<sup>47</sup> himself admits, the single example of a skull being subjected to this treatment. Only Silius Italicus (**Sil.Pun.XIII.482-483**) says that this treatment was general; the best source on Gallic behaviour, Posidonius, does not mention it. It is even possible that Silius Italicus may have been copying Herodotus; Brunaux<sup>48</sup> himself says he employs the same terms as Herodotus. Finally, it has already been shown that the Celts did not have the custom of presenting the heads to the chief to receive payment or part of the booty. Therefore, the only aspect of headhunting which the Gauls and the Scythians definitely had in common was the practice of converting a skull into a drinking cup; while it is possible to suggest that this particular custom came from the Scythians, it is certainly insufficient to support the idea that the custom of headhunting in general and all its aspects were the result of Scythian influence. The practice of the head being kept in the home of the warrior, who took it, is typical of any headhunting culture and is no proof of Scythian influence; Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.29.4**) says that the warriors handed the heads τοῖς θεράπουσι, which indicates that the head was the warrior's personal property. Among the Bontoc of the Philippines the severed head goes to the man who took it<sup>49</sup> and Borneo headhunters used to keep heads in the house<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, if hunters of animals preserve the heads of their targets as trophies and as alleged evidence of their bravery, it is all the more likely that a headhunter would do the same. It seems that there may be a similarity between the custom of the Scythians and the Celts, which need not be explained by contact or kinship<sup>51</sup>; moreover, similar concepts and attitudes can be found among the majority of Indo-European cultures<sup>52</sup>, such as the Indo-Iranian Carmanians (**Strab.XIV.2.14**).

Wait contends that the cult of the severed head is not a pan-Celtic custom, but a specific one<sup>53</sup>, limited to the Celto-Ligurian area<sup>54</sup>. While conceding that the evidence shows that the religious cult of the head was possibly of great antiquity, according to Wait<sup>55</sup> the evidence for the severed head being the object of a religious

cult is found only in southern Gaul and, although there are occasional sculptures of human heads north of the Massif Central in France, not only is the evidence for a cult of the severed head very sparse, but there is no association between a religious site and either a stone head or a real skull sufficiently convincing to establish the existence of a cult of the severed head. Wait<sup>56</sup> argues that there is no association of skulls or sculpted heads with religious sites; Webster<sup>57</sup> feels that it is “difficult to follow” the argument by Wait that the use of skulls outside of the Celto-Ligurian sites lacked religious referents and is to be viewed as being in a purely secular context. Certainly, Wait’s argument appears suspect when some of the sites with gateways decorated with skulls and which are supposed to be purely secular are actually sanctuaries.

Webster raises arguments regarding the temporal and spatial extent of the custom of headhunting. There is a difference in tense in the reports of headhunting by Diodorus Siculus and Strabo. Diodorus Siculus records the practice in the present tense as if it was still happening, while Strabo states that it has stopped, giving the credit for this to the Romans. Diodorus Siculus’ use of the present tense merely indicates that headhunting was practised at the time of his source and he was continuing this temporal aspect. Webster<sup>58</sup> suggests that, although the literary and archaeological evidence supports the case that headhunting was practised widely by the 3rd century BCE, contrary to Strabo’s statement that headhunting was stopped by the Romans, it had been decreasing by the 1st century BCE and it had ceased to be practised in Gaul during the 1st century BCE due to an “internally motivated change in practice”, for which the Romans got the credit. This is based on a number of points. First, the fact that the majority of examples of headhunting are set in the past<sup>59</sup> or seem to be prior to the time of the source (*Ath.IV.154*). Then the point made by Webster<sup>60</sup> that the only reference to headhunting in the 1st century BCE is by Posidonius and that, although Posidonius had an eyewitness experience of headhunting, this only proves that headhunting was practised *circa* 100-90 BCE and even then only in the *Provincia*. Finally, there is the absence of any mention of headhunting by Caesar<sup>61</sup>.

There are some problems with this idea. Webster gives no reason for the “internally-motivated change in practice”. Webster says that the passage concerning the siege of Munda (*B.Hisp.XXXII.2*) is problematic and, as a result, cannot be used as evidence, because it does not actually say that the troops responsible for the erection of the skulls around the besieged town were Gauls. In view of the fact that Caesar would have had many Gauls in his army and, of all his forces, only the Gauls would have

done this, Webster's interpretation seems pedantic; Sterckx<sup>62</sup> certainly thinks they were Gauls. Finally, as even Webster<sup>63</sup> accepts, the art work of Trajan's column shows Auxiliaries in the Roman army riding off with severed heads, indicating that headhunting was still practised even at the beginning of the 2nd century CE. This shows that Caesar's silence on headhunting is actually an exception rather than a piece of evidence of the normal situation. It may be that Caesar considered the mentioning of such a custom as too much of a cliché or he may have wanted to portray the Gauls as worthy of being treated as other than the terrible foe of Roman history and deliberately left out references to, for Romans, such a barbaric custom; if either of these were the case, the reference to human sacrifice may have been part of information about the Celts which Caesar incorporated wholesale.

Lambrechts states that the cavities for skulls in the so-called Celto-Ligurian sanctuaries, and, therefore, the custom of headhunting, were the result of Celtic infiltration into that southern part of Gaul and that headhunting is definitely a Gallic tradition<sup>64</sup> and that, from the geographical division of those severed heads which are actually known, it is not necessary to conclude that the custom of decapitation was limited to the Celts of the Midi<sup>65</sup>; however, apparently inspired by Wait's<sup>66</sup> statement that severed heads are found in religious contexts only in the *Provincia*, an argument which, ironically, Webster<sup>67</sup> herself finds difficult, Webster seems to be proposing that headhunting was not practised in Gaul north of the *Provincia*, claiming that there are no textual references to the severing of the heads of dead enemies in non-Mediterranean Gaul<sup>68</sup> and that Diodorus Siculus ignored the geographical differences made by Posidonius and made the custom pan-Celtic<sup>69</sup>. Green<sup>70</sup> agrees with this idea saying that evidence for headhunting is "rare and confined to a few discrete areas", an example of which is Roquepertuse. But this proposal seems to be based on an assumption and an excessively narrow interpretation. The first problem is that it is assumed that Posidonius travelled only within the *Provincia* and, therefore, all references derived or presumed to be derived from him (**Strab.**IV.4.5; **Diod.**V.29.4) refer to practices in the *Provincia*; the extent of Posidonius' travels is debatable and one cannot limit every observation to this territory. The second is that, while some literary references (**Polyb.**III.67.3; **Sil.Pun.**IV.213) are to Gauls who are fighting for Hannibal and, therefore, were almost certainly recruited from tribes in the *Provincia*, others are to Celts from north Italy (**Polyb.**II.28.10; **Livy.**X.26.10-11); for the proposal to be accepted one would need to assume that *all* the Gallic tribes in Cisalpine Gaul came from the *Provincia* and from no other Celtic region. Even if one dismisses the account of the migration of the Gauls into north Italy, in which many

of the tribes alleged to form part of this migration are from central Gaul (**Livy.V.34.1, 4-5 and 8-9**), there is the case of the Boii. The Boii, who demonstrated the custom of headhunting (**Livy.XXIII.24.11-12**), inhabited north Italy and are alleged to have migrated there through the Great Saint Bernard Pass (**Livy.V.34.8-9**), which would mean that they must have come from either Switzerland or, at least, from north of the *Provincia*; this is strengthened by the fact that a Gallic tribe called the Boii entered Gaul in 59 BCE with the Helvetii from Switzerland (**Caes.B.G.I.5.4**). Finally and conclusively, there is the text by Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**), in which it is stated that the custom of headhunting is not only practised by the northern tribes, and therefore not just in the *Provincia*, but also that these tribes practice it the most. This clear statement is ascribed to Posidonius by Zwicker<sup>71</sup> and Webster<sup>72</sup> herself accepts that Posidonius does, indeed, describe headhunting as a custom of the northern Gauls. Lambrechts<sup>73</sup> mentions that stone monuments depicting severed heads are numerous in the Midi, but rare in the rest of Gaul, but points out that this is due to the fact that stone statuary was developed only in a later period. Even if the statement by Posidonius about the tribes of northern Gaul did not exist and even if one ignores the archaeological evidence from northern France mentioned previously, the archaeological, numismatic and literary evidence concerning other Celtic regions, as Lambrechts<sup>74</sup> points out, indicates that headhunting was practised by the Celts of not just the *Provincia*, but of Spain, north Italy, the Balkans, Galatia and Ireland; it would therefore be strange if it was not also practised in Gaul north of the *Provincia* and unreasonable to think so. “Ce que.... mérite d’être souligné, c’est le fait que la pratique de la décollation se retrouve un peu partout dans le domaine celtique”<sup>75</sup>.

Webster also seems to be making the suggestion that the practice of hanging heads from horses is found only among the Mediterranean Gauls<sup>76</sup>; the suggestion is based on the fact that literary references to this practice are found only in the works of Posidonius (**Strab.IV.4.5**) and Livy (**Livy.X.26.10-11**), who are referring to the *Provincia* and to the Senones of north Italy respectively, and a visual representation of the custom is found in Entremont<sup>77</sup>. In view of the fact that it has been shown that headhunting was a custom present among the Celts and bearing in mind that the Celts were renowned horsemen, it seems reasonable to accept that hanging the disembodied heads from the horses would be a common technique among all Celts and unnecessarily pedantic to limit it to two particular groups of Celts because it is only in connection with these groups that the technique is specifically mentioned.

Archaeology confirms that the Celts took the heads of the vanquished and either installed them in buildings or, in some cases, used them as drinking vessels, just as the Graeco-Roman<sup>78</sup> and ancient Irish texts say, that value was ascribed to them and, therefore, that the severed head had multiple significance. Archaeology also reveals that the image of the human head was common in Celtic iconography and art<sup>79</sup>, indeed, a recurring theme in Celtic art from the 5th to the 1st centuries BCE and further<sup>80</sup> and the image of the human head alone has produced more discussion than any other image<sup>81</sup>. Although, as Webster<sup>82</sup> points out, the image of a head does not necessarily portray a severed head.

Although not within either Belgic Gaul or Aquitania, there is a group of pre-Roman sanctuaries and settlements in Southern Gaul, in the Lower Rhône valley near Marseille, which provides evidence for the practice<sup>83</sup>. They are termed Celto-Ligurian<sup>84</sup>, although, according to Brunaux, this term is too vague and should be treated with caution<sup>85</sup>. One of these, the most celebrated<sup>86</sup> and best known<sup>87</sup>, is Roquepertuse<sup>88</sup>, a shrine of the ancient city of the Salluvii<sup>89</sup>, dated to between 6th and 2nd century BCE<sup>90</sup>, 4th century BCE<sup>91</sup> or end of 3rd century BCE<sup>92</sup> and decorated with statues of war-gods and a large carved goose, the symbol of war<sup>93</sup>; the entrance to this shrine had a portico, dated, like the temple, to the 3rd century BCE<sup>94</sup>, which was composed of three stone pillars, each containing niches for the skulls<sup>95</sup> and block III had the skulls still in place<sup>96</sup>; the cavities were carved later than the 4th century BCE<sup>97</sup>. The skulls, probably dating to the 3rd century BCE<sup>98</sup>, are of adults in full vigour and endowed with a strong constitution<sup>99</sup> and so were probably of war victims<sup>100</sup>, details accepted by Lambrechts, Green and Aldhouse-Green<sup>101</sup>. Recently it has become clear that the skulls at the entrance to the sanctuary of Roquepertuse were on the inner side of the stone pillars and were thus looking inward<sup>102</sup>.

Another site from the same area and date is the sanctuary at Entremont<sup>103</sup>, 3 km north of Aix, the tribal centre of the Salluvii<sup>104</sup>, built as early as the 3rd century BCE<sup>105</sup> and sacked by the Romans led by C. Sextius Calvinus in 125<sup>106</sup>, 124<sup>107</sup>, 123<sup>108</sup> or 121<sup>109</sup> BCE, and is considered by some as the best-known assemblage<sup>110</sup>. The sanctuary in the settlement was on top of the hill<sup>111</sup>, between the upper and lower towns<sup>112</sup> and against a wall that enclosed the upper town<sup>113</sup>; it was built in the 3rd century BCE<sup>114</sup> or between the 3rd and the 2nd century BCE<sup>115</sup>, but has been subject to radical redating to a much earlier period, at least six centuries earlier, the beginning of the Early Iron Age and perhaps even the Bronze Age<sup>116</sup>. It was in the form of a portico, made up of a colonnade composed of rectangular pillars<sup>117</sup>. Warrior-gods are

depicted at this shrine, as at Roquepertuse, some holding human heads; carved human heads decorate the colonnade and, again as at Roquepertuse, there were niches containing real skulls<sup>118</sup>. Fifteen heads have been found, some with nail holes for mounting<sup>119</sup>, and actual crania were nailed to the wall<sup>120</sup>. The presence of a javelin in one indicates that these were skulls of war-victims<sup>121</sup>. There was a hall of heads<sup>122</sup>. A pillar has a carving, which may represent the chief of a victorious tribe<sup>123</sup>, a horseman of the La Tène I period bringing back a severed head attached to the underside of his horse's neck<sup>124</sup>. There is a group of four carved heads, commonly dated to the 3rd or 2nd century BCE<sup>125</sup>. Finally, there is a tall stone into which twelve heads have been cut; the fact that each face has closed eyes and no mouths suggests that the heads are of dead people<sup>126</sup>.

Some of the sanctuaries, which are parallels of Roquepertuse and Entremont, are Saint-Blaise near Miramas<sup>127</sup>, Glanum, at Saint-Remy-de-Provence<sup>128</sup> and Cadenet<sup>129</sup>; a frieze, probably having decorated the transversal of a portico from the citadel of the Voconces at Nages, depicts galloping horses alternating with beardless, severed heads with closed eyes and thick hair divided into parallel locks, and fragments of lintels decorated with severed heads found at Nîmes<sup>130</sup>.

Indeed, the severed head is a popular theme in sculpture and ornaments of the *whole* Celtic area<sup>131</sup>. Although cults involving human skulls and the depiction of the human head were not peculiar to the Iron Age period, evidence for them in the Neolithic period having been found, the image of the severed head is common in Celtic art and iconography in Europe<sup>132</sup>. According to Le Roux there is no direct link between the rite of the severed head and the aniconism of the Celts<sup>133</sup>, the existence of the latter only being Le Roux's opinion.

Heads were fixed with nails to the entrance of a fortified town<sup>134</sup>, such as at Puig Castelar in Spain<sup>135</sup> and at Bredon Hill and Stanwick in Britain<sup>136</sup>. Skulls were also placed in the ramparts of Celtic citadels. A skull was installed in the rampart, dated to 2nd century BCE, at l'Impenal in Quercy in central France<sup>137</sup> and two skulls were positioned above the gate of the citadel of La Cloche near Marseilles, one held by a nail, the other by an iron armature inserted from the front through to the occiput<sup>138</sup>. The installation of heads as part of the defensive structures of a citadel demonstrates the magical significance of the severed head as a means of protection and defence. The apotropaic quality of even a carved head is seen in the human masks with closed eyes sculpted on the ramparts of fortresses. At Les Bringasses and even Entremont in

Provence, on the ramparts of the fortresses of Baux and Castelet de Fontvielle in France and at the Tower of San Magin and the forts of Allariz, Lugo Baran and Armea in Spain<sup>139</sup> sculpted representations of skulls, which were more permanent, were considered sufficient to be placed in the ramparts<sup>140</sup>. Stone busts or torsos of busts of warriors have been discovered at Entremont<sup>141</sup> and on one torso there is a human head<sup>142</sup>; Lambrechts<sup>143</sup> thinks that this played an apotropaic rôle.

Some have attempted to cast doubt on the connection between these finds and headhunting. However, as has been pointed out<sup>144</sup>, Strabo, when describing the custom of hanging heads before doors, uses the word *προπυλάϊος*, which precisely describes the porticoes at Roquepertuse, Saint-Blaise and Glanum. Moreover, craniological examination of the heads nailed up at the other sites indicates that the heads had been taken from the fresh bodies of men of fighting age<sup>145</sup>. Skulls were publicly displayed on the entrance of the sanctuary of Gournay-sur-Aronde from the 3rd century BCE<sup>146</sup>. MacCulloch says that heads might be put on stakes<sup>147</sup> and suggests that a Celtic town or the palace of a Celtic king might present a gruesome sight, resembling a Dayak village in Borneo, with stakes surmounted with heads everywhere<sup>148</sup>.

The depiction of headhunting and the image of the skull were even used for decoration<sup>149</sup>. At Karlich a bronze plaque, dated to the 5th century BCE, was found, on which a naked Celtic warrior is portrayed holding a severed head attached to his wrist<sup>150</sup>. The carvings of single severed heads alternating with carvings of a horse on a fragment of the lintel from the site at Nages in southern France is a common association in Celtic iconography and obviously refer to the fact that Celtic warriors tied heads to their horses<sup>151</sup>. The use of the skull as a drinking vessel can be seen by the cups made from human skull-caps which were found at Libenice<sup>152</sup> and Býčí Skála<sup>153</sup> in the Czech Republic. The numerous amulets made of cranial slices, which have been found in Gaul and Britain, demonstrate both the valuable nature, which skulls had for Celts<sup>154</sup>, and the religious basis for the importance which the skull held<sup>155</sup>. Both provide proof of the significance the human head had for the Celts. Severed heads are even depicted on Celtic Iron Age coinage. Some Gallic coins have images of coins accompanied by severed heads, a series of coins from Alesia has a man with a war-trumpet and a severed head, indicating, according to Aldhouse-Green<sup>156</sup>, a link between war and headhunting<sup>156</sup> and an Iron Age coin depicts a figure holding a severed head<sup>157</sup>; a coin of the Osismii shows heads joined by cords<sup>158</sup>.

Finally, the excavation of graves provides archaeological evidence that the Celts practised headhunting. There is evidence of the burial of headless bodies in inhumation graves in the Marne district of France, dated to the Early to Middle La Tène period. Two headless bodies were buried on either side of a complete body at Sogny-aux-Moulins and there were other burials of headless bodies at Les Jogasses, Mont-Gravet, Poix and Grandes Loges<sup>159</sup>. There were no skulls on 200 articulated skeletons at Moeuvres<sup>160</sup>. A headless burial was found in the Ardennes at Mont Troté<sup>161</sup>. There was also the opposite; in the north of France and in Belgium an offering of a skull was deposited in tombs for cremated bodies<sup>162</sup> and there are many burials of severed heads<sup>163</sup>. Green<sup>164</sup> suggests that the latter may be examples of the burial of trophy skulls as an apotropaic act and Birkhan<sup>165</sup> agrees. Such funeral customs were practised by the Iron Age Celtiberians; some graves of nobles have “sceptre-terminals” shaped like double horses with a severed head beneath the front hoofs and a pair of heads beneath the horse<sup>166</sup>. As regards the deposit of heads on their own, Cunliffe mentions that severed heads have been found in some grain storage pits in northern Gaul<sup>167</sup> and posits that these heads were propitiatory offerings to the chthonic deities placed in the empty pits to ensure a good harvest<sup>168</sup>. Although Delattre<sup>169</sup> points out that there is no evidence of human sacrifice, this does not exclude the suggestion that they were offerings since it is possible that the heads were from people who had died through natural causes. The significance of the deposit of heads in grain storage pits will be seen later<sup>i</sup>. Cunliffe<sup>170</sup> also says that skulls formed an important category in pits at Danebury; eight pits had human heads, one female, one child and six adult males<sup>171</sup>, the latter having head wounds<sup>172</sup>.

According to Green and de Vries<sup>173</sup>, there is evidence in the vernacular sources that these customs were practised in pagan Ireland and it is well-documented (*L.L.*568-570; 2527-2529; 14310)<sup>174</sup>. The Irish vernacular literature also provides evidence that the severed head in Ireland had the same multiple significance: The head and, therefore, the brain, had personal significance, sometimes as a trophy (*LL.*1243-1246; 1629-1632; 2171-2172; 14300; 14315)<sup>175</sup>, religious significance and also magical significance by being able to avert evil and to prophesy (*L.L.*4035-4041)<sup>176</sup>.

Duval<sup>177</sup> asks various questions about the Celtic institution of headhunting - is it a matter of heads of enemies decapitated on the field or of prisoners executed en masse, or of non-combatant victims sacrificed and decapitated, or simply skulls taken from some deceased members of the tribe of the dead people? Was the offering made

---

<sup>i</sup> See page 239-240.

to the gods or to the Shades of heroes? - but does not actually answer them. Brunaux, accepted by Webster<sup>178</sup>, details the actual recorded decapitation procedure. The head was removed from the *dead* enemy on the battlefield, decapitation never being a method of inflicting death, and no version of it was assimilated into the sacrifice of prisoners, at least not in Gaul. Archaeology supports this. All the skulls and cervical vertebrae uncovered so far have displayed traces of knife cuts, which indicate actions around the neck, but never traces which indicate a violent blow of a sword or an axe<sup>179</sup>.

Although accepting that none of the Graeco-Roman authors mention headhunting in the context of human sacrifice<sup>180</sup> and that the archaeology from southern Gaul supports the view that no evidence of connection between headhunting and human sacrifice<sup>181</sup>, Aldhouse-Green<sup>182</sup> says that Strabo's statement (**Strab.IV.4.5**), taken at face value, suggests that, even if the warriors were killed in battle, their heads were used even in a sacrificial context. However, taken at face value, Strabo is saying that the Romans prohibited headhunting, human sacrifice and divination contrary to Roman usage; the only link between them is that they were contrary to *mos maiorum* and there is no indication that there was any other connection.

There are differing details of the ultimate destination of the heads, which suggests a multiple significance, personal, religious and magical, attached to the severed head. Probably because they both had the same source<sup>183</sup>, as can be seen by their close similarity to each other, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus both agree that the Celts kept the heads τῶν δ' επιφανεστάτων πολεμίων (**Diod.V.29.5**) or τῶν ἐνδόχων (**Strab.IV.4.5**) preserved in oil<sup>184</sup> in a chest in their houses, that they proudly displayed them to guests, boasting that their ancestors had refused a large ransom for the head and that they would not contemplate giving up the head for gold equal in weight to the head. This indicates that they had personal significance and Reinach<sup>185</sup> thinks that the heads have all the appearance of personal keepsakes.

However, according to Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**), they nailed the heads, implying all the heads, to the doorways of their homes, τοῖς προπυλαίοις, while Diodorus Siculus (**Diod.V.29.4**) says that they nailed only ἀκροθίνια on to the walls of their houses. The word ἀκροθίνια has caused some problems. Strabo's comments about headhunting are in a totally secular manner, but, because of the use by Diodorus Siculus of the word ἀκροθίνια (**Diod.V.29.4**), which means "first fruits" and which has a religious connotation, it is thought that Diodorus Siculus may be referring to

some form of religious precept<sup>186</sup> and to a cult status of the severed head<sup>187</sup>. However, ἄκροθίνια can also mean “best parts” or “booty” and elsewhere Diodorus Siculus uses the word ἄπαρχαι to refer to “first fruits” (**Diod.V.32.6**); in view of the former meaning of the word ἄκροθίνια, Webster<sup>188</sup> suggests that Diodorus Siculus uses the term to show that they were votive offerings or the best of the spoils of battle, a view with which Brunaux concurs<sup>189</sup>. Brunaux<sup>190</sup> points out that by τὰ προπύλαια Strabo, and, therefore, Posidonius, refers not to the doorways of the domestic dwellings of individual, but to the entrance of the sacred area of a sanctuary. The religious association of the word τὰ προπύλαια ties in with the religious connotation of the word ἄκροθίνια and Webster’s suggestion is acceptable since a cult place would be the best destination for a votive offerings. Archaeological support is the front of a skull adorning a cult building in a high status residence at Montmartin dated to 3rd or 2nd century BCE<sup>191</sup> and possibly the heads of young men of fighting age, which may have been hung from the entrance of the sanctuary at Gournay-sur-Aronde from which they fell into the ditch, while the rest of the bodies were disposed of elsewhere<sup>192</sup>; François Poplin was more reserved in his interpretation of the position of the heads prior to their arrival in the ditch.

De Vries and Le Roux<sup>193</sup> consider headhunting to be a cultic activity and to have had religious causes and resonances, although its status as a rite is expressly rejected by Le Roux. But the two authors record that the Celts kept the heads of the most respected and distinguished enemies preserved in chests. The solution may be supplied by Livy. Livy relates how the severed head of L. Postumius, whose two legions were destroyed in Cisalpine Gaul in 216 BCE by the Boii, was taken by them to their holiest temple<sup>194</sup>; there the head was cleaned, presumably of flesh, and then covered in gold and kept in the temple as a goblet or to give libations (**Livy.XXIII.24.11-12**). Although Postumius’ skull was not nailed to the front of the sanctuary entrance, perhaps the fact that his head was put in a temple (**Livy.XXIII.24.11**) means that the heads of the enemy chief were the best parts and were dedicated to the war god, while the heads of ordinary warriors could be kept in houses. Reinach<sup>195</sup> says that this indicates that it was the custom of the Gauls to dedicate the head of the enemy chief in their temples; Zecchini<sup>196</sup> suggests that it was a variation on the Celtic custom, in that the head was placed in the temple and not in the possession of an individual warrior because the enemy was killed as commander of the Romans, not in a single combat, and therefore belonged to the whole tribe. Moreover, the idea that it was the heads of the bravest warriors, which were taken, is still present; Livy states that Postumius fought *omni vi* (**Livy.XXIII.24.11**) and this, combined with the

fact that he was the Consul and army commander, must have been the reason for the skull's treatment; Brunaux<sup>197</sup> agrees with this view and proposes that this shows that there existed in Gaul a specific type of booty closely resembling the Roman *spolia opima*. Perhaps this also happened to the head of Ptolemy Keraunos, defeated by Brennus in 281 BCE (**Just.Epit.XXIV.5.6**), and the Consul G. Atilius, killed at the battle of Telamon in 225 BCE (**Polyb.II.28.10**). By the phrase *ut mos iis est* (**Livy.XXIII.24.12**), Livy indicates that this procedure was not only not an isolated incident, but was still practised at his time. Or perhaps these are different practices from different tribes. Even so, the fact that some tribes keep heads as personal keepsakes indicates that for this tribe at least they had personal significance.

The dedication of the head in a temple shows that the Celts considered the human head also to have religious significance, supported, according to MacCulloch<sup>198</sup>, by Silius Italicus' description of Gauls offering heads to the gods or their ancestors (**Sil.Pun.V.652-653**) and by the scholars writing the Commentary of Lucan (*Comm. Schol.Bern. ad Luc.ad I.445*) claim that the Celtic deity Taranis was appeased by human heads, if the word *caput* is used in its simple, unextended meaning, an interpretation accepted by Duval<sup>199</sup>. The practice of offering severed heads, the products of war, to Taranis supports his identification with Jupiter<sup>ii</sup>, to whom the Scholiasts give the epithet *praesidem bellorum*.

The custom of using skulls as cups is confirmed as being Celtic by Florus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Orosius and Silius Italicus (**Flor.I.3.4.2-3**; **Amm.Marc.XXVII.4.4**; **Oros.Hist. ad Pag.V.23.18**; **Sil.Pun.XIII.482-483**). These works actually refer specifically to the Scordisci<sup>200</sup>, but they were a Celtic tribe<sup>201</sup>; it is possible that, for this information, Florus, Ammianus Marcellinus and Orosius all used the same source or the latter two used Florus. However, not only do none of them state that the heads were taken on the battlefield from fallen warriors, which was the usual practice, implying that hunting did not play a part in the acquisition of the head, which may have been a deviation from the normal custom peculiar to the Scordisci, but there is also confusion among the authors about the source of the heads. Florus states that they were obtained from prisoners who were sacrificed. Ammianus says that the heads were taken from sacrificial victims, without mentioning that they were prisoners. Orosius reports that the heads came from prisoners and that the Scordisci cut a prisoner's head off when they needed a new cup, there being no mention of a sacrifice. Orosius, in stating that the Scordisci cut off a prisoner's head whenever

---

<sup>ii</sup> Pages 47.

they need a cup, is probably mistaking the result of the decapitation, the conversion of the skull into a cup, for the cause. De Vries feels that the report by Orosius cannot be taken seriously and is merely a horror story<sup>202</sup>. The fourth author, Silius Italicus, adds the detail that the Celts gilded the skulls, which Florus, Ammianus Marcellinus and Orosius do not mention.

It appears from Classical literature that the Celts considered the human head also to have magical significance. Some of Caesar's auxiliaries, who, according to Sterckx<sup>203</sup>, could only have been Gauls, placed severed heads on the sword-points turned towards the town of Munda, which was being besieged (*B.Hisp.XXXII.2*). The purpose was partly psychological, to demonstrate their ability and undermine the morale of the inhabitants. But the writer says that another purpose was to surround the enemy with a siege-work; the only way severed heads on sword-points could achieve this is if the enemy believed that the heads had the power to keep them from breaking out. Moreover, both the frequency of the portrayal of the human head and the fact that, even if a human figure is portrayed, the size of the head is exaggerated indicates the importance of the head in Celtic art<sup>204</sup>. According to Green<sup>205</sup>, the multiple imagery of the human head, janiform, triplistic or merely a plurality of heads, demonstrates that the human head was considered to possess magical power. While it is obvious that the Celts considered the head to be significant, why was preference given to the head and why did value seem to be attributed to something which was, in fact, only a fetish?<sup>206</sup> What was the origin of this significance? For Le Roux<sup>207</sup>, the Celts' interest in the severed head is dominated by a metaphysical constant, which is the role attributed to the head. Brunaux<sup>208</sup> has said that it was a proof of the enemy's death in order to obtain a reward, as was the practice among the Scythians (*Hdt.IV.64.1*). However, there is no evidence of this in literature. Brunaux bases his claim on two, possibly three, pieces of evidence. The first is that, when the Gallic allies of the Romans changed sides during Hannibal's advance across the Cisalpine region and attacked the Roman army (*Polyb.III.67.3*), they decapitated the Romans in order to get rewards from Hannibal<sup>209</sup>. But the taking of the heads was only another example of Gallic headhunting with no indication of any other motive than the acquisition of heads; the idea of a reward for heads is not mentioned in the account and Hannibal's promise of rewards is not connected to the headhunting and was made solely in order to ensure the Gauls' loyalty. The second is the decapitation of Indutiomarus (*Caes.B.G.V.58.5-6*)<sup>210</sup>. But, not only is this the only instance in literature, Classical or Irish, of a reward being offered for a severed head, but, as has

been said<sup>iii</sup>, it originated with a Roman, not among the Celts. Using passages from Polybius and Livy (**Polyb.**II.28.10; **Livy.**XLIV.26.1), Brunaux<sup>211</sup> says that the custom of presenting the king with heads gave a warrior the right to any wages; but, not only is it only the head of the consul C. Atilius, which is presented to the Celtic king (**Polyb.**II.28.10), in the same way that it was only the head of L. Postumius which was preserved in the sanctuary of the Boii (**Livy.**XXIII.24.11-12), but also Polybius does not state that the presentation of a severed head grants one the right to pay and Livy does not say that the right to pay is dependant upon the presentation of a head to the king.

Le Roux<sup>212</sup> states that the skull has been the centre of an ancestor cult and Brunaux<sup>213</sup>, drawing on the fact that, among other headhunting peoples, the practice accompanies a cult of the heads of the ancestors, posits that the Gauls also had cults concerned with the veneration of the heads of ancestors. But Wait<sup>214</sup> points out that Brunaux provides little evidence for the claim and Webster<sup>215</sup> counters Brunaux by pointing out that, not only is there no mention in Classical literature of ancestor worship among the Celts, but also all references to headhunting by the Celts concern the heads of dead *enemies*.

Lambrechts<sup>216</sup> says that one is able to consider the severed head as a trophy and both Le Roux and Brunaux take this view for similar reasons. Le Roux, like Brunaux later, says that battle for the Celts was merely a series of duels, that the simplest and most reasonable idea is that headhunting is connected to the concept of the duel and that the severed head, which every warrior had the right to take from a defeated enemy<sup>217</sup>, is a trophy<sup>218</sup>; the severed head of the enemy killed in single combat is above all else the tangible sign of the victory of military power<sup>219</sup>. Le Roux<sup>220</sup> contends that it is not necessary to look any further, since the matter is rich enough with symbols. Brunaux says that the head both was, before all else, a trophy and a unique witness and incontestable proof of courage<sup>221</sup>, particularly in a migrating society with no writing to record martial achievements and bravery, where tangible, transportable proof like the head was ideal<sup>222</sup>, and was removed as a more convenient way of symbolically transporting the enemy's corpse and offering it to the gods, since the Celts viewed the head as representing the whole body, *pars pro toto*<sup>223</sup>. However, Brunaux's statement that, since pitched battle was rare in Gaul, with its deep forests<sup>224</sup>, skirmishes and ambushes were the principal forms of tactics and battle was just a multiplication of duels<sup>225</sup>, a warrior had to get evidence of success

---

<sup>iii</sup> Page 221.

and, therefore, bravery<sup>226</sup> is not convincing. Hubert<sup>227</sup> suggests that it is proof in the rite of passage to manhood and for Gernet<sup>228</sup> it is a reminder of an initiation rite common to numerous Indo-European peoples. From all the booty, it is the warrior's personal property and forms part of his movable goods in his home and his household<sup>229</sup>. Brunaux<sup>230</sup> says that this psychological reason for the acquisition of heads preceded any religious one and, like Diodorus (**Diod.V.29. 4**), compares the practice to hunting trophies of wild animals. This concept of a trophy finds support in literature and social anthropology. The observation by Posidonius related by Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**) of severed heads being nailed to houses is an example of the celebration of valour typical of a heroic society<sup>231</sup>, in Irish literature, the severed heads taken by Cú Chulainn were tokens of his prowess<sup>232</sup> and among the Iban of Sarawak the acquisition of an enemy's head was a sign of fighting prowess and brought prestige and access to the most desirable women<sup>233</sup>. Brunaux<sup>234</sup> also claims that combat, the hunt and the initiation of a warrior were all linked. According to Le Roux<sup>235</sup>, the attitude towards the ownership of the trophy seems to have differed in the Celtic world; in Gaul it seems that severed heads were the property of individuals, a view with which Brunaux<sup>236</sup> agrees, but in Ireland the heads were collective property.

But could other parts of a warrior's anatomy not be severed, such as a right hand, scalp or penis? It must be granted that a severed right hand does not actually prove death nor may the scalp; Freeman<sup>237</sup> points out that, in the case of males, the two trophies, which provide definite proof of an enemy's death, are the head and the genitals<sup>238</sup>. Brunaux says that the head, as opposed to the hand or penis, was taken because it is the most expressive part of a human<sup>239</sup> and that, although not the motive, decapitation has the psychological effect on the enemy of removing the identity and wholeness from the dead person by removing the head<sup>240</sup>; Freeman<sup>241</sup>, however, suggests that it is the durability of the head, which lends itself to be the favourite body part. A common belief is that the Celts considered the head to represent the body *pars pro toto*, to be a metonym for the whole body<sup>242</sup>.

Brunaux<sup>243</sup>, contrary to his suggestion that the severed head was viewed only as a trophy demonstrating courage, points out that, not only was there a desire to buy the heads, or the possessors would not have boasted of having refused to sell them, but also that the value of the head must have been, not in its prestige value as having been the head of a great warrior, since, if this was the case, there is not much kudos in owning a head which someone else had acquired, but instead in the fact that the

head had magical power. Brunaux<sup>244</sup> posits that the severed head acquired a commercial value towards the end of the 2nd century BCE and interprets the activity recorded by Posidonius (*Ath.IV.154*; **Paradoxographer** No.46, 112.6) as a person selling his head and as indicating that, at the beginning of the 1st century BCE, the aristocratic warrior value originally given to the severed head had been devalued.

Despite her own instruction that one does not need to look for any significance in the head beyond its status as a trophy, Le Roux<sup>245</sup> says “la «tête coupée» n’est pas que la simple mise en valeur de trophées guerriers. Il y a du trophée sans doute, mais on ne répétera jamais assez qu’il n’y pas que cela dans la «tête coupée»”. As Powell<sup>246</sup> states, headhunting was not just to prove martial prowess. Ross and Webster<sup>247</sup> say that the head is the seat of the essence of being, a view which Brunaux<sup>248</sup> does not reject but believes came later, and Henig<sup>249</sup> points out that the Greeks and the Romans considered the head to be the seat of power. The Roman *imagines* could be the Italic equivalent of the Celtic head. Kenner<sup>250</sup> points out that in early Roman funereal sculpture the head of the deceased rested on a neck which was far too thin to support it and seemed merely to replace a rod. Ross and Green<sup>251</sup> merely suggest that the Gauls also believed in the head being a seat of power, a power centre for human action<sup>252</sup>. But Le Roux<sup>253</sup> states that the Celts believed that the head was the seat of the soul, that the soul of the deceased was inseparable from the skull, that the head contained the soul even after death, preserving the man’s virtues, that, if the head was preserved, it held inexhaustible power and became a reservoir of energy and that, as a result, the head was an amulet or a fetish. Clarus<sup>254</sup> also says that for the Celts the head was the seat of the vital power present and manifested in every person, but that this power was more than physical procreative power, which could have been obtained by cutting off the penis, which is reasonable to accept, and was believed to be the human aspect of solar power, encompassing light, consciousness and spiritual power, which is less reasonable. Wait<sup>255</sup> says that the basis for the deposit of human skulls in the enclosure ditch of Gournay-sur-Aronde was a belief that the skull contained the soul of the deceased and added to the power of the weapons and animal bones also in there. However, skulls are rare at Gournay-sur-Aronde and are present at Ribemont-sur-Ancre only in the polygonal structure.

The belief that the acquisition of an enemy’s head resulted in the acquisition of the enemy’s virtues or soul is considered to be very primitive<sup>256</sup> and to have originated in prehistoric times<sup>257</sup>. The idea that such a belief existed among the Gauls is accepted by Le Roux, Brunaux and Webster<sup>258</sup>. But Brunaux<sup>259</sup> later says that it was gone by

the Iron Age. From this Brunaux states not only that the reason Celts refused to sell the heads was not because they believed that they needed the proximity of the heads to acquire power, but because, by taking the head, a personal relationship had been created and it could not be sold<sup>260</sup>, but also that the severed heads on the sanctuaries were purely decorative and were not *sacra*<sup>261</sup>.

There has been disagreement about using social anthropology to understand the significance of headhunting to the Gauls. Reinach<sup>262</sup> believes that an understanding of the customs of the Celtic peoples is too often altered by comparisons with the practices of Classical civilisations instead of drawing on those of, in his words, savage or semi-civilised peoples, but Le Roux contends that one need not look any further than that the head is taken as a trophy and proof of bravery<sup>263</sup> and that social anthropological comparisons between the Celts and peoples of the Far East merely reveal that they had the same customs, but cannot reveal that the customs had the same motivations<sup>264</sup>. Despite Le Roux's statements, Sterckx<sup>265</sup>, using comparative anthropology regarding headhunting and ascertaining and assessing the reason or reasons for this practice by certain peoples in the world of a more recent period, in such places as India, New Guinea, Borneo and the Sulu Isles, has argued that these may represent or correspond to the Celts' motivations for headhunting, on the basis that similar practices may have similar reasons. Such an examination has revealed a stunning convergence of motivations among all headhunters.

Among headhunters the head has been considered as rich in soul-substance and, if the vital essence is viewed on a personal level, was regarded as residing in the head<sup>266</sup>. Indeed, the idea that the soul resides in the head was well-established in Assam, Burma and the Naga hills<sup>267</sup>. The Karens of Burma considered the life-principle, *tso*, which means "power"<sup>268</sup>, to be in the head<sup>269</sup>, in Thailand the *khuan* dwells in the head<sup>270</sup>, the Kayan of Borneo believe that the head contains the ghost of the dead person<sup>271</sup> and for the Iban the soul, called *semengat*, resides in a person's head<sup>272</sup>. In Melanesia the head was the seat of magical powers<sup>273</sup> and in New Guinea the skull was believed to be full of power<sup>274</sup>. The idea is not limited to the Far East. The Nootka of British Columbia in Canada consider the soul to be a little man living in the crown of the head<sup>275</sup>. Hutton<sup>276</sup> has no doubts that this idea is the basis for headhunting. The motive for headhunting seems to have been to stimulate agriculture<sup>277</sup> and the main seasons for headhunting were the times of planting and growing<sup>278</sup>. The Karens believed that, when grain, fertilised by a human head, is eaten, the life-principle goes to the person's semen; by headhunting, therefore, men

and animals are able to procreate<sup>279</sup>. For the Wa of Burma headhunting is directly connected with crops<sup>280</sup>. The Kayan of Borneo believe that, if the ghost in the head is cared for, it promotes crop growth and prosperity<sup>281</sup>; in the Naga hills of Borneo headhunting is connected with the health of crops and cattle and human heads are believed to increase productivity<sup>282</sup>. The Land Dayaks believe that a newly-taken head makes the rice grow, game and fish increase and ensure health to everyone and fertility to women<sup>283</sup>. The Iban believe that the fertility of the hill rice depends on the state of the *semengat*<sup>284</sup>. In Borneo headhunting is regarded as a custom bequeathed by the ancestors to ensure abundant harvests<sup>285</sup> and the presence of heads in a house bring prosperity and crops<sup>286</sup>. The concept was found in the Philippines, where the Bontoc believe every farm must have at least one head at planting and growing<sup>287</sup>. It was also practised in Africa to aid crop growth, the Ashanti, for example, placing a head in the hole from which new yams have been taken<sup>288</sup>. As Jones<sup>289</sup> says, there seems to be an intimate link between the soul and fertility. It is also clear that headhunting is driven by the need to secure the soul's vitality in order to obtain agricultural productivity<sup>290</sup>. Hutton<sup>291</sup> says that the soul is a fertiliser and resides in the head. Consequently, it must have been essential to obtain as many heads as possible in order to ensure the fertility of all animals and plants<sup>292</sup>. Reinach<sup>293</sup> thinks that these attitudes and conceptions of the severed human head recall the talismanic role, which Bran's head played for London. The general idea of a connection between human heads and an abundant harvest and the specific practice of the Karens of Burma and the Ashanti of West Africa recall the custom in northern Gaul of depositing heads in empty storage pits<sup>294</sup>.

But what is the origin of the belief that the head, and not any other part of the anatomy, possessed magical power? Headhunting has a cosmic facet. The head is thought to be the receptacle for the vital power of the individual and, as the amount of Life in the universe is limited, heads must be severed in order to ensure the availability of Life and the continuance of the chain of existence<sup>295</sup>. There are two common factors. The first is the belief that decapitation of an enemy either prevents the dead person from being reborn or from returning<sup>296</sup> or inflicts a further death, which prevents him from taking revenge on the living,<sup>297</sup> or supplies one with absolute mastery over the deceased<sup>298</sup>; and the second is the idea that decapitation allows a transference of the vital power of the victim either to the killer or to the community for the purpose of fertility<sup>299</sup>; Powell<sup>300</sup> has suggested that it originated with cult practices concerned with fertility and bringing ghosts into servitude. These

concepts clearly combine headhunting with sexual fertility<sup>301</sup>; this may be the basis of headhunting among the people of ancient Carmania (**Strab.**XV.2.14).

According to Sterckx the majority of Indo-European peoples distinguished between two souls<sup>302</sup>. The first is the *thymos* or individual conscience, located variously in the lungs or the liver or the heart or the entrails, and the second is the *psyche* or the unconscious vital power, the heat which distinguishes the living from the dead, located in the hot bodily fluids, such as the blood and sperm<sup>303</sup>. The Greeks believed that there was a connection between the *psyche*, residing in the head, and semen, which was not known to be a secretion of the testicles, but was thought to be a part of the cerebro-spinal fluid, channelled from the brain down the spinal column to the penis (**Pl.Ti.**49; **Arist.Gen.An.**747a)<sup>304</sup>. The Romans held almost identical beliefs that the head was the residence of the *genius* and the source of seed<sup>305</sup> and seems to be the basis of the image used by Propertius (**Prop.**III.7.4); Onians<sup>306</sup> claims that the Latin phrase *caput limare cum aliqua (aliquo)* means to engage in sexual intercourse. Daryae states that, according to popular Indic belief, the head is the reservoir where semen is stored<sup>307</sup> and believes that this concept has a common Indo-European heritage<sup>308</sup>. This is similar to a belief among the headhunting Iban, that the head contains not only the soul but also seed<sup>309</sup>. This may explain why headhunting peoples took the head in order to possess the virility and fertility power of the victim and not the penis; the head was the source whereas the penis was merely the depositor. However, while the legend of Measgheagra proves that the Celts believed that the soul resides in the head or, more precisely, the brain and the story of wounded warriors being healed by being immersed in a cauldron of marrow shows that the soul was also believed to be present in the spinal marrow, it should be said that there is no textual evidence to prove that the Celts believed in the presence of the soul in the sperm<sup>310</sup>. But if so many peoples, Indo-European and otherwise, accepted the belief that the brain and the spinal marrow were the reservoir and the conduit respectively of the vital power transmitted in the sperm, Sterckx considers that it would be astonishing if the Celts had not<sup>311</sup>.

This concept explains various ideas concerning the head and the soul, such as the Celtic belief that the soul was situated in the head or, more precisely, in the brain<sup>312</sup>, and it also explains the link between the brain and fertility, seen in the representation of Hermes the Psychopomp by only a head and a phallus, in the customs of headhunting peoples, in the etymological connection between *cerebrum* and *c(e)reo*<sup>313</sup> and in the idea that women, although they obviously have intelligence and

human consciousness, do not have a soul<sup>314</sup>. The connection between the brain, the seat of the soul, and fertility makes this last concept comprehensible; a woman does not have a soul because she does not produce sperm, which is the conveyance of the soul<sup>315</sup>. Finally, it also supplies an explanation for filial piety, the cult of ancestor worship and the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis<sup>316</sup>; these beliefs confirm that the sperm was thought to be a drop of brain containing a hot vapour, which becomes the soul and consciousness of the son<sup>317</sup>. They connect with other Indo-European theories of metempsychosis, of which the best known is the Indian<sup>318</sup>. For the Indians of the Vedic period the sperm contains the totality of the human and, therefore, the sperm contains all that is the father and by it the father is transmitted in an embryo and is reborn as his son<sup>319</sup>.

The Celtic belief that the dead, and even parts of the dead, still possessed life explains the fact that the severed head of a brave warrior has religious, magical and personal significance. The religious significance is that, as MacCulloch<sup>320</sup> suggests, headhunting had a sacrificial aspect. The magical significance is that the head had apotropaic qualities<sup>321</sup>. The belief that the severed head protects is a universal and most ancient belief<sup>322</sup>, seen in the Gorgon's head being a protector of the living and intermediary between Hades and the mortal world<sup>323</sup>, such as the Gorgon's head being sculpted onto the enclosure of the Acropolis of Athens (**Paus.**I.21.3)<sup>324</sup>, obviously protecting the Acropolis, and into Hellenic funerary sculpture of the beginning of the end of the 5th century BCE<sup>325</sup>, protecting the dead from the living. Reinach<sup>326</sup> suggests that the custom of placing a *gorgoneion* in the middle of shield goes back to a belief of the ancestors of the Greeks in the apotropaic value of the severed head. The Gorgon's head is even on Celtic coinage<sup>327</sup>. This belief also explains the inclusion of human heads in ramparts<sup>328</sup>, which can be equated to the Gorgon's head<sup>329</sup>, and the myth of the burial of Bran's head at London to keep away invaders<sup>330</sup>. This seems to be supported by the existence of skull-burials, which invariably involve skulls of adult males, possibly indicating a practice of burying headhunting trophies as an apotropaic rite<sup>331</sup>. The depositing of a skull in cremation tombs in the north of France and in Belgium is probably also based on the apotropaic qualities of the skull, this time protecting the dead, just as it can protect the living<sup>332</sup>. The fact that carved single heads adorn the defensive arms of Entremont, Les Bringasses, the fortresses at Baux, Castelet de Fontvielle, the Tower of San Magin and the forts of Allariz, Lugo Baran and Armea show that even the representation of a head seems to have had the same apotropaic value as a skull<sup>333</sup>.

The third one is not only of magical and religious significance, but also of personal significance. If the soul, the source of vitality and power, including sexual power, was in the head<sup>334</sup>, then whoever possessed the head of the warrior would acquire the power and qualities of the dead warrior, such as his strength and virility. The personal significance is, therefore, that a warrior benefited from the former owner's qualities<sup>335</sup> and maintained and renewed his power by killing his enemies<sup>336</sup>; this could be viewed as an extension of the belief that *pro vita hominis nisi hominis vita reddatur* (**Caes.B.G.VI.16.3**). For a warrior to benefit from the power, the head had to remain in his possession<sup>337</sup>; a refusal to part with the head is therefore understandable, because this would result in a reduction of one's power<sup>338</sup>. It has been suggested that the Celts may have believed that, once out of one's possession, the skull's power could even be used against one<sup>339</sup>. In view of the fact that severed skulls are sometimes found with complete skeletons<sup>340</sup>, possession of the skull, and therefore its power, may also have guaranteed the subservience of the dead warrior either in this world or the next. The severed skulls in the grave may also have been believed to have apotropaic qualities<sup>341</sup>. Drinking from the skull may have had the purpose of transferring the power directly to the drinker<sup>342</sup>. The religious significance is almost the same except that, by hanging in the temple, grove or consecrated place, the power was offered and transferred to the deity<sup>343</sup>; Cunliffe suggests that the skull in the Celto-Ligurian sanctuaries were believed to add their power to the god and, by being there, the power was prevented from being used against them<sup>344</sup>. There may even have been a cult of heads of noted men or ancestors<sup>345</sup>.

According to Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**), headhunting was suppressed by the Romans. It has been demonstrated that headhunting was imbued with great religious, personal and magical significance; the degree to which such a significant, deeply embedded custom was affected by acculturation will now be examined.

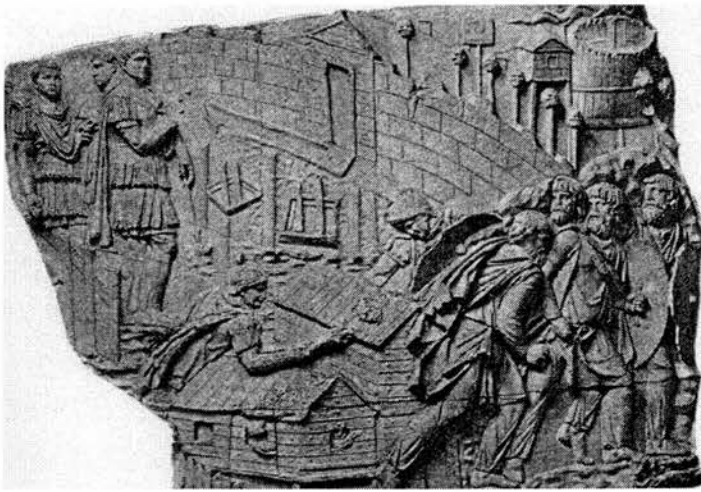
The Romans banned human sacrifice throughout the empire by 97 BCE (**Pliny.H.N. XXX.12**)<sup>346</sup> and, it is assumed<sup>347</sup>, head hunting by extension. The latter is thought to be confirmed by Strabo (**Strab.IV.4.5**). However, Strabo's claims about human sacrifice and anthropomancy are, respectively, probably false and unproven and, therefore, the accuracy of his statement regarding headhunting is equally doubtful; actually Strabo merely states that the Romans stopped *τούτων*, which seems to be referring not to the custom of headhunting, but just to the customs of nailing the heads to the entrances to their sanctuaries and considering heads as an object of sale.

A funerary stele from Kohlmoor, in *Moguntiacum* [Mainz/Mayence], of the Roman Auxiliary horseman Cantaber, son of Virotis, portraying him trampling down the severed head of a Suebian warrior<sup>348</sup>, a votive offering of a severed head on a frieze from Arles<sup>349</sup> and a relief from Paris depicting four severed heads hanging from the branches of a tree<sup>350</sup> are, as Lambrechts<sup>351</sup> says, all evidence that headhunting continued after the Conquest and its termination; the continuity is reinforced by the fact that the latter relief resembles the claim that Taranis received severed heads as offerings in the form of an oak tree (*Comm.Schol.Bern.ad Luc.ad I.445*). Indeed, there is archaeological evidence that the custom of headhunting was not only still practised in the 1st century CE and was not actually ended by the Romans, but, as in the case of Caesar, was exploited. There are examples of this in Britain. Two skulls were set into the *cella* wall of a shrine at Cosgrove, Northamptonshire<sup>352</sup>. One example from Folly Lane, St Albans, is of interest. The skull of a youth, 15 to 18 years old, was found at the bottom of one of the pits outside a Roman/Romano-Celtic temple<sup>353</sup>; the temple is dated to the 2nd century CE and is “broadly contemporaneous” with the skull<sup>354</sup>. Even more interesting is the fact that the skull shows signs of random cut-marks, which suggest de-fleshing and the idea that the skull itself was an object of value<sup>355</sup>, and the *foramen magnum* is missing, which could have been caused by the skull being mounted on a pole<sup>356</sup>. Mays and Steele<sup>357</sup> posit that the skull may have been exposed before its deposit in the pit because the loss of the mandible and all but one of the maxillary anterior teeth indicates a period of time between death and the deposit in the pit and suggests that the skull was exposed after partial de-fleshing. The four perforations in the skull may indicate that the youth was killed by blows<sup>358</sup>. The de-fleshing procedure is the same applied to the skull of the body found at La Tène<sup>359</sup>. A de-fleshed skull mounted in a temple, reminiscent of the case of Postumius’ skull (*Livy.XXIII.24.12*), strongly suggests headhunting as late as the 2nd century CE. At Colchester the excavation of a late 1st century CE building thought to have been a granary or shrine produced six skulls<sup>360</sup>. Although Benfield and Garrod<sup>361</sup> consider them to be the result of executions, Isserlin<sup>362</sup> says that it is possible that these skulls “had originally been built into the wall fabric”. This recalls the insertion of skulls in the ramparts at Luzech, in Quercy in central France<sup>363</sup>. Again a shrine containing skulls recalls the skull of Postumius and, in view of the presence of skulls in granary pits<sup>iv</sup> and the connection between skulls and fertility<sup>v</sup>, the presence of skulls in a granary wall is perfectly consistent. As regards Gaul, seven or eight heads were offered to Mars by Vectirix, son of

---

<sup>iv</sup> Page 231.

<sup>v</sup> Pages 239-240.



**Fig.6.1**

A scene from Trajan's column depicting heads on spikes lining Roman fortifications

Reppavos, at Besaure, near Apt<sup>364</sup>. The most outstanding evidence is in scenes on Trajan's column portraying Trajan's conquest of Dacia; there are depictions of severed heads on spikes lining Roman fortifications (**Fig.6.1**) and of Roman Auxiliary cavalymen presenting Trajan with severed heads of Dacians<sup>365</sup> (**Fig.6.2** and 6.3). These



**Fig.6.2**



**Fig.6.3**

Two scenes from Trajan's column depicting Roman Auxiliary cavalymen presenting the severed heads of Dacians to Trajan

scenes demonstrate that headhunting was practised by the Roman Army, or, at least, the Auxiliaries. Since the Romans had employed Gauls as cavalry since before the

Second Punic War, it is very likely that the Auxiliary cavalrymen were Gauls. The Auxiliaries presenting the heads may have been dismounted horsemen and, therefore, also Gauls. This means that headhunting not only still existed, but was countenanced by the Roman authorities. Indeed, since the severed heads belong to Dacians, it is possible that the custom was not only acknowledged, but was encouraged. Roman acculturation both affected headhunting and yet left it alone. Strabo's statement may therefore be interpreted as meaning that the practice was prohibited inside Gaul, not only because of the repulsion it evoked, but also because of the social instability it provoked, in which case Strabo could be said to be partially correct.

In Britain headhunting seems to have continued for 100 to 150 years after the Conquest. If this is applied to Gaul then one should expect examples of this in the middle or the end of the 1st century CE; the severed heads from Apt confirm this. However, this merely demonstrates that headhunting continued, but it does not prove that the old method of headhunting, inter-necine warfare, continued. But this is not the argument. Rather the contention is that the Romans stopped headhunting inside the Roman Empire directly, by prohibiting human sacrifice, or indirectly, by the establishment of the *pax Romana*, which stopped the main method of headhunting, inter-tribal conflict. But the practice was continued outside the Empire in the service of the Emperor. This is an element of Roman acculturation, but not in the expected way. This would mean that the Romans had taken a Gallic custom both popular with the warrior section of Gallic society and with strong, deep personal and magico-religious associations, practised over many centuries, and had redirected it to the benefit of the Romans, joining in the minds of their soldiers the promotion of Rome's political interests with their personal and religious interests. Vectirix, who deposited the heads at Apt, may easily have been a Roman auxiliary; this would explain the dedication of his, and Rome's, enemies to Mars.

## Chapter Seven **The Celtic Afterlife**

Most modern scholars<sup>1</sup> agree that certain passages of certain ancient authors (**Caes.** *B.G.* VI.14.5; **Pompon.** III.2.19; **Strab.** IV.4.4; **Diod.** V.28.6; **Val.Max.** II.6.10; **Luc.** I.456-457) allude to a Celtic belief in life after death and it has been called “une des données majeures de la tradition druidique”<sup>2</sup>. The Celtic beliefs, which can be discerned from the Graeco-Roman and Irish vernacular literature, are confirmed by archaeology<sup>3</sup>. However, some modern scholars<sup>4</sup> refer to this belief with the controversial phrase ‘immortality of the soul’ and claim that it is linked to the Druids by Graeco-Roman tradition<sup>5</sup>. This chapter will demonstrate that the Celtic concept of the Afterlife is a corporeal one in a specific physical location and that the references to it or descriptions of it as “immortality of the soul” or reincarnation are misleading or incorrect respectively.

Caesar states that, at a funeral, presumably of a nobleman, since they are the only ones whom Caesar would have noted, various personal possessions, even animals, are burnt, presumably on the funeral bier. He also says that, previously, people, such as slaves and certain chosen clients, also used to be burnt after the funeral (**Caes.** *B.G.* VI.19.4); this is mentioned by the Berne Scholiasts (*Comm.Schol.Bern. ad Lucan.* ad I.451). Like Caesar, Pomponius Mela also says that they would burn or bury useful items with the dead and relatives, presumably meaning the wives, would throw themselves onto the pyre<sup>6</sup> (**Pompon.** III.2.19). According to Kramer and Dittenberger<sup>7</sup>, Caesar’s use of the phrase *paulo supra hanc memoriam*, means before the time of those who are now alive and, therefore, in this context, that is up to the end of the 2nd century BCE; this strongly suggests that the practice had stopped before Caesar’s arrival, possibly well before, a view also expressed by Brunaux<sup>8</sup>. But the most obvious meaning of *memoriam* in this context, especially qualified by *hanc*, is “written account”; therefore, Caesar may be referring only to the time immediately before his invasion. MacCulloch<sup>9</sup> says that the fact that Pomponius Mela does not mention it does seem to indicate that it was obsolete by his time, but this is an *argumentum ex silentio*. Some Irish sagas mention the importance of killing the animals belonging to the deceased at the burial<sup>10</sup>, which not only corroborates Caesar and Pomponius Mela, but also suggests that it was the practice of burning *people*, which was obsolete. These practices only make sense if there was a belief that the man would use the items and slaves or meet the wife and clients after death. Lucan says that the Druids taught that after death the spirit controls limbs, meaning a

physical body, in another world (**Luc.**I.456-457). Diodorus Siculus says that the Gauls throw letters to dead relatives onto biers so that the dead will be able to read them (**Diod.**V.28.6), Pomponius Mela says that they even considered business transactions as being possible after death (**Pompon.**III.2.19) and, like Pomponius Mela, Valerius Maximus states that the Gauls' belief in the immortality of souls is so strong that they believe that they are able to collect debts after death (**Val.Max.**II.6.10). All these indicate a belief in a physical existence in another place different from this world, where the dead reside and can read letters.

However, although he accepts the reports of the burning of goods on pyres, Tierney<sup>11</sup> finds the report of letters to the dead put into funeral fires "quite incredible", but without saying why. He also claims that these reports seem to be "the product of a wonder-making fantasy" by Diodorus, which, by the time of Pomponius Mela and Valerius Maximus, grew from being mere letters to being "cheques on the bank of Pluto" and that possibly Diodorus' informant was ignorant of Gallic customs and misinterpreted a Gallic funeral<sup>12</sup>. Tierney<sup>13</sup> seems to support this idea by claiming that Diodorus says that such activities only happen at "some funerals" (**Diod.**V.28.6). Presumably his reasoning is that Diodorus' informant probably witnessed the practice at only some funerals and extrapolated the practice to all funerals. However, the fact that Tierney finds the reports incredible proves only that Tierney does not believe them, it does not prove that they were untrue. Indeed, Wait<sup>14</sup> states that, even though it may have seemed incredible to Tierney, the reports present "a consistent and reasonable picture within the Celtic context" and ethnology reveals that the destruction of objects in this world was necessary for their transmission to the next and this supports the reports by Classical writers. Moreover, Tierney's apparent support for his claim is based on a mistranslation of the passage of Diodorus. The word ἐνιους does not describe τὰς ταφὰς, as Tierney contends that it does, because the former is masculine and the latter is feminine, and, therefore, the phrase "some funerals" does not exist in the sentence. Nor, for the same reason, can the word ἐνιους describe ἐπιστολάς; therefore, the sentence does not contain the phrase "some letters". The only possibility is that the word ἐνιους is the subject of the verb ἐμβάλλειν in an *oratio obliqua* construction dependent on a verb which is understood and, therefore, that the meaning of the word ἐνιους must be "some [people]".

Archaeology, particularly the finds from the Aisne-Marne culture, has provided further evidence for understanding the Celtic afterlife. The burial practices of the

Celts on the Continent in general can be divided into two types. The most common, because the evidence is often preserved and noticeable, was inhumation, which was practised by the Gauls and the Celts in general from the 7th century until the 1st century BCE<sup>15</sup>, and even into the 1st century CE<sup>16</sup>, or from the 5th century to the 3rd century BCE<sup>17</sup> or from the Early La Tène<sup>18</sup>. One of the more remarkable elements among a new and complex ensemble of funerary practices was cremation<sup>19</sup>.

Cremation appears at the beginning of the 3rd century BCE or at the end of the Middle La Tène<sup>20</sup>, during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE<sup>21</sup>, or in the late 2nd century or early 1st century BCE<sup>22</sup>. In some cases, Filip<sup>23</sup> says, cremation dominated only from the end of the 2nd century BCE and the beginning of the 1st. It arose in the north of France in the 4th century BCE<sup>24</sup> or in the middle of the 3rd century BCE<sup>25</sup> and, during the 3rd century BCE, slowly spread south and east<sup>26</sup> from the north Champagne region<sup>27</sup>; the cause for this change is unknown<sup>28</sup> and has stimulated many theories<sup>29</sup>, but is sometimes attributed to the Belgae<sup>30</sup>, although this is not certain<sup>31</sup>. Brunaux<sup>32</sup> states that the custom is certainly not to be found in Celtic culture. The divergences of dates are due to regional variability in the change from inhumation to cremation, which was adopted unevenly by the Celts<sup>33</sup>, to the fact that some graves, due to a paucity of grave goods, are very difficult to date and can only be estimated very approximately and to the question of whether one includes in the category of inhumation burials in storage pits, ditches etc. As regards the geographical spread, broadly speaking, cremation appears to have become the dominant rite first in the north-east and southern France and later elsewhere.

The custom in inhumation was for the body to be dressed according to social position<sup>34</sup> and gender, Celtic women often being buried with their jewellery<sup>35</sup>, and then to be placed supine in a rectangular grave, head to the west and feet to the east<sup>36</sup>. It was rare for several individuals to be buried together<sup>37</sup>. From the Middle La Tène period on it was the custom, from the Czech Republic to France, to demarcate burials by enclosure-ditches<sup>38</sup>. The practice of inhumation also involved the interment with the deceased of offerings of ceramics and cuts of meat, generally placed at the ends of the grave<sup>39</sup>. Equipment and items appropriate to the deceased's position in this life were buried with him/her<sup>40</sup> and it seems that the deceased's possessions all had a place in the afterlife<sup>41</sup>. Aristocratic warriors were usually buried with full panoply and anything relevant to this world and the next<sup>42</sup>; after the Early La Tène period the normal panoply was a sword, a single spear and a sword belt, shields only being included from the 3rd century BCE<sup>43</sup>; the goods would all be placed in the grave, as they had existed in life, except that the deceased's weapons were destroyed<sup>44</sup>. Since

it was the family who determined the contents, this practice enabled the family, if it belonged to the tribal elite, to display its wealth, and therefore its status<sup>45</sup>, presumably by visibly and permanently relinquishing expensive items and signs of wealth. Filip<sup>46</sup> says that, in Celtic flat burials, it is possible to distinguish between the graves of the wealthy and the warriors, those of persons of average income and those of the poor, who had no grave goods, who, in some cemeteries form 10-15% of the number of graves. Such behaviour indicates a socially stratified society<sup>47</sup>. The tombs of the élite are classed as an expression of a “heroic” society<sup>48</sup>. While in ordinary burials the grave goods would be modest, in the case of the nobility these would be weapons, ornaments, amber, prestige goods, Mediterranean imports related to feasting, such as Etruscan drinking vessels, or possibly a Celtic chariot<sup>49</sup>; often Celtic men and frequently warriors on the Continent were buried with either chariots or wagons<sup>50</sup>. Burials with the two-wheeled chariot, which began from the 5th century BCE in the Marne and Rhineland regions, are most distinctive<sup>51</sup>, but less extravagant in grave goods<sup>52</sup>. They are more common in the Champagne region<sup>53</sup>, 250 having been found by 1995<sup>54</sup>. Burials with vehicles occur with other types of graves and these latter graves, without chariots, display a socio-economic hierarchy; the rich women were buried wearing a torque, the rich men with their weapons, such as a sword or thrusting spear, while the men and women beneath them on the social ladder were buried with, respectively, spears, but no sword, and bracelets<sup>55</sup>. The weapons would have been destroyed by their blades being bent, a practice characteristic of ceremonial breaking<sup>56</sup>. The rest, forming half of the tombs identified, were buried with only pottery<sup>57</sup>. Rich burials with chariots, reflecting the idea that prestige goods were an attribute of status, were at their height in the 6th century BCE<sup>58</sup>, continuing into the 5th<sup>59</sup>. For most of the 4th century BCE until the end of the 2nd warrior equipment indicated status<sup>60</sup>. From approximately 200 to 100 BCE the graves were simpler with less distinction of rank and status<sup>61</sup>. This does not contradict Brunaux’s chronology regarding inhumation, because, as has been said, regional variability and the lack of grave goods, resulting in approximations, cause the divergences in dating. Brunaux<sup>62</sup> suggests that the dead were buried to acquire existence beyond, that the tomb assured protection for the skeleton and a place of tranquillity for the wanderings between the different worlds and says that the grave was as much a means of keeping the dead from coming back as it was a place of rest. In the 1st century BCE and early 1st century CE, in the north Celtic region, the pre-Roman ‘Belgic’ burials, which were as rich as those of the graves of the 6th and 5th centuries in the rest of Gaul at their zenith<sup>63</sup>, with their contents, such as wine cups, *amphorae* and meat, show not only the importance and propensity of the people for

funeral feasting rituals<sup>64</sup>, which seem to be the main interest of very late Iron Age chieftains<sup>65</sup>, but also the clear belief of the Celts in an afterlife<sup>66</sup>, even if only in the tomb. But even the graves of the less affluent usually contained all the necessities of life, which shows that the afterlife was accessible to all and not just the wealthy; Nosenko<sup>67</sup> considers it to be unlikely that the Celts would consider the joys of the afterlife to be the preserve of the rich alone. However, from the materials buried it seems that social status was preserved after death<sup>68</sup>.

As regards the custom of cremation, Brunaux<sup>69</sup> proposes that, prior to cremation, the body was exposed; this idea is based on the fact that analysis of bones has revealed that some bones were dry before they were burnt. This may find support in the Celtic belief that carrion birds carry the soul to the gods in the sky<sup>70</sup> (*Sil.Pun.III.341-343*); the bodies may have been exposed for the carrion birds. Whether there was exposure or not, after the cremation the ashes were placed in a sizeable, probably wood-lined, chamber with food, pottery, artefacts and some metal objects<sup>71</sup>; weapons no longer seem to be included in grave goods and, according to Büchenschütz<sup>72</sup>, seem to have been disposed of in the great sanctuaries, such as Gournay-sur-Aronde. Analysis of the bones and the other materials with the remains suggests that the cremated formed only a part of the population and a select part at that<sup>73</sup>. Women seem to be more numerous than men and the latter can be identified by their grave goods as farmers or artisans, but never as warriors<sup>74</sup>. The cremation grave was a pit where the cremated remains and the offerings were deposited and does not appear as a real burial, that is something well constructed and conspicuous on the surface; instead it was usually only a simple unformed hole giving no indication of its existence<sup>75</sup>. Sometimes several individuals can be found in the same burial<sup>76</sup>. Cremation was also applied to the chariot burials of the Gaulish aristocracy, the chariot frequently being burned and the weapons sacrificed, that is broken, or replaced by parade weapons; these forms of burial, the majority dating from the Early La Tène, have been found in the north, the Paris region and west-central areas of France<sup>77</sup>. It seems that the weapons of the aristocrats, being broken and buried, were treated differently from those of other classes, which may have been placed in a sanctuary; a possible reason for the destruction of the weapon(s) may have been either to prevent quarrels among the surviving relatives<sup>78</sup> or because the weapon(s) were too closely associated with the deceased to be used by anyone else<sup>79</sup>. The evidence for cremation is not as noticeable as for inhumation and, therefore, it may have been more widespread than it appears<sup>80</sup>. These burials witnessed only the rites of interment and there is no evidence of a funerary cult above the tomb<sup>81</sup>. Indeed, Bruanux<sup>82</sup> says that, with no

demarcated enclosure, no arrangement of paths and no alignment of graves, in short nothing to indicate human involvement in the area, the areas where the burials were located cannot be considered as necropoleis and that these places were no longer places of rest, but had become places to put the bones. Cremation, the development of urbanisation and the establishment of formal temple structures were all part of the changes which spread through the majority of the Celtic world at the end of the 2nd century BCE<sup>83</sup>. Cremation does not seem to have totally displaced inhumation; even as late as the Augustan period one might be buried in a tomb with jewellery, food, utensils and cooking implements<sup>84</sup>.

There is one conclusion, which is reached from the archaeological evidence concerning inhumation and even cremation. The Gaulish customs prove a definite belief in an afterlife and the continuance of the individual's identity<sup>85</sup>. The incorporation of goods in the grave has been accepted as agreeing with the idea of a life after death<sup>86</sup> or at least as enough to suggest that a belief in an afterlife existed<sup>87</sup>. Brunaux states definitely that the Gauls of the period equipped the dead for a new life beyond the grave<sup>88</sup> and Piggott says that the contents of the graves indicate the implication of a literal understanding of an afterlife<sup>89</sup>. Although having previously accepted that the Celts believed in an afterlife<sup>90</sup>, Green is not as definite, merely saying that grave goods "may imply a belief that the deceased would need them" and, therefore, "may indicate a ritual which suggests the expectation of an after-life"<sup>91</sup>. According to Ferguson<sup>92</sup>, this belief in an afterlife contrasts with the general pessimistic attitude to death expressed in Roman literature, such as by Catullus (*Cat.* V.5-6, CI), possibly a literary construct or reflecting the attitude of the educated, literate class who had dispensed with the traditional Roman beliefs and the optimistic belief in life after death therein. Interestingly, while the Berne Scholiasts say that the belief in life after death made the Gallic warriors fight more bravely, both Caesar and Pomponius Mela state that the belief was designed and taught specifically to do this. Although MacCulloch<sup>93</sup> accepts this, there is no actual reason for thinking it and it is probably a misinterpretation<sup>94</sup>, a surmise<sup>95</sup> or a rationalisation<sup>96</sup>. It seems to be a case of mistaking the result of the teaching for the intention due to the Roman writers' rationalising tendency<sup>97</sup> or cynicism. It is rather the case that the classical authors have grasped nothing of the Celtic mentality<sup>98</sup>. According to Le Roux and Guyonvachc'h<sup>99</sup>, warfare was too much of a part of Celtic life for the Druids to occupy themselves with such psychological arguments, but this is possibly an unwarranted assertion. Brunaux apparently suggests that the Druids rationalised a

belief in life after death<sup>100</sup>, which went back to prehistoric times<sup>101</sup>. Macbain<sup>102</sup> says that all Indo-European peoples believed that the human soul lived on after death. The archaeological evidence confirms the reports of the Classical authors who mention the burning of bodies<sup>103</sup>, Caesar, Pomponius Mela and Diodorus Siculus, all of whom belong to the Posidonian Tradition, although Pomponius Mela says that the Celts bury as well as burn their dead (**Pompon.**III.2.19); moreover, the evidence also corroborates those texts concerned with the Celtic belief in an afterlife<sup>104</sup>. It is probable that, as Caesar says (**Caes.B.G.**VI.19.4), wives, clients, slaves or anything dear or useful to the dead were also cremated. From Caesar's descriptions the Gallic custom of cremation, with its cremation of animals and people, was similar to the Homeric style<sup>105</sup> (**Hom.II.**XXIII.161-177). According to Brunaux, Caesar is describing a form of burial, which can actually be placed at a much earlier time, when cremation was exceptional; indeed, according to archaeology, such burials were so rare that none has been found<sup>106</sup>. Cremation does not mean that the belief in the after-life ceased<sup>107</sup>; it merely implies a significant alteration of belief<sup>108</sup> and indicates that a different eschatology developed<sup>109</sup>.

Brunaux has proposed how Celtic eschatology may have altered in the change from inhumation to cremation. Cremation brought a revolution in the conception of the grave<sup>110</sup>, the conception of the soul as perfectly distinct from the body<sup>111</sup> and with it the afterlife. With cremation the deceased no longer had the same status as he had had in life and individuality had gone<sup>112</sup> and a new concept arose, the distinction between the soul and the body, implying that a person lives on in another shape<sup>113</sup>. Cunliffe<sup>114</sup> suggests that cremation may have been a resurgence of the idea of the spirit being released into the sky or an emulation of Roman practice; the latter is unlikely because cremation did not become standard practice in Rome until the 1st century BCE, long after cremation had been introduced into Gaul. Brunaux believes that cremation indicates a new belief regarding the move of the soul from the body<sup>115</sup>. This belief is that the destruction of the body by cremation was actually necessary for the transition of the soul to the afterlife<sup>116</sup>. As the basis of his theory, he uses the practice of the destruction of some grave goods, such as weapons, even before the introduction of cremation<sup>117</sup>. Certainly, one reason for the 'ceremonial killing', that is the destruction, of a personal object of the deceased, such as a weapon, is to release the spirit in the object in order to accompany the dead person to the After-life<sup>118</sup> and Reinach<sup>119</sup> says that the belief underlying this practice is probably that, just as the deceased is a broken being, it is necessary for the objects accompanying him to be broken too. Brunaux<sup>120</sup> proposes that this custom practised

on inanimate objects may be explained by the belief that these possessions had a double and that the dead did not actually use the grave goods physically interred with the body but used the doubles, which could only be used when the physical original was destroyed and the double released. A similar belief, and no doubt the inspiration for Brunaux's proposal, is held by the Nubas of Sudan, the Vais of Liberia and some peoples of Oceania<sup>121</sup>. Brunaux<sup>122</sup> suggests that cremation may have had the same purpose of destroying the body so that the double of the body can be separated and be used by the soul. The destruction of the body became viewed as essential for the soul's passing by ensuring the separation of the soul<sup>123</sup> as well as, presumably, the separation of the body's double. Nosenko<sup>124</sup> concurs with this theory. Support for it can be found in Patroclus' statement that he is denied access to the land of the dead until his body is cremated (**Hom.II.XXIII.71-74**) and the fact that ancient Irish tradition suggests that the Celts believed in the existence of a double or "substance", only differing from the bodily substance by its indestructible nature, who leaves the body after death and leads an independent existence in the Otherworld<sup>125</sup>. If this theory were true, it would indicate that the eschatology adapted to the change in practice and it is more a case of cremation acquiring this purpose of freeing the double than already having it when it was introduced. However, while this is an interesting proposition and draws on comparative anthropology, there is insufficient support for it to be accepted as anything more than a suggestion. It is possible that cremation may indicate or have been the result of a change in the conception of the after-life and the soul's sphere of existence; the soul was no longer conceived as living in the grave or under the earth using its old body, but in the sky or in a supernatural world in another body. This would explain the absence of a cult at the grave. But it does not seem to have eliminated or even undermined the basic belief in an afterlife.

However, the practice of a decent burial does not seem to have been accorded everyone<sup>126</sup>. Indeed, the number of excavated graves dating from the Middle and Late La Tène show that cremations do not correspond to the whole of the population and it can be noted very clearly that not all the dead acquired graves<sup>127</sup>. In view of the fact that skeletons have been found in rubbish pits, disused storage pits or ditches surrounding a sacred enclosure, it seems that not everyone received an honourable burial<sup>128</sup>; indeed, it is clear that many people were not buried<sup>129</sup>. These skeletons may not have been victims of human sacrifice, but may have been rendered impure and, therefore, denied a proper burial<sup>130</sup>. The body was probably exposed until the flesh had decomposed and the spirit was considered to have left; once the excarnation

process was complete and the spirit had gone, the bones were disposed of without any ceremony or ritual<sup>131</sup>.

It is alleged that warriors killed in battle were people who did not receive a burial and that their bodies were left to rot on the battlefield<sup>132</sup>. This is based on the account by Pausanias of the aftermath of the battle of Thermopylae in 279 BCE at which the Gauls were defeated (**Paus.X.21.6**). Pausanias says that after the defeat the Gauls sent no one to bury the dead and instead left the bodies either to be buried by someone or to be eaten by carrion birds. Pausanias suggests two reasons for this. The first is to strike terror into their enemies; the second is that the Gauls have no feeling for the dead. Pausanias overlooks another possible reason, which is that, as Pausanias says, the Gauls ran away and, therefore, were hardly likely to come back to bury their dead and just relied on their enemies to do so; in which case this episode cannot be taken as a typical example. However, the most likely explanation is that this was, indeed, typical behaviour of Gauls towards the dead in battle, not for the reasons given by Pausanias, but because the Gauls believed that, when the bodies of warriors were eaten by carrion birds, their souls were transported to the gods by the birds. This probably inspired Silius Italicus to mention that the Celts did not burn their dead but believed that their souls would be carried up to the sky and the gods, if their limbs were eaten by vultures (**Sil.Pun.III.341-343**); Aelian reports that the Celtiberians let their fallen warriors be eaten by vultures (**Ael.N.A.X.22**). Jullian<sup>133</sup> claims that this custom had disappeared from Gaul.

Two sites, which provide examples of the disposal of human remains other than by a recognised burial, are Gournay-sur-Aronde, at which many human remains have been found<sup>134</sup>, and Ribemont-sur-Ancre, which had the remains of hundreds of individuals<sup>135</sup>. The remains at both sites displayed signs that the corpses were dismembered as part of a funerary ritual<sup>136</sup>. This treatment would not be given to the ordinary Gaul, who was buried or cremated, but to a small section of the population<sup>137</sup>. At Gournay-sur-Aronde the bones were placed in the ditch enclosing the sacred area<sup>138</sup>; on the basis of the idea that the Gauls believed that the deceased's spirit still in the bones added power to that of the animal bones and swords in the ditch<sup>139</sup>, Brunaux<sup>140</sup> has suggested that the bones would act as an apotropaic cordon around the area. This idea, although plausible, is unverifiable and purely speculative. Despite this Wait<sup>141</sup> seems to consider it possible. Even if correct, what does this imply about the section of the population treated this way? Would outcasts or people rendered impure be considered as suitable to protect the enclosure?

Brunaux's<sup>142</sup> latest interpretation regarding Ribemont-sur-Ancre is that the first, quadrangular, enclosure, in each corner of which is an ossuary, hollow square structures 1 metre high<sup>143</sup> composed of human bones in a criss-cross pattern, was a trophy, the bones being those of the defeated warriors, the denial of a ritual appropriate to warriors being due to their defeated status. Brunaux<sup>144</sup> interprets the second enclosure, "un polygone vaguement circulaire" and approximately forty metres from the first, as being a ἔρῶον, in which the victors' dead were exposed naked to be eaten by birds. This is archaeological evidence supporting the literary references to the custom of leaving the bodies of dead warriors to be eaten by birds so that their souls could go to the gods. Using lines from Lucan (**Luc.**I.447-449), Brunaux hypothesises that the ritual required sacred words to be spoken to ensure the transport of the souls.

This belief that the dead warriors' souls were transported to the gods by the birds probably arose because of the fact that the crow, a carrion bird, would be seen after battles eating the bodies of slain warriors<sup>145</sup>; as a result of this both the crow or raven (the two are considered interchangeable) were, for the Celts, "the bird of battle *par excellence*", symbolising the slaughter of war and being associated with combat and destruction<sup>146</sup>. The Irish triple goddess of war and destruction, the Morríghna or Badbh,<sup>147</sup> could change into ravens<sup>148</sup> and the Irish Celts often represented the goddess of war by a crow. One form of the war goddess, called Badbh Catha, "the Battle Crow"<sup>149</sup> or "Battle Raven"<sup>150</sup>, embodied the concept of a winged soul leaving the body after death<sup>151</sup>; a similar concept is found in Roman art<sup>152</sup>. Therefore, the concept that the crow guided the soul of dead warriors<sup>153</sup> is probably derived from these ideas. Although Catullus knew that the crow was a carrion bird (**Cat.**CVIII.5), Silius Italicus and Aelian probably used "vulture" because it was probably the best known carrion bird in the Mediterranean world.

In view of the fact both that entrance to an afterlife in the Otherworld seems to be available to all regardless of past deeds, possibly even to those buried in mass graves, and that life there reflects all the aspects of the world of the living with no indication of any form of retribution or punishment for past deeds, that the fate of good and evil are the same<sup>154</sup>, it has been stated that "the idea of justice... was absent from the faith of the Kelts" and not only was the Afterlife not a reward for ethical or moral behaviour, but the concepts good and bad were irrelevant to the idea of life after death<sup>155</sup>. It seems that the afterlife for the Celts not only did not provide compensation for ills or sufferings in this world or a punishment for those who had

misused the opportunities of this world<sup>156</sup>, but was a double and a continuation of this world<sup>157</sup>. Unlike the Roman afterlife<sup>158</sup>, there is no evidence of moral retribution after death or of a judgement day<sup>159</sup>. There is no distinction between justice and success<sup>160</sup>. It seems that the only punishment a Celt might receive is the anger of the gods for those who disobey them or exclusion from religious activities for refusal to accept the judgement of the Druids (**Caes.B. G.VI.13.6**) and even then this punishment is limited only to this life (**Caes.B.G.VI.13.7**)<sup>161</sup>. MacCulloch<sup>162</sup> suggests that, since bravery is so important to the Celts, there was the belief that cowards would not receive the afterlife. Support for this may be found in the instruction ἄνδρείαν ἄσκειν, in the alleged example of Druidic teaching σέβειν θεούς, καὶ μηδὲν κακὸν δρᾶν καὶ ἄνδρείαν ἄσκειν (**Diog. Laert.Vitae.Prooem. 6**), and in Irish myths, in which reincarnation is given to heroes, that is brave people, as a reward.

This now leads to the question regarding the actual conception or conceptions of the afterlife held by the Celts. There is little help from the Classical sources, whose descriptions of the Afterlife disagree. They vary in degrees of precision, from the vague (**Pompon.III.2.19**) to the implication of other bodies (**Caes.B.G.VI.14.5**) to the more precise indication of a physical afterlife in another world (**Luc.I.456-458; Comm.Schol.Bern. ad Luc. ad I.451 and 454; Adnot. super Luc. ad I.458**). Diodorus appears to agree with Lucan by saying that εἷς ἕτερον σῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς εἰσδυομένης (**Diod.V.28.6**), but it can be seen that he actually differs from the Latin authors mentioned and that his information is polluted by *interpretatio* when he claims that the Gauls follow ὁ Πυθαγόρου λόγος and that the soul enters a body again δι' ἐτῶν ὀρισμένων. It can be stated with certainty that it was believed that the dead lived a life similar to that which they had left but in another world<sup>163</sup>. What was this world like? Unfortunately, because the archaeological evidence can be interpreted in more than one way and an attempt to clarify the situation by reference to Celtic, primarily Irish, mythology and legend has not succeeded, opinions are divided and each opinion cites archaeology and Celtic vernacular sources as support. Moreover, even if the Insular Celtic conceptions of the Otherworld could be clarified, it must be remembered that, as Grenier<sup>164</sup> points out, one cannot be sure whether and to what degree the conception and spatial position of the Otherworld held by the Insular Celts were also held by the Continental Celts.

In Irish literature, mention is made of magical islands. They have been given various names<sup>165</sup>, but the description of the land is the same. The dead return to a primordial

state<sup>166</sup> and the world of the dead is not presented as a horrible place<sup>167</sup>. There is no pain, care, disease, old age or decay<sup>168</sup>. It is full of music and birdsong, an abundance of food and feasting<sup>169</sup> and beauty and beautiful women<sup>170</sup>. Everything is beautiful, young, attractive and pure<sup>171</sup>. It is a marvellous country where men are eternally young<sup>172</sup> and is a more enviable situation in comparison to that of the living in this world<sup>173</sup>. Not surprisingly, since it is the principal diversion of a heroic society<sup>174</sup> and the legends are addressed above all to members of the warrior nobility<sup>175</sup>, there is still fighting between heroes<sup>176</sup>. It has been compared to the Scandinavian concept Valhalla<sup>177</sup>. Interestingly, even mortals can reach these islands<sup>178</sup>.

While it has been stated that the “world beyond the grave” should only be identified with a magical land in the hills of Ireland<sup>179</sup>, there are two basic views. One view calls these islands in the ocean the Otherworld, but does not identify them with the world beyond the grave<sup>180</sup> and holds rather that the burial customs point to a belief that the dead, separate from the once-living body, live on, not as shades, but with a physical body, residing in the grave<sup>181</sup>, the dead Celt’s personality continuing in a new immortal version of his previous body filled with his spirit, a belief similar to Vedic teaching<sup>182</sup> and, according to Kendrick<sup>183</sup>, a belief found among various pre-industrial peoples and familiar to ethnographers. It was a world where one’s earthly status was recognised and continued<sup>184</sup>. This belief explains the Classical evidence that famous dead were consulted through dreams<sup>185</sup> (*Tert. De Anim.* 57.10) and Green<sup>186</sup> proposes that the enclosure-ditches around burials may have served to stop the dead from travelling from the grave as a malevolent force, which suggests that the Celtic dead resemble the Roman *lemures*. Support for this argument is claimed to be found in Irish myths, which relate how the spirit animated the body in another world and it is possible for the dead to return in a fully clothed tangible body<sup>187</sup>, and in which tombs were described as houses in which the dead lived and from which the dead might come, not as ghosts, but in bodies which could be cut<sup>188</sup>. The evidence of grave goods, weapons, coins, ornaments and even chariots as well as the design of the tomb is held to confirm that this was the belief<sup>189</sup>. However, Jullian and Brunaux in 1986 do not think that, when inhumation was the practice, the dead were intended to inhabit the graves as homes<sup>190</sup>, but that the grave was merely a means of easing the journey of the dead from this world to the next<sup>191</sup>; they say that there are not enough domestic items buried with the body and there would have been attempts to preserve the body<sup>192</sup>. By 1996 Brunaux<sup>193</sup> contended that in the Early La Tène or the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the dead were believed to lead a vegetative existence in the grave. MacCulloch argues that all the evidence taken together suggests that the Celts

believed that the future life was in a body in a replica of this world<sup>194</sup>. He also says that from this the Celts would have developed the idea of a wide, hollow, subterranean world of the dead<sup>195</sup>, which the Celts do not seem to have considered as being gloomy<sup>196</sup>, to which all graves lead, a belief which survived among many peoples, such as the Slavs and the Scandinavians<sup>197</sup>, and which must have been the realm of Dis Pater<sup>198</sup>. He suggests that it was with the development of this belief in a multitude of graves leading to the underworld that the Earth-god became Dis Pater, god of the dead<sup>199</sup>. MacCulloch grants that other eschatologies, such as the world of the dead being far off in a distant place or in the sky, developed<sup>200</sup>, but this belief in a bodily afterlife in the grave survived, even in areas where cremation was practised<sup>201</sup>, along side the belief in bodily immortality in another world<sup>202</sup>; and sometimes all these beliefs might be held simultaneously<sup>203</sup>. However, MacCulloch is adamant that the Land of the Blessed where the gods and heroes live never appears in stories about the dead<sup>204</sup>, is not the land of the dead<sup>205</sup> and is never mentioned as being so in sagas, Märchen or popular tradition<sup>206</sup>. In view of the fact that the Otherworld was conceived as a number of regions displaying different aspects<sup>207</sup>, it is possible that the Land of the Blessed and the Land of the Dead are two aspects of the same Otherworld<sup>208</sup>.

The other view, like the first one, states that the personality of the deceased survives in a recognisable form<sup>209</sup> or that the spirit has a new body<sup>210</sup>, but that it lives again in another region<sup>211</sup> elsewhere<sup>212</sup>. There was a firm conviction in a personal existence in another world<sup>213</sup>, a literal and vivid re-living of a life, exactly corresponding to the deceased's life when alive, but beyond the grave<sup>214</sup>, "a continuing *material* existence"<sup>215</sup>. However, while it is held that the dead lived in a world beyond the grave, it is unclear what form this world took<sup>216</sup>. Scholars either have assumed the Land of the Dead, the world beyond the grave, to be the same as the previously mentioned Otherworld<sup>217</sup> or believe that the two have become confused<sup>218</sup>; this is not inconsistent with Irish legend, but it is also possible to consider that the Land of the Dead was separate<sup>219</sup>. This uncertainty is due to reliance on Irish myths, since the Gaulish view of the afterlife is unknown<sup>220</sup> and Classical sources and archaeological evidence cannot help. While these legends provide a clear description of the strange, unearthly place called the Otherworld, the relationship of the Land of the Dead with the Otherworld is ambiguous, probably because the interpretation of the world to which the dead went varied from tribe to tribe. Indeed, according to the Celts' ideas, there was no precise border between the world of the living and the world of the

dead<sup>221</sup>. Support for this second view may be found in Irish vernacular literature. In this literature the land to which the dead go has been located in various places, sometimes determined by the geographical position of the believers, such as outside normal time and space<sup>222</sup>, far to the east beyond the rising sun<sup>223</sup>, under the sea<sup>224</sup>, under the ground<sup>225</sup> by the people in the interior of Ireland<sup>226</sup>, or on an island or islands in the west<sup>227</sup> by the people on the coast of Ireland<sup>228</sup>; indeed, the latter idea, the Dead going to a land in the west, is found not only in Irish legend, but in Homer (*Hom. Od. X.508-512; XXIV.11-14*), who places the House of Hades in the far west. Plutarch says that, according to a legend of the Celts, Chronos or Saturn was imprisoned on an island, one of a group of four islands<sup>229</sup> five days journey west from Britain, and the inhabitants live there without pain or work, furnished with everything, either sacrificing to the god or indulging in philosophy (*Plut. De def. or. 18; De fac. 26*). It is possible that Plutarch is reproducing, subject to *interpretatio*, a Celtic description of the Otherworld. This legend seems to have survived to the mid-4th century CE, since Avienus refers to an island sacred to Saturn (*Avien. Ora Maritima. 164-165*). If this view is correct, the Otherworld of corporeal beings contrasts with the gloomy Classical afterlife filled with ghosts<sup>230</sup>, although Green says that the place presided over by Donn was sombre<sup>231</sup>. One thing is certain. The islands of the Otherworld or of the Dead must not be confused with the real islands where the Druids are alleged to go to study<sup>232</sup> (*Caes. B. G. VI.13.11-12*).

According to Nosenko<sup>233</sup>, there was a contradiction in the Celtic view of the afterlife, because the Celts not only believed that a dead person's soul lived in another world, but that they also believed in the migration of the soul to a different body in this world. Nosenko<sup>234</sup> proposes a solution to the contradiction. He suggests that the Celts believed in a plurality of souls in each person. The indestructible double or soul-shadow or soul-image, led a corporeal existence in the land beyond the grave on the islands in the ocean and perhaps the hills of Ireland. On the other hand, according to Nosenko<sup>235</sup>, the Celts evidently believed in another "substance", the soul-spirit or soul-breath, which entered a different body in this world.

The differences and contradictions regarding the spatial position of the Celtic Afterlife are to be expected in view of the large number of tribes and the fact that the geographical position of their territories probably affected their mythology and teaching; ultimately, it must be remembered that it was highly unlikely that the Celts had a uniform canon and doctrine regarding the Afterlife. As Grenier<sup>236</sup> points out, the legends placing the Otherworld on islands are those of a sea-faring people,

meaning the Irish Celts. However, despite these difficulties, two points are clear. The Celts had a clear belief in a material life after death, whether in the grave, in a land of the dead or in a beautiful Otherworld, and this life beyond the grave seems to have been available to the aristocracy at least, but probably to all Celts regardless of one's behaviour and moral conduct and without any adherence to any code, moral, dietary or otherwise.

While it is clear that the particular position of the Celtic Afterlife, under the ground or over the sea in the West, depends on the geographical position of the particular Celts holding that belief, it is also clear that the certainty of a bodily life after death, the attractive nature of that life and the apparent absence of any punishment for misdeeds contrasts starkly with Roman beliefs, be they extinction or possible immortality for the soul or the belief in a trial and judgement for some, paradise for a few and an existence devoid of personality and feeling for the many. In view of this difference between the Roman religion and the Gallic, it is difficult to accept Woolf's contention that the Gauls considered the Roman religion better and exchanged their, on the whole positive, beliefs for pessimistic negative ones.

The extent of the influence on the Gallic belief by Roman religion and the Salvation religions can be gauged.

Jullian<sup>237</sup> claims that the Oriental deities were popular with the Gauls, because Mithras signified the sun and Isis, and presumably Cybele, the Earth and every culture appreciated these concepts. However, the inscriptions do not support this. In Belgic Gaul there were no inscriptions to Cybele and *Magna Mater*, only one to Isis<sup>238</sup> and, as regards Mithras, there were three inscriptions, two in the Tungri tribal territory<sup>239</sup> and one also among the Suessiones<sup>240</sup>, and only one *mithraeum*, at Mackwiller. In Aquitania there was one inscription each for Isis<sup>241</sup> and Mithras<sup>242</sup> and, as with Belgic Gaul, none for Cybele; however, there were eight for *Magna Mater*, six in *Lactora* [Lectoure]<sup>243</sup>, one in *Burdigala* [Bordeaux]<sup>244</sup> and in *Vesunna* [Périgeux]<sup>245</sup>. Although they were not rejected entirely, the influence of the Oriental cults, such as Mithras, Cybele and Isis and Serapis, on Gallo-Roman culture was slight. While Jupiter Dolichenus, god with a bull, thunderbolt and double-headed axe, was especially popular on the Rhine, probably among the soldiers, Egyptian cults left few traces and Syrian gods do not appear to have penetrated in to the indigenous people much<sup>246</sup>.

Duval<sup>247</sup> proposes that two basic weaknesses in these cults may account for this. The first is the fact that they were monotheistic and the second is that they were still exotic even for the Roman pantheon and, therefore, probably too exotic for the Gauls only recently introduced to Roman culture. Despite this Cybele seems to have prospered with more than 60 *taurobolia* and processions in honour of Cybele attested at the end of the 2nd century or at the beginning of the 3rd<sup>248</sup>. The two possible reasons for this are that the *taurobolium* resembled some traditional Gallic cattle sacrifice and that she was confused with the Matres and other fertility-related goddesses<sup>249</sup>. Terracotta statuettes of Cybele have been found along with statuettes of the Mother-goddesses, Venus, Fortuna and Minerva, who, if she was equated with Brigit, was also concerned with fertility, at Graach, Hofstade-lès-Alost, Dhronecken and Hochscheid. This may be the third reason for the lack of impact of the female Oriental cults; all the female deities were immediately equated in the Gallic mind with the transfunctional goddess concerned with fertility. A fourth reason, which explains the lack of attraction of Oriental deities is that all these cults entail a form of initiation, which, in the case of Mithras, is limited to men, as a requirement for salvation and an adherence to a code regarding behaviour or diet. This method of acquisition of the Afterlife must have seemed terribly unattractive in comparison to the Celtic Afterlife, which was open to anyone, involved no change in status, morality or diet and was as enjoyable as this life.

## Conclusion

Both literary and archaeological evidence for Gallic religion must be used circumspectly and are subject to a number of provisos. Just as every work must be examined to obtain the author's focalisation, so the literary evidence produced by Greek and Roman authors cannot be accepted unquestioningly. The main literary sources were not and were never intended to be objective scientific analyses and were written primarily about the southern Gauls specifically and between a specific period of time. Moreover, the authors, only two of whom had actually been to Gaul, not only had their own motives for writing, but were the products of the Mediterranean world and, therefore, affected by ethnocentrism and cultural primitivism. The problems of Greek and Roman literary evidence have been discussed and taken into account in this study.

The use of Irish vernacular literature is valid, but it must be tempered with caution for both specific and general reasons. The specific are anachronisms, additions due to the religious views of the Christian monks transmitting the myths to writing and conscious imitations of Classical literature; the general reason is that the literature is the product of and concerned with Irish, not Gallic, culture. It has also been shown that many of these reasons for not using Irish vernacular literature are erroneous, specious, are applied excessively or, unfairly, only to Irish vernacular literature.

The use of archaeological evidence to reconstruct Gallic religion has as many problems as the use of literary evidence, and of a similar kind. All that is available are the religious sites and artefacts and, even then, only those which have survived and have dates and origins which are known or can be estimated. The actual rites and beliefs have to be extrapolated from them and will never really be known. Moreover, the evidence is subject to interpretation, which may be influenced by the interpreter's imagination, prejudices, psychology or political view.

The worship of Gallic deities continued and Gallic religion was not abandoned in favour of the Roman. This is demonstrated by the continued worship of many Gallic deities on their own and unconnected with any Roman deity. Moreover, the use of the names of Gallic deities as epithets indicates, not the abandonment of the Gallic religion and its replacement by the Roman, but their official recognition and consecration by the Romans and the fact that they were considered equal with Roman deities; it indicates not acceptance of the Roman religion by the Gauls, but

rather the acceptance of the Gallic religion by Romans. The Gauls who practised combining Gallic and Roman deities were not the ordinary Gauls, but were the minority of the indigenous population who were Roman citizens; they continued to worship the Gallic deities and coupled them with Roman ones only as an expression of their loyalty. As with a Gaul with Roman citizenship, the Roman name merely indicated the new loyalty and political orientation, but the Gallic name demonstrated that the Gallic quality and personality were not abandoned, but continued. Further evidence of the recognition by the Romans of the equal status indigenous deities had with the Roman and that the Gallic religion continued is the fact that, in the provincial capital, as late as the 3rd century CE, Gallic deities were considered worthy to be associated with objects of worship introduced by Roman acculturation, such as Roman deities, the *Numen Augusti* and the Divine House. The basic plan, square enclosure and ambulatory area of the Gallic temple continued in the Gallo-Roman temple. Anthropomancy ceased to be practised because it was an extraordinary procedure invoked only for situations which, due to Roman acculturation, no longer existed. Widespread human sacrifice seems to have ceased by the 1st century BCE and was therefore unaffected by Roman acculturation; however, there is evidence that it may have continued on a small scale. The sacrifice of weapons ceased due to the *pax Romana*, but the sacrifice of other objects continued. Of the animal sacrifices, the chthonic bovine sacrifice seems to have been affected by Roman acculturation, but the animal sacrifice involving a banquet continued, as did the rite of circumambulation. Headhunting was stopped in Gaul, but continued under the aegis of the Roman Army on the borders and as part of the conquest of new lands. Finally, the emphasis on the fertility aspect of the female Salvation religions rather than their message of salvation indicates the continuance of the Celtic view of the Afterlife.

Certain aspects of Gallo-Roman religion showed not only continuity of Gallic cult, but also its redirection and, as a consequence, the removal of potential tension on the part of the indigenous, non-citizen section of the population regarding the acculturation of their customs and beliefs. The worship of Gallic deities became associated with Roman deities, public cults and Roman culture, in short Rome itself, and was redirected from being purely indigenous to being a part of Roman culture in Gaul and to be a sign of loyalty to Rome. Moreover, with the worship of Gallic deities established as public cult and with the recognition of them by the State as on the same level as the Roman deities, any resentment due to the impression that indigenous beliefs and deities were inferior, unwanted or a threat was defused as was

the idea that a Gaul had to choose between his Gallic heritage and the Roman. In the same way, headhunting was redirected from use against other Gauls to use against Rome's enemies and for the furtherance of Rome's power and to be a sign of loyalty to Rome. With the redirection of headhunting towards Rome's enemies, unrest among the nobility and warrior class, which Rome used as cavalry and for whom headhunting provided military renown and magico-religious power, was avoided. In both the worship of deities and headhunting, redirection of an indigenous institution advanced Roman culture and defused any potential tension.

There was no reason for the Gauls to consider the Roman religion as better; not only were the two religions similar in many ways, but the Gallic religion was more attractive as regards the belief in the Afterlife. Indeed, the fact that the Romans treated aspects of the Gallic religion on a level with the Roman shows that they did not consider Gallic religion inferior. The Gallic religion was not abandoned in preference to the Roman through the activities of the Romans and the Gauls and it is not the case that Gallo-Roman religion was actually Roman with the only Gallic quality being that it was practised in Gaul. Aspects of the Gallic religion continued beyond the 1st century CE, both continuing to appeal to the Gauls and, because of this, being used by the Romans either for the benefit of the Empire or to introduce the Gauls to Roman culture.