

Celtic Lore Mythology

The Celtic identity in Europe is exceedingly old, dating back well beyond written historical records. As a consequence we have to rely on archaeology and the analysis of language in order to trace the Celts back to their origins.

It has long been recognized that the Celtic languages are members of the Indo-European group of languages, which include English, Romance/Italic and the Indo-Iranian languages. It is also acknowledged that such a group of related languages could only have emerged as a result of a movement of population out of a shared common homeland. It is widely believed that homeland was located in the south Russian steppe and that population movement from that area led to the formation of these languages.

The racial group that we call Celts were an Indo-European people whose culture spread rapidly across the whole of Europe, up into Scandinavia, down into the Spanish peninsula; and modern thought points to a spread over the Asian sub-continent as far as the borders of China. This does not mean the people expanded and took over, but that their culture was strong enough to dominate and be adopted by other peoples in those areas.

Celtic civilization offers a window into a world that was before many of the conventions of Western society. It has been compared in this respect to the Hindu culture of India, the other “fringe” culture of the Aryan expansion in Europe and there are many similarities in their culture and their beliefs which span back to the formative years of Western civilization.

The rise of the Roman Empire as the dominant power in ancient Europe was intimately connected to the fate of a people collectively known as the Celts. Their historical significance is indicated by the reports written by Julius Caesar during the six years he spent subjugating the Gauls, the Celtic tribes who inhabited modern-day France during the last centuries AD. Caesar's Roman perspective on the Celts is documented in “The Gallic Wars” (“de bello gallico”), still an important part of contemporary Latin courses, and continues to define the Celts today, even in the form of popular comic strips.

Our knowledge of the lives of the ancestors of Asterix and Obelix is quite detailed as a result of modern archaeology, which has investigated the history of the Celts through numerous excavations. From their central European homeland, the Celts had in the course of their historical migrations arrived near

of Rome by 400 BC. They eventually succeeded in penetrating as far east as Asia Minor via the Balkans and Greece, where they are documented in the Letters of St. Paul the Apostle, who referred to them as Galatians.

The oldest known reports of the Celts are attributed to the Greek historian Herodotus (about 484 to around 430 BC), who mentions a town called Pyrene in Celtic territory on the upper reaches of the Danube. However, Herodotus himself had never actually set foot in that area, and probably based his report on an even older source: Hecataeus of Miletus, who wrote in the middle of the 6th century BC. The written sources go no further back than this.

Archaeology has shown that these peoples possessed vibrant cultures, and developed superb artistic styles. Greek lotus motifs, inspired early Celtic artistic taste, were imitated and developed into the ‘La Tène’ style, used especially on metalwork.

These peoples have another great claim to modern attention. The word ‘Celtic’ is used today of peoples whose (present or former) native tongues are related to those of the ancient Celts.

The Celtic Roots of Europe

For a thousand years the ancient Celts dominated a vast pan-European commonwealth. The importance of their place in European cultural, linguistic and artistic development is only now being rediscovered.

The old Celtic dialects were the close ancestors of modern Welsh and Gaelic. The Celts enjoyed life. Food and feasting was important in early Celtic societies, and lavish

hospitality still survives in the Scottish Highlands. Celtic culture was transmitted orally; history and facts were not written down but memorized in the form of verse. Celtic education included subjects as diverse as religion and geography, philosophy and astronomy. Celtic orators were famed throughout Europe, and the Romans employed them as tutors for their sons. In this advanced culture, even the ruler gave precedence to the Druid who was scholar, judge and bard as well as priest.

The bravery of the Celts was recognized even by their enemies. Spurning protective armor, they would often go naked into battle. Their women were also able warriors, merchants and rulers, because Celtic society gave women the same status and rights as men.



The Celts were also skilled and inspired stonemasons and metalworkers. Celtic art is widely recognized for its originality and outstanding quality. Despite their advanced culture, lack of unity was the downfall of the Celts when the Roman military machine began to overrun their lands.

Gaul fell, then the south of Britain. But the Romans were stopped in Scotland by the Picts, a Celtic people. The Romans retreated, and Scotland remained unconquered. Neither were the Celts in Ireland conquered by the Romans, and it was from Ireland that the Gaels were to come to Scotland.

Keltoi was the name used by the ancient Greeks to refer to a barbarian people to their north. The identification of this people with the speakers of 'common Celtic', the ancestor of what are now classified as the Celtic languages, is conjectural, though widely accepted. The Celts first appeared c.1200BC and came to dominate much of central and western Europe until the Roman and Germanic expansion in the 1st century BC pushed them to the western fringes of the continent. In Ireland their language and culture was firmly established by the early Christian era. But the chronology and manner of their arrival there remains obscure. Earlier notions of a large scale invasion are not supported by archaeological evidence. Instead, the likely scenario is either the arrival of a conquering minority that imposed itself, in one or more phases, on an existing population, or a process of peaceful cultural penetration across a lengthy period. In either case it seems clear that descriptions of the people of Ireland, along with those of Wales and Scotland, as 'Celtic' is primarily a cultural rather than a racial classification.

Who Were The Celts ?

The Celts originally inhabited an area in southern Germany and Bohemia. By the end of the 5th century BC they had expanded into the Iberian peninsula; in 390 BC they sacked Rome. In the east they went as far as Anatolia. In the west they migrated to Britain in the 5th century BC and Ireland in the 3rd century BC.

A great deal may be learned about the Celts from the archaeological materials left behind in the various countries where their culture dominated for several centuries. Most of the written documents of Celtic culture and religion are from Ireland and date from the 12th century AD, when they were written under Christian aegis.

As in the other Indo-European cultures, a clear tripartite structure appears in Celtic societal organization. The principal divisions are the king, the warriors, and the cattle herders. The religious hierarchy is also tripartite, consisting of the priestly Druids, who also served as administrators; the vatis or filidh, experts in magic and divination; and the bards, who are concerned with maintaining oral literature and prose poetry.

As a culture the Celts display counteracting tendencies: they seem to be autonomous, anarchic, and concerned for local traditions, but a basic unitary character is manifested in their social organization and mythological histories.

The Celtic pantheon is difficult to discern. The names of several hundred gods are known, but the majority appear to be local deities. During the Roman period, many Celtic deities were identified with Roman gods. One of the most important, called Lugh in Ireland, was identified with Mercury.



Among the ancient European peoples were the warlike Celts--muscular, red-haired wanderers who probably came from the distant steppes beyond the Caspian Sea. By 500 BC they were living in north-eastern France, southwestern Germany, and Bohemia. The Celts, who were also called Gauls, continued to migrate in all directions. About 400 BC Celtic tribes crossed the Swiss Alps into northern Italy. After capturing the fertile Po Valley region, they laid siege to Rome. At the same time other groups of Celts pushed down into France and Spain, eastward to Asia Minor, and westward to the British Isles. To what is now France they gave the ancient name of Gaul. In Asia Minor they founded the

kingdom of Galatia. St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians in the New Testament is addressed to the descendants of these Celts. In Britain, Celtic warriors overran and conquered the islands. The Celts -- Scottish and Irish peoples -- also migrated to North America, many of them congregating on a small island much like their homeland, called Cape Breton. Cape Breton is part of Nova Scotia -- New Scotland.

Celtic Life and Religion

The Celts were organized loosely in tribes. Each tribe had a chief, nobles, freemen, and slaves. Usually it lived in a fortified stone and wood beam village, often built on a hilltop, with fields and pastures outside not too distant from a water source or well. The tribes often fought each other. If one tribe

conquered several others, its chief took the title of king. The Celts brought many new skills to the peoples they conquered. Their weaponry was highly advanced, as they learned the art of smelting iron, which enabled them to produce large billhooks, axes and other tools. These tools were not only used as weapons, but were used quite effectively to open up roadways through previously impenetrable northern European forests. They decorated their helmets, shields, and arms with artistic metalwork and enameling. The Celts were also adept in such practical matters as curing hams, keeping bees, and making wooden barrels. Celtic priests were called druids, and their religion, druidism. Little is known of the druids because their rites were never written down. Apparently their gods were similar to those of other early peoples. The druids of Gaul were both judges and priests who sacrificed criminals to their gods. The druids of Britain were chiefly religious teachers. Only men of good family could become druids. Membership was highly prized because druids did not have to fight or pay taxes. The druids taught that the soul was immortal, passing after death from one person to another. They deemed the mistletoe sacred, especially if grown on an oak tree. The oak was also sacred, and druids often held their rites in an oak forest. Wise in the lore of plants, animals, and stars, the druids were also magicians and astrologers. Many ancient stone monuments were once thought to have been built by druids, but scientists now date them from pre-Celtic times.

Archaeological findings have demonstrated the very rich culture that the Celts developed; excelling in poetry, art, jewelry, pottery, enamel work and advanced metalwork. The Celts used local materials, which consisted mostly of wood but in some places they used stone, showing great architectural skill.

There are many of these impressive stone structures in Britain, which survived from the fourth to the second centuries, BC. Celtic society was tribal and they had a highly cultivated law systems, which were handed down orally. One such example would be the provision of curative medical treatment, sick maintenance and the establishment of hospitals.

Christianity and the Celts

Part of central and north Phrygia became Galatia with the invasion of the Galatian Gauls (3d cent. B.C.). The kings of Pergamum ruled much of

Phrygia until it became a Roman province in 25 BC. There has been much archaeological excavation in the area. Galatia lies on the central plateau of present-day Turkey. Many Greeks also settled in Galatia, bringing Greek culture to the area.

Paul the Apostle visited and founded churches in Galatia and addressed a New Testament Epistle to the Galatians. Scholars generally date Galatians from the middle of the 1st century, about AD 54. The motivation for the Epistle was the growing influence on the Galatians of Jewish Christians, who deemphasized faith in Christ as a fundamental principal of Christianity. To counteract this teaching, Paul asserted as the central theme of the Epistle that faith in Christ, not works of the law, is the essential condition for salvation (Chapters 3-5). Primarily because of Paul's exposition of the doctrine of faith, Galatians has been a continuing source of inspiration for Christian theologians.

Celtic Decline

The Celtic domination of Western Europe lasted only a few centuries. In time the Romans made Italy, Gaul, and much of Britain into Roman provinces. The Carthaginians overpowered the Celts in Spain, and German tribes drove the Celts out of the Rhine Valley. Following the Roman conquest, the Anglo-Saxon invasion wiped out most traces of Celtic culture in England. Only on the fringe of Europe did the Celts manage to keep their distinctive traits and languages--in

Brittany, the Isle of Man, Wales, Ireland, and the Scottish Highlands. There traces of Celtic culture still survive in folklore and in the Breton, Manx, Welsh, Erse, and Gaelic languages. Curiously enough, however, those Celts in the New World [namely, Cape Breton] kept their traits and languages more alive than those in Europe. Bagpipes, Gaelic, folklore and dance are all actively taught and celebrated on the Island. The name Celtic Renaissance was given to a revival of interest in Celtic languages, literatures, and history, which began in the late 1800s. The revival was especially strong in Ireland, where it led to the writing of plays with Irish-Celtic themes. Erse, or Irish Gaelic, is now an official language of Ireland.

Note 1: What we today call "Celtic" mythology is a transmogrification of numerous basic mythologies of numerous Irish, British, Gaul and Scottish tribes. One



of the earliest of those tribes has been, by differing ethnologists, called the Iberian, Berber, Silurian, Basque, or Euskarian race. (Take your pick!) This tribe spoke a “Hamitic” language. Another of those earliest tribes are popularly called the “Celts”, who spoke an “Aryan” language. These “Celts” were made up of the Goidals (Gael), Brythons (Britons, Bretons), Continental Gauls, Irish (or Irish Gaelic), Manx, and Scottish Gaelic.

Note 2: One of the great skills developed by the Celts, as confirmed by archaeological discoveries, is the building of roads. As mentioned above, they were able to access once inaccessible territories by building road ways which enabled the widespread expansion of their civilization.

Note 3: The Celts spread out in all directions and eventually they were granted lands in central Asia Minor, establishing the Celtic state of Galatia, which later became the first Celtic peoples to be converted to Christianity. The Celtic civilization has been represented as proud, ignorant, illiterate, fierce and savage and this image remains with us to this day. These inaccurate and biased representations of the Celts are far from the truth. The Celts were primarily an agricultural and pastoral people, living within a well-structured tribal society as farmers. There is no doubt that they were fierce in battle, however they were not the mindless group of blood-thirsty barbarians wandering through Europe as many writers would have us believe.

The Races of Celtic Mythology

Again, the Irish mythology is a deep ocean of mythical tales. It feels like the tales of this mythology are endless; ones that keep generating other more tales. With that ceaseless generating, it is easy to expect that the characters are plentiful as well. It is true after all. In fact, the significant characters of the mythology descend from reputable races of Ireland. They all have origins that assisted in creating the long history of ancient Ireland. The Tuatha de Danann had always taken over. There were plenty of other supernatural races, including the Gaels, the Fomorians, Fir Bolgs, Nemedians, Picts and the Milesians. However, the Tuatha de Danann was the race that evoked most of the gods and goddesses that were worshiped.



The Goddess Aine

Celtic Mythological Characters (including Britain, Ireland, Gaul, Wales, Scotland)

Abnoba - (Gaul) Goddess of the hunt (similar to the Roman Diana)

Achall - In Irish legend, Achall was a loving sister who died of sorrow when her brother was killed in battle.

Achtan - The Irish heroine who bore Cormac, the king.

Achtland - In Celtic legend, this mortal queen could not be satisfied with human men, so she took a giant as her spouse.

Adsagsona - Celtic goddess of the underworld and of magic.

Aebh - Wife of Lêr.

Aed - Son of Lêr.

Aeifé - Another wife of Lêr.

Æs Sídh - Means “the folk of the mounds”, the fairies.

Ainé - (AN-yuh) Ireland; a woman of the Leanan Sidhe (Sweetheart of the Sidhe). Some said she was the daughter of Manannan, some said she was the Morrigan herself. There was a stone, Cathair Aine, belonging to her and if anyone sat on the stone, they would be in danger of losing their wits, sit three times and they would lose them forever. Aine was very revengeful, and it was not a safe thing to offend her. Queen of the fairies. Other fairy queens were

Aoibhinn, Cliodna, and Aynia.

Aine of Knockaine - (AN-yuh of knock-AN-yuh) Ireland; moon goddess and patroness of crops and cattle; associated with the Summer Solstice. Also Aine Cliach, and Cnoc Aine.

Airmed - A goddess of the Tuatha de Danann of Ireland. She was the goddess of witchcraft and herb lore, daughter of Diancecht.

Alator - A war god worshiped in Britain.

Amaethon - (Wales) God of agriculture.

Angus, Aengus or Aonghus (Mac Oc) - Gaelic god of youth and god of love and beauty. He had a magical harp of gold whose music was so sweet that no one could hear and not follow it. One of the Tuatha De Danann, name means "young son". He had a harp that made irresistible music, and his kisses turned into birds that carried messages of love. His bough, underground fairy palace, was on the banks of the Boyne River. Variants: Angus or Oengus of the Brugh, Angus Mac Oc. The son of the Dagda and river goddess Bionn, Aengus (or Aonghus) – meaning 'true vigor', was the Celtic deity of love, youth, and even poetic inspiration. In the mythical narrative, to cover up his illicit affair and consequent pregnancy of Bionn, the Dagda (who was the leader of the Celtic gods and could magically control the weather) made the sun stand still for nine months, which resulted in Aengus being birthed in just a single day. In any case, Aengus turned out to be a lively man with a charming and whimsical character who always had four birds hovering and chirping around his head. It was said that Aengus has his dwelling around Newgrange after he had tricked his father Dagda into giving him the possession of the Brú na Bóinne – the spiritual abode of the chieftain of the Tuatha Dé Danann. But his status in ancient Ireland as a patron of young lovers was borne by his own love for Caer Ibormeith, a girl who was seen in a dream by the god. Aengus was then able to find her and marry after instantly recognizing his muse as one of the swans (since Caer turned into a swan every alternate year). As for the historical side of affairs, Aengus, with its epithet Mac Óg ('young son'), was possibly linked with Maponos, one of the Celtic gods of youth, venerated in both ancient Britain and Gaul.

Andraste - (Britain) Andraste is a warrior goddess, the goddess of victory. See Badb

Annwn - (Britain) The otherworld.

Anpao - was the god of death; the son of Mider and Fuamnach, and the brother of Cernunnos and Arawn.

Anu/Danu - Ireland; goddess of plenty and Mother Earth. Greatest of all Irish goddesses, deity of cattle, health, fertility, prosperity, and comfort. One of the ancestor goddesses of Ireland. Some mythographers claim she is the same goddess as Aine, others say Danu.

Aoibhell - (Ireland) another woman of the Sidhe, she made her dwelling in Craig Liath. Legend has it that she gave a golden harp to Meardha, Murchadh's son, when he was getting his schooling at the Sidhe in Connacht and learned of his father's death. Whoever heard the playing of the harp would not live long afterward. It was this harp that Cuchulain heard the time his enemies were gathering against him at Muirthemne, and he knew by the sound that his life was near its end.

Arawn - Wales; god of the dead and the underworld Annwn. Only until Christian conversion, the Welsh didn't look on the underworld as hell. God of revenge, terror, and the dead. Brother of Cernunnos and Anpao.

Ardwinna - A Celtic goddess of the forests.

Arianrhod - (Wales) The goddess of the moon. A magician goddess, who like Artemis lived in orgiastic maidenhood surrounded entirely by women, although it is also said she lived a wanton life, mating with mer-men. She was the most powerful of the children of the mother goddess Don. Goddess of beauty, fertility, and reincarnation. Known as Silver Wheel and the High Fruitful Mother, the palace of this sky goddess was Caer Arianrhod (Aurora Borealis). Keeper of the Silver Wheel of Stars, a symbol of time and karma. Her ship, Oar Wheel, carried dead warriors to Emania (Moonland).

Artio - Celtic goddess of wildlife, who was usually depicted in the form of a bear.

Avalon - a realm similar to Asgard or Olympus, connected tangentially to the hill Tara in Ireland and to the underworld of Annwyn as well as to a series of other smaller faerie worlds. Collectively, these realms are known as Otherworld.



The Celtic God of Youth and Beauty - Aengus

Badb - (Ireland) One of the three war goddesses known collectively as the Morrigan. She was depicted in the form of a raven with a crimson (bloody) mouth. Also the goddess of enlightenment, inspiration, life, wisdom. Sister of Macha, the Morrigan, and Anu, the name of this goddess means “boiling,” “battle raven,” and “scald-crow”. Known as **Cath Bodva** in Gaul. A Mother Goddess and Triple Goddess, Badb’s cauldron boiled with the ever-producing mixture that produced all life. Variants: **Badhbh**, **Badb Catha**.

Balor - Some historians believe that the Fomorians were of Asiatic or of Northern African origin they being described often as having dark skin and hair colouring. Balor of the Evil Eye or Balor of the Mighty Blows was one of their chief leaders and was renowned for his gigantic size and strength. He was also a magician. He probably lived in the north west of Ireland as this is the area where the legends of his deeds are most plentiful. Tory island in particular is connected with Balor it is said that this was the place where he ruled. ‘He had one eye in the middle of his forehead and the other one directly opposite in the back of his head.’ A glance from this “evil eye” is said to have blasted the bleak islands lying to the west of Scotland. With its foul distorted glances, its piercing beams, and venomous properties, like those of the basilisk this eye in the back of the skull would strike people dead. Because of this Balor kept it constantly covered except when he wished to get the better of his enemies. The Gaelic speakers still call an “evil eye” *Súil Bhaloir*.

Banba or **Banbha** - Irish earth goddess, she was part of the triad that included Eriu and Foltá (Fodla).

Bebhiomn - An Irish underworld goddess and a patron of pleasure.

Bel - (Ireland, Wales) God of cattle, crops, fertility, fire, healing, hot springs, prosperity, purification, science, success. A sun and fire god closely connected with the Druids and the festival of Beltaine (May 1). Variants: Bilé, Belenus, Belinos, Beli Mawr (Wales). *Note: Sumerian gods were also called Bel.*

Belatucadros - (Britain) God of war and of the destruction. His name means “fair shining one”. The Romans equated him with their god Mars.

Belenus (Bel or Belenos) - (Pantheistic) God of healing and light, and referred to as “The Shining One”. He is in charge of the welfare of sheep and

cattle. His wife is the goddess **Belisama**. They can be compared with the Greco-Roman Apollo and Minerva.

One of the most ancient and most widely worshiped of Celtic gods – who was venerated in Continental Europe, Britain and Ireland, Belenus (also known as Belenos, Bel, and Beli Mawr) was the quintessential sun god in the Celtic mythology. Known by his epithet ‘Fair Shining One’, Belenus was also associated with the horse and the wheel – and their composites tended to portray him as the effulgent Sun God gloriously riding across the sky in his horse-drawn chariot. Other representations depict Belenus as only riding his horse while throwing thunderbolts and using the wheel as his shield.

Now given his eminence in ancient times, it doesn’t come as a surprise that the Roman identified him with one of their own syncretic Greco-Roman deities – Apollo, the archetype of the youthful god of light. Thus over time, Belenus was also associated with the healing and regenerative aspects of Apollo, with healing shrines dedicated to the dual entities found across western Europe, including the one at Sainte-Sabine in Burgundy and even others as far away as Inveresk in Scotland.

In fact, the cult of Belenus was so strong in some parts of the continent that the god was regarded as the patron deity of Aquileia (the ancient Roman city situated at the ‘head’ of the Adriatic sea) as well as the national god of Noricum (comprising parts of modern-day Austria and Slovenia). Even in our modern context, the legacy of Belenus (or Bel) survives through the continued festival of Beltane (‘Fires of Bel’) that was originally celebrated to signify the healing powers of the spring sun. Interestingly enough, the familiar Welsh name ‘Llywelyn’ also comes

from two Celtic sun gods, since it is derived from Lugubelinos – the composite of Lugus (or Lleu in Welsh) and Belenos (or Belyn in Welsh).

Beli Mawr - (Wales) Welsh ancestor deity.

Belisama - (Celtic) Goddess of light and fire, the forge and of crafts. She is the wife of the god Belenus.

Bheara - (Ireland/Scotland) [Also Cailleach Bheur {see Cailleach below} or Cally Berry] She controlled the weather. When a handsome young man was kind to her, she changed herself from an ugly old hag into a beautiful young woman and rewarded him with her favors. She is also considered to be the



Artist Idea of Balor - One Eyed Giant

“White Lady” and the wife of Manannan the Sea God; you can see her in the sunlight sparkling on the water.

Bilé (Gaelic) - The Irish have a special relationship with death, I think it's safe to say. (Or is it better to say that death has a special relationship with them?) Bilé is the Gaelic god of the underworld from whom sprang the first men, and considered by some to be the father of the gods and men.

Bilé, Irish god of death, is the iteration of a much older Celtic god who is often referred to as Bel or Belinos in the Brythonic tradition. He is the namesake of the Celtic feast day Beltane, which was—and among some groups, still is—celebrated on May Eve and May 1st.

The myth of this God is that he arrived on the Emerald Isle at Beltaine where he met the Goddess Danu. When he arrived, the spirits of those who had left their physical bodies were roaming the countryside sometimes causing havoc with their wailing. Some of the spirits even bothered their living relatives by sitting in their houses and making a nuisance of themselves preventing their relatives from sleeping by crying, walking around, and moving furniture. The living leaders came to the Goddess Danu and asked her to find a way to help their deceased relatives pass over to another place where they would not disturb their living relatives.

Once the Goddess Danu met and spent time with Bilé she asked him to lead those people who were ready to “pass through the veil to the other side”. Bilé was not very pleased with the idea of going to the underworld permanently but he agreed as his service to the Goddess in exchange for being able to return to be re-united with her once a year. This became the Celebration of Beltaine in Ireland.

She turned him into a tree, which is the meaning of his name. This tree is the World Tree at the center of the Western Sea. It is the doorway or stairway that is utilized by people after they are ready to leave the physical realm and go to the Otherworld or Underworld. The Irish myth states that he shares his throne with the three goddesses (Eire, Banba and Fodla the three sisters of Ireland), all members of the Tuatha De Dannan. When Bilé first went to the underworld with the first group of individuals they held a conclave and by consensus chose Eire as the Goddess of the physical land we now call Ireland.

Blodeuwedd - (Wales) goddess of flowers, lunar mysteries, wisdom. Known as the Ninefold Goddess of the Western Isles of Paradise and Flower-Face,

goddess was created by Math and Gwydion as a wife for the god Lleu. Her symbols were the owl and the moon. Variants: **Blodwin**, **Blanchefflor**.

Boann - (Ireland) Goddess of the River Byone and mother of Angus Mac Og by the Dagda. She held the powers of healing. Variants: Boannan, Boyne. Mother of Oengus. Wife of Elcmar, the Dagda covets her and sends Elcmar on an errand. Boann conceives from the affair, and to hide it Dagda magically lengthens the day to 9 months so Boann can bear Oengus while Elcmar is still away.

In another legend Boann formed the River Boyne, giving it her name. It was originally a well of inspiration, now called Trinity Well, shaded by 9 hazel trees. The crimson nuts of the trees, when eaten, granted inspiration and great magical powers. However, not even the highest gods were allowed to trespass the well. So the nuts were all eaten by the salmon that swam in it. With pandoric virtue, Boann defied the taboo of the well and caused the waters to rise up and chase her away, forming the Boyne River, and releasing the salmon, which appear in other tales. On a more mundane level, salmon was a staple food supply for the Irish, and before agriculture fully developed, a good salmon season was as important as a good harvest.

Bodb Derg, aka **Bodb the Red** - and the Red Lord, is a god of war, the son of Dagda and Morrigan, and the uncle of Arawn. His mortal descendants were known as the Red Clan.

Boibhniu - Celtic god of smiths.

Borvo - (Gaul) God of healing.

Brân - (Britain) God of the underworld.

Bran the Blessed - (Wales) god of prophecy, the arts, war, music, writing. Associated with ravens; the brother of Manawydan ap Llyr and Branwen. His father Llyr was a sea god. Variant: **Benedigeidfran**.

Branwen - (Wales) goddess known as Venus of the Northern Seas was the deity of love and beauty. Daughter of Llyr and one of the three matriarchs of Britain.



Blodeuwedd

Bres - (Gaelic) God of fertility and agriculture; one of the first kings of the Tuatha De Danann. Bres the beautiful, who was king for a short time and ruled poorly.

Bride - Scotland's version of the Celtic Irish Brigid.

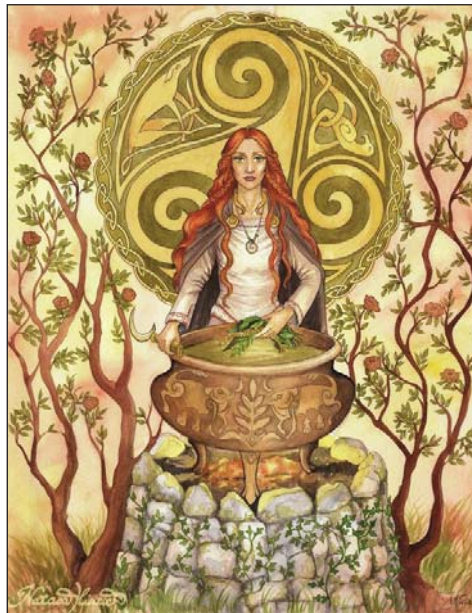
Brigandu - Celtic French version of the Celtic Irish Brigid.

Brigantia - Celtic Briton version of the Celtic Irish Brigid.

Brighid or **Brigit** - (Gaelic, Celtic) Brighid was the goddess of fertility, spring, therapy, agriculture, fire, healing, metalworking, learning divination, occult knowledge, prophecy, smithcraft and poetic inspiration. She is the wife of Bres. Her Gaelic name of Breo-saighead means "fiery arrow" or "fiery power". Celts often referred to her as being three in one - the Triple Brigits or the Three Mothers. An ever-burning fire was kept in her honor by her nineteen priestesses who lived in a sacred temple at Kildare. Variants: **Brid, Brig, Brigid, Brighid and Bride**. She is known as **Caridwen** (Cerridwen) in Wales. There are three sisters by the name of Brigit in Irish myth (daughters of Dagda) who are the patron-goddesses of learning (poetry), healing and smithcraft.

In the mythical narrative, she is the daughter of the Dagda and thus a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Curiously enough, in Lebor Gabála Éirenn (The Book of the Taking of Ireland – collection of poems compiled in the 11th century AD), she is mentioned to have a quite a few domesticated animals, ranging from oxen, the king of boars, to sheep – and these critters used to cry out as a warning to the goddess.

Beyond the narrative, it is the history of Brigid as one of the major Celtic gods in Ireland that fascinates many aficionados. To that end, continuing the tradition of the Indo-European dawn goddess, Brigid was possibly sometimes venerated in her three aspects – the healer, the poet, and the smith. In essence, she may have been a triple deity (the composite of three entities). Furthermore, her eminence (in at least Ireland) stems from the possibility that pre-Christian Brigid was syncretized in the medieval times with the **Catholic Saint Brigid of Kildare**. This incredible form of syncretism hints at how the early medieval Christian monks played their part in adapting to the changing religious landscape of the realm by retaining a few of the older native 'pagan' elements.



Brighid

Bronach - An Irish goddess of cliffs.

Caer Ibormeith - Ireland; goddess of sleep and dreams; and perhaps a less violent version of Mare; daughter of Ethal Anubail, a fairy king of Connacht. She often took the form of a swan who lived on a lake called Dragon's Mouth, and wore a copious golden chain with 130 golden balls on a silver chain about her slender neck. She was loved by Aengus MacOg, god of young love. When he awakened from a dream of her he sought her out. After he found her, he too

became a swan, and the two of them flew and sang the sweetest, most restful music ever heard upon this earth. Together they flew away to Bruigh na Boinne, his megalithic site north of Tara, where they sang so wonderfully that the whole of Ireland fell into a peaceful sleep for three days and three nights.

Cailleach - An ancient goddess of the pre-Celtic peoples of Ireland. She controlled the seasons and the weather; she was the goddess of earth and sky, moon and sun. Later in Scotland and Ireland she became the goddess of disease and plague. A Destroyer, or Crone, goddess, she was also called "Veiled One". As the Crone, she ruled with the Maiden and the Mother. Dogs guarded the gates of her afterworld realm where she received the dead. Celtic myth has her gatekeeper dog named Dornarth "Death's Door". Irish bards who could curse with satire were often called cainte "dog".

Cairbré - A son of Cormac.

Cairpré - A bard of the Tuatha Dé Danann and a son of Ogma.

Canola - (Irish) According to the myth she was the inventor of the Irish harp. She had a disagreement with a lover, and so she left his bed to wander the night. Hearing beautiful music, she stopped and sat down; soon she fell asleep in the open air. Wakening to daylight, Canola discovered the music had been made by the wind, blowing through the rotted sinews clinging to the skeleton of a whale. Inspired by the sight and remembering its magical sound, she built the first harp.

Camulos or **Camulus** - (Celtic-Roman) Rather than being counted among the core Celtic gods, Camulos was possibly more of a Romano-Celtic deity, often associated with Mars (or Greek Ares), and thus was perceived as a god of war

and some say the sky as well. However, his origins lie as the tribal god of the Remi, a Belgic tribe that dominated north-eastern Gaul (comprising modern-day Belgium and parts of both Netherlands and Germany). In any case, Camulos was regarded as one of the important ancient Celtic gods (or Romano-Celtic deities) in Britain, judging by his name being given to several places in the region, including Camulodunum, the ancient Roman name for Colchester in Essex, England. And while, initially, he was just worshiped on stones where wreaths of oak were placed, later characterizations portrayed Camulos as having horns of ram on his head.

Caradawc - Caradawc of the Strong Arms was a son of Brân.

Carlin - (Scotland) She was the spirit of the eve of Samhain (Halloween), the night the year turned to winter, and the ghosts of the dead roamed the world of the living.

Carman - (Irish) A destructive witch, she was the goddess of evil magic. She had three equally destructive sons: Dub ("darkness"), Dother ("evil"), and Dian ("violence"). The Tuatha de Danann, the deities ruled by the goddess Danu, fought against Carman with their most powerful weapons. Finally the sorceress Bechuille, was able to undo Carman's curses. Her sons were destroyed and Carman put in chains, where she died of grief.

Cartimandua - (Britain) A legendary warrior queen who waged war against the Roman Empire, she was the leader of the Brigantes, descendants of the goddess Brigantia.

Cathubodva - Gaulish war goddess.

Cenn Cruaich - (Gaelic) The heaven-god (akin to Zeus). Also known as **Crom** or **Crom Cruaich** as mentioned in Hyborian exploits, where is his a chitlonic Earth deity of dark and foreboding caves and dark places.

Cernunnos - (Celtic) Arguably the most visually impressive and rather portentous of ancient Celtic gods, Cernunnos is actually the conventional name given to the deity 'Horned One'. As the horned god of Celtic polytheism, Cernunnos is often associated with animals, forests, fertility, and even wealth. His very depiction mirrors such attributes, with the conspicuous antlers of the stag on his head and the poetic epithets like the 'Lord of the Wild Things'.

As for history, there is only single known evidence for the full name Cernunnos, and it comes from the Pillar of the Boatmen carved by the Gaulish sailors in circa 14 AD. Considered as one of the important reliefs of the Gallo-Roman religion, the pillar additionally depicts other Roman deities like Jupiter and Vulcan.



However, quite intriguingly, the visual representations of the horned deity (as one of the Celtic gods) predate such inscriptions and names by centuries. To that end, one of the apt examples would pertain to an antlered human figure featured in a 7th-4th century BC dated petroglyph in Cisalpine Gaul and other related horned figures worshiped by the Celtiberians based in what is now modern-day Spain and Portugal. And the most well-known depiction of Cernunnos can be found on the Gundestrup Cauldron (circa 1st century BC).

Cernunnos was the god of the underworld and of animals. The horned (reindeer horns) god of virility, he is accompanied by a ram-headed serpent and a stag. He was often depicted holding a bag of money, possibly signifying he was considered a god of fertility also. All Celtic areas in some form pay homage to the god of animals, commerce, crossroads, fertility, reincarnation, virility, warriors, woodlands. Druids knew him as **Hu Gadarn**, the Honored God. Ancient Celtic images show him seated in a lotus position, naked, with antlers or horns on his head. Animals that were sacred to him: bull, ran, stag, and horned serpents.

Variants: **Cerowain**, **Cernenus**, **Herne the Hunter**. His parents are Mider and Fuamnach. His brothers would be **Arawn** (god of dead) and **Anpao** (god of death). The Romans identified him with Mercury as a 'psychopompos' or leader of souls to the underworld. Cernunnos wears the torc (neck-ring) and

is ever in the company of a ram-headed serpent and a stag. Extremely popular among the Celts, the Druids encouraged the worship of Cernunnos, attempting to replace the plethora of local deities and spirits with a national religion. The Celts were so enamored of Cernunnos that his cult was a serious obstacle to the spread of Christianity.

Cerridwen - (Wales) Cerridwen is the goddess of dark prophetic powers. She is the keeper of the cauldron of the underworld, in which inspiration and divine knowledge are brewed. Goddess of death, initiation, inspiration, magic, regeneration. Known as a moon goddess, Great Mother, and grain deity; wife of the giant Tegrid. She brewed a magical potion of wisdom in her cauldron, and forced the young Taliesin to stir it for a year and a day. When he accidentally swallowed the last three drops, he was transformed into a bard. Welsh bards once called themselves Cerddorion “sons of Cerridwen,” meaning they received their initiation from Cerridwen herself. Variants: Caridwen, Ceridwen. Probably a local variant or the same goddess as **Brigit**.

Cessair - (Irish) A great magician, she became the first queen of Ireland. She and her band of female followers inhabited the land after the Great Flood.

Cethé - Son of Diancecht.

Cethlenn - Wife to Balor.

Cethlion - (Irish) Prophetess of the Formorians who warned of their impending doom at the hands of the Tuatha de Danann.

Cian - A son of Diancecht. Most skilled at healing, so much so, that his father was jealous of his skills.

Clíodna - (Gaelic) Goddess of beauty and the otherworld.

Clúd - Goddess of the river Clyde.

Cocidius - (Britain) God associated sometimes with forests and hunting (linked with the Roman god Silvanus), sometimes with war (equated with Mars).

Conairé - Conairé the Great; high king of Ireland.

Conall Cernach - (Irish) Powerful warrior; his name means “strong and victorious”.

Conchobar - (Celtic) Conchobar’s intended bride, Deidre, eloped with Noisi. Conchobar killed Noisi and his brothers and Deidre died of sorrow.

Condatis - (Britain) God who personified the waters, sometimes considered a war god.

Coranians - A mythical tribe of dwarfs.

Corb - An Iberian god.

Cormac - Known as “the Magnificent”. Descendant of Conn “the Hundred Fighter”. His reputation was akin to that of Solomon.

Coventina - (Britain) Goddess who personified a holy spring that had healing powers.

Credenus - (Celtic) chieftain, the one who responsible for crafting;

Creiddylad - Wales; goddess of flowers, love. A daughter of the sea god Lir, connected with the festival of Beltaine and called the May Queen. Variants: Creudylad, Cordelia.

Creidhne - (Celtic) Creidhne was the god of metal working. One of the trio of craft-gods of the Tuatha De Danann, as were Goibhniu and Luchta.

Crom (the Hyborian God worshiped by Conan): May be based on the Irish pagan deity Crom Cruaich or Cremm Crioich.

Cu Chulainn - (Celtic) A hero akin to Heracles or Theseus, born with the strength of a man and a burning rage to conquer all in his path. His famous exploits are described in Táin Bó Cuailgne [The Cattle Raid of Cuailgne (or Cooley)].

Cuda - (Britain) Mother goddess.



Cerridwen

Cu Roi - (Irish) A sorcerer who transforms himself into various guises.

Dagda - (Celtic-Gaelic) The god who was the supreme head of the People of Dana. (The equivalent of Cronus.) Revered as the leader of the Tuatha Dé Danann tribe of gods, he was usually associated with fertility, agriculture, weather, and masculine strength, while also embodying the aspects of magic, wisdom, knowledge, and Druidry. These facets do explain his renown and veneration among the Celtic druids. Many of the aspects also bear striking similarities to the divine characteristics of Odin, the chieftain of the Æsir tribe of ancient Norse gods. Dagda possesses a bottomless cauldron of plenty and rules the seasons with the music of his harp. With his mighty club, Dagda can slay nine men with a single blow, and with its small end he can bring them back to life. He was father to Brigit, Angus, Mider, Ogma, and Bobd the Red. In Ireland he was god of the arts, knowledge, magic, music, prophecy, prosperity, regeneration. Known as the “Good God” and “Lord of the Heavens,” he was one of the high kings of the Tuatha De Danann and had four great palaces under hollow hills. His magical cauldron had an inexhaustible supply of food and his oak harp made the seasons change. See **In Dahgda**.

As the ancient Irish perceived Goddess Danu as a mother, they regarded Dagda as a father. On the other hand, legends have it that Goddess Danu was the mother of God Dagda. It makes more sense to regard them as husband and wife. Legends claim that they were the ones who started the Tuatha de Danann.

Seemingly, all the gods of the Tuatha de Danann were strong and giant. The portrayal of the Dagda often included an enormous man. He usually wore a cloak that had a hood. On the other hand, some sources contained a depiction of this god in a sarcastic yet comical way. He was wearing a short tunic that did not even cover his private parts. It seemed to be intentional to make him seem unsophisticated and crude; an image that a god shouldn't be.

This god was the one responsible for controlling almost everything in life. Those included time, seasons, weather, life and death, and the crops as well. Regular members of the Tuatha de Danann had superpowers, so imagine

how powerful gods were. The Dagda was a prevailing deity figure who possessed more than a few powers; he also owned magical items. One of those items was the Cauldron of the Dagda; it was among the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danann.

The Dagda also owned a countless number of fruit trees that were constantly productive. Besides, he had two pigs that were prominent in some tales of Celtic mythology. He was the god of wisdom who had the power to control life, death, and weather.



Dahgda

Damona - (Gaul) Goddess of fertility and healing; her name means “divine cow”.

Dana, Anu, Don or Danu - (Celtic) The goddess/mother from whom Tuatha Dé Danann (The People of Dana) were descended. She was the daughter of the god Dagda (the Good), and had three sons, who had only one son between them, Ecne (Knowledge). In another story, the Goddess played an actual role was one with Bile. Bile is the god of healing and light. He appeared in the story in the form of an oak tree; a sacred one. Danu was the one who was responsible for feeding that tree and nurturing it. Their relationship was the reason for the Dagda to be born.

She was another of the three war goddesses known collectively as the Morrigan. She is particularly associated with the province of Munster with its fertile soil and was known as Anu in those parts. The Tuatha Dé Danann were all descended from her. The goddess Danu can be found under many names from Dana, Anu to her Welsh equivalent Don. She is the ancient Irish mother-goddess and was considered to be the goddess of rivers, wells, magic, prosperity, fertility (her totem animal being the mare) and wisdom as well as being a moon goddess. However she was also, being part of the Morrigan, a goddess of strife

and war and, as many Celtic gods and goddess, she was a balance between ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Some scholars believe that Anu was the primary Earth/Nature Goddess and Danu was only the name given to her by the nineteenth century writers. However the nineteenth century writers were so popular that now most people would know of the Tuatha De Danann and the Goddess Danu. She is the most ancient God on Celtic record. Another name that people refer to the oldest ancient Celtic goddess with is the **Beantuathach**. This name means

the farmer; they call her that, for she was the goddess of the land. Not only did she nourish the lands of Ireland, but she was also associated with the rivers.

Evidence of this most ancient Celtic God is found in the Irish Lebor Gabala, date to about 1000 C.E. Dana is the mother of the Tuatha De Danann, who later dwindled to the Daoine Sidhe, the Sidhe-folk of Ireland. She was praised as the mother of the Gods, who is beyond all other Gods of this world. The Name Dana means wisdom, or teacher, as in the English word don, or giving, as in the root of the word donate. Well, lest look first at the Tuatha De Danann, this name means "Children of Dana". Today, the Irish people, through their veneration for the good St. Bridget, render homage to the divine mother of the people who bear her name Dana--who are the ever-living invisible Fairy people of modern Ireland. The Recorded mythology and literature of ancient Ireland have, very faithfully, preserved a clear picture of the Tuatha De Danann, and their Goddess-Dana. Danu is recorded as being the Mother of the Dananns. Her name is usually associated with the Danube. There is also some speculation that in Proto-Celtic periods, the name Danu had been connected with the River Don in Russia. Don is the Welsh goddess who is equivalent to the Irish Dana, and it seems likely that she was an immigrant from Ireland, for the children of Don correspond closely in character and functions to the Children of Dana. Don is also connected with the River Don in Scotland. There is a possible link between the name Dana/Danu, the name Dione, as goddess name in Greece, and the goddess name, Diana, as known by the Romans. A major theme linked to the goddess of the Celtic Pantheon is the association to a particular body of water, usually a river, but at times a spring, lake, or the ocean.

Dechtere - (Irish) The mother of Cuchulain. There are a number of versions of his birth, of which two follow: one, Dechtere accidentally swallowed a mayfly while drinking a cup of wine, became pregnant from this event, and bore Cuchulain; two, She was impregnated by the god Lugh with his own soul, and vomited him into life as Cuchulain, thereby remaining a virgin.

Deidre - (Celtic) Deidre was the beautiful intended bride of Conchobar. She ran off with Noísi (Naoise), and died of sorrow when Conchobar killed him and his brothers.

Dewi - (Wales) The Red Dragon god. The emblem of Wales.

Dia Griene - (Scotland) The daughter of the sun in ancient Scotland. She appears in a folktale in which, held captive in the Land of the Big Women, she is freed by the Cailleach, disguised as a fox, and a helpful young bumbler named Brian.

Diancecht - (Irish) Diancecht is the god of healing, magic, medicine and regeneration. He killed the giant serpent that was destroying cattle throughout the land. He also killed his own son whose skill in healing endangered his father's reputation. He is the one who fashioned a fully functional arm of silver for Nuada. Physician-magician of the Tuatha De Danann; his sons were Miach, Cian, Cethe, and Cu, his daughter Airmed was also a great physician. Variant: **Dian Cecht**.



The Goddess Dana by Genzoe

based on the Welsh people's tales.) See **Donn**.

1. Don, the mother goddess; the Welsh equivalent of the Irish Danu.
2. According to the predominant story, Dön was the leader of one of the two warring families of gods. His children were the powers of light, the other family's children were the powers of darkness.

Donn - Irish god of the dead whose abode is at Tech Duinn (House of Donn) which is placed on an island off the south-west of Ireland. The house is the

Domnu - Mother goddess of the Fomors. In Irish mythology, the Fomoir or Fomorians were a semi-divine race and were believed to have been one of the first tribes to inhabit Ireland, from a time before the Biblical Flood. (Sometimes they are considered as the tribe or nation descending from Ham, the cursed son of Noah.)

The first part of the name, 'Fo', is generally said to mean 'below' or 'beneath'. The word 'mor' is more problematic: it could refer to the sea - the name of the Fomorian goddess Domnu means 'marine abyss' - but is more likely to mean phantom or spirit, and thus to refer to beings from the underworld.

Dön - Ireland, Wales; in Ireland, goddess who ruled over the Land of the Dead. In Wales, goddess of sea and air. For both, generally a goddess of the elements, communicating with the dead. (There are two differing versions of Celtic Mythology with one of them probably

assembly place of the dead before they begin their journey to the Otherworld. In modern folklore Donn is associated with shipwrecks and sea storms and sometimes equated with the Dagda and Bilé. In some versions he is said to be the son of Midir the Proud. More often than not he is confused with the eldest son of Milesius. The god's name is derived from the Celtic *dhuosno-, meaning the "dark" or "black" one.

Donn's island, Tech Duinn, is in reality little more than a rock (now known as Bull Rock) situated off the coast of the Beara peninsula. But for centuries that rock inspired fear in the minds of the ancient Irish.

Druantia - Several Celtic areas; goddess known as Queen of the Druids and Mother of the tree calendar. Goddess of fir trees.

Dylan - Wales; sea deity and the some of Gwydion and Arianrhod, this god was called Son of the Waves, and a silver fish was his symbol.

Eadon - Ireland; nurse of poets

Elaine - Wales, Britain; a Maiden aspect of the Goddess, she was later transformed in the Arthurian sagas.

Elathan - A king of the Fomors.

Elen - (Wales) In the Mabinogian, the Welsh mythic epic, this heroine appears as the world's first highway engineer. When her land was threatened, she magically built highways across the country so that her soldiers could gather and defend it.

Emer - (Irish) An exceptionally beautiful, and intelligent, woman who knew it! Before she would allow the hero Cuchulain to sleep with her she demanded a number of heroic tasks be successfully completed, reasoning that her superior endowments warranted it.

Epona - (Britain, continental Gaul) goddess of horse breeding, healing spring, prosperity. Called Divine Horse and the Great Mare, the goddess of horses was acknowledged and worshiped by Roman soldiers. Her symbols were horses and dogs.

Beyond syncretism, there were also sole Celtic gods worshiped in the pantheon of the ancient Gallo-Roman religion and even Rome itself. Epona belonged to the rare second category. Regarded as the female deity and protector of horses, donkeys, and mules (etymologically, the word 'Epona' is derived

from Proto-Celtic *ekwos – meaning horse), the Celtic goddess was also possibly associated with fertility – given the visual cues of patera, cornucopia, and foals in some of her extant sculptures. And talking of depictions, most of the dedicatory inscriptions to Epona (found by archaeologists) were made in Latin (as opposed to Celtic), thus suggesting her popularity in the Roman world.

In fact, with her aspect as the protector of horses, Epona was favored and venerated by the auxiliary cavalymen of the Roman Empire, especially the renowned Imperial Horse Guards (Equites Singulares Augusti), who were the cavalry counterparts to the Praetorian Guards. As for the other Celtic cultures, it has been argued in the academic circles that Epona possibly inspired the Welsh mythical/folkloric character of Rhiannon – the tenacious lady of the Otherworld.

Ellylion - The Welsh elves.

Erc - A king of the Fir Bolgs at Tara.

Eremon - First king of Ireland.

Eri - (Irish) The mother of Bres.

Eriu - (Irish) The goddess for whom Ireland is named. In Gaelic Ireland is rendered as Erin, which means the "land of Eriu". Daughter of the Dagda. **Eriu** (modern Irish – **Eire**), regarded as one of the Celtic gods among the Tuatha Dé Danann, has the distinction of having an entire nation named after her. To that end, the very term Ireland comes from 'Eriu' (as the realm was known in the olden times), and thus her modern name Eire is modified to suit the current pronunciation of Ireland. Essentially, Eriu serves as the modern personification of Ireland.

As for the mythological side of affairs, the Irish goddess Eriu in many ways symbolized the legacy of the Tuatha Dé Danann after they were defeated by the Milesians. In the related narrative, when the Milesians invaded Ireland from Galicia, Eriu and her two sisters **Banba** and **Fotla** went forth and greeted the newcomers.

As a courtesy, the Milesians promised to name the land after her. But unfortunately for the Tuatha Dé Danann, they were only given the underground to dwell in by the victorious Milesians. And this realm (underneath the Sidhe mounds) was perceived as the passage to the Celtic Otherworld. Thus, the Otherworld was associated with the supernatural, mystical world where fairies and gods lived.



Epona Ireland.

Ernmas (Irish Mother Goddess) - Ernmas was an Irish mother goddess. She did not have any significant roles in the Irish folktales. That was because she died in the first battle of Mag Tuired when the Tuatha de Danann defeated the Firbolg. She was one of the Tuatha de Danann. Despite her insignificance, she gave birth to some of the most prominent gods and goddess of the Celtic mythology. She was the mother of a trinity of sons; Glonn, Gnim, and Coscar along with two more, Fiacha and Ollom.

Some sources also claim that she was the mother of the three Irish goddesses Érie, Banba, and Fótla. The three of them were wives of the three sons of Ogmá. At last, Ernmas was also the mother of the popular trinity of war goddesses, the Badb, Macha and the Mórrígan. They were the three goddesses that people usually confused between them.

Esus - (Gaul) God equated with either Roman deity Mars or Mercury. Human sacrifices to Esus were hanged and skewered with a sword. Esus is usually pictured as a woodcutter. His sacred animal was the bull.

Etain - (Irish) An early sun goddess of ancient Ireland and wife to Mider.

Etan - Wife of Ogmá.

Ethne - (Irish) An ancient Irish goddess that subsisted on the milk from a sacred cow from India.

Ethniu - Daughter of Balor.

Fagus - (Gaul) God of beech trees.

Fairies/Fearie (Fey) - There are many different aspects of Fairy lore in Celtic Ireland. The people of the Tuatha Dé Danann retreated to an Otherworld after the Milesians came to Ireland and became known as the **Sidhe** pronounced shee. These became some of the Gods and Goddesses as well as Fairy Kings and Queens of the Celtic people in later times. There are many different types of fairy people and creatures. The ideas of small humans with butterfly wings was largely a English Victorian era invention.

Fand - (Celtic) Wife of Manannan, god of the sea. Fand was the daughter of Aed Abrat. He was probably the son of the Dagda who has a grave in Ireland

by his name; Aed's grave. She had two siblings, Aengus and Li Ban. Her husband was Manannán mac Lir and, probably, Niamh was her daughter.

Most of the tales that she appeared in were ones of the Ulster Cycle. She appeared in the form of a bird that came from the Otherworld. The most popular tale of hers was Serglige Con Culainn, which means the Sick Bed of Cu Chulainn.

Fea - A war goddess, wife of Nuada.



Ernmas: Image Credit to Shelly Mooney

Fedelma - (Irish) Poet and prophetess in the service of Queen Medb.

Feidilíne - (Irish) A prophetess who foretold the death of Queen Maeve.

Fergus - (Irish) King of Ulster prior to Conchobar.

Fídeal - (Scotland) A water demon, Fídeal was one of those seductive maidens who, after luring their lovers into the water, dragged them under to drown.

Finchoem - (Irish) Finchoem was one of those goddesses of mythology that conceived in an "unusual" way. She swallowed a worm from a magic well, hoping she would bear a hero. She did; his name was **Conall**, a prominent stalwart in Irish heroic legend.

Findabar - (Irish) This heroine was the daughter of Queen Maeve and her consort, Aillil. Aillil opposed Findabar's choice of a husband, but Findabar married the mortal Froach anyway.

Finn MacCool or **Finn** (Irish) - A mythological warrior that appears in several Irish legends. One popular story tells of a salmon that knew all of the world's knowledge. Finn decided to eat the Salmon to gain the knowledge. As he was cooking the fish, juice squirted out and burned Finn's thumb. Finn stuck his thumb in his mouth to stop the pain and instantly learned the knowledge the salmon carried. From then on, anytime Finn sucked his thumb he gained whatever knowledge he was seeking. Leader of the Fianna.

Finvarra - King of the Irish fairies.

Fiongalla - (Irish) Legend has it that she was held in enchantment by the powerful druid Amerach. Amerach made Fiongalla vow never to sleep with a man until one brought magical yew berries, holly boughs, and marigolds from the earthly seat of power. A hero named Feargal actually managed to perform this almost impossible task and won Fiongalla.

The Fir Bolg - the fourth wave of invaders to Ireland. They had been under slavery and servitude in Greece and decided to leave and set sail for Ireland which was the home of their ancestors the **Nemedians**. Five brothers, Slainge, Rudraige, Gann, Genann and Sengann set off at daybreak sailing westwards on a south-west wind. As they approach Ireland the wind rose up and separated them into three parts: The Fir Bolg, The Fir Domnann, and the Fir Gaileon. The first were named for the leather sacks they carried, the second for the pits that were left when they dug out the earth, and the third for the darts that were their weapons. They all eventually landed on Ireland at the same time, and sent messengers to each other to meet up in the center of Ireland at Tara. Then they all assembled there and decided to divide out the land equally between the five brothers into the provinces of Mide, Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connaught. There they lived peacefully enough for many years until the coming of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the first Battle of Magh Tuiredh - 'The Plain of Props' was fought. They were conquered by the Tuatha Dé Danann but were allowed to choose a portion of Ireland to live in and Sreng chose Connaught and the western islands. They built many forts on the Arran Islands off Galway coast, Dún Aonghus, Dún Onaght and Dubh Cathair 'Black City' to name a few.

Fithir - (Irish) The younger of two daughters of the king, she was courted by a neighboring king, but her father refused permission for her to marry until her older sister was wed. Not content to wait, the neighboring king kidnapped the older sister and claimed that she had been killed. Fithir was then married off to him. Years later, while she was on a hunting trip, Fithir ran across her sister who had been held captive all those years. The shock of seeing her sister alive killed Fithir. Her sister then wept herself to death.

Flidais - (Ireland) Goddess of forests, wild creatures. A shape shifting goddess who rode in a deer-drawn chariot. The stag-mistress who roamed the earth in a chariot drawn by supernatural deer. She possessed a cow whose milk supplied thirty people a day. She called the wild creatures of the countryside her cattle. Flidais had a daughter named Fland who was a lake maiden who sat beneath her waters and lured mortals to herself, and to death.

Fodla - (Gaelic) One of the trio of goddesses who lent their name to Ireland. The other two were Banbha and Eriu. Her name translates from the Old Norse simply as "Lady". This meant more in that language than it does now in ours. The word was the feminine counterpart to 'Lord' in its fullest sense of power and authority, implying divinity. In the diverse Norse pantheon, she stood forth as an unusually diverse and strong figure. Her stories are many.



The Fir Bolg

The Fomorians - An ancient sea-faring race it is thought that they originally came from Northern Africa or Asia as they are described as having dark hair and dark skin in the original accounts. The name 'Fomor' literally means 'beneath the sea' from the Gaelic 'faoi-mhuir'. Today scholars believe that 'Mor' means 'phantom' or 'spirit' and therefore proves that the Fomorians were considered to be Gods with magical powers. Conaing is one of the first of these Fomorians to have settled and they seem to have settled on all the Northern Islands along the coast of Ireland and across to Scotland and Norway. They were reputed to have great magical powers. Some accounts have them living beneath the waves. It would seem that they split up into different tribes and that some did

decide to reside in the Underworld such as Tethra the Fomorian fairy king. They were certainly renowned Sea-farers and their ships were important to them. An account from the Second Battle of Magh Tuiredh says that their fleet stretched from Norway to the Northeast coast of Ireland. Most Fomorians are described as dark-haired but there are exceptions Elatha the father of Bres being described as having 'golden-hair and being the handsomest man in sight'. He also seems to have been less blood-thirsty and more interested in justice. He refused to go to war with his son Bres against the Tuatha Dé because it was an 'unjust cause'. According to the ancient accounts in the

Lebor Gabala Erenn the tribes of the Nemedians, Fir-Bolg, and Tuatha Dé all spoke the same tongue and were supposed to be descended from the same family, the Fomorians were a completely separate race with separate language and customs. Although they do intermarry with the Tuatha De Danann in these accounts, see The Story of the Tuatha De Danann. In some accounts the Fomorians are described as one-eyed, one armed, one legged monsters with vast magical powers. In ancient times a curse was always pronounced on someone using this one-eyed, one armed, one legged stance as it was deemed to have great magical power, Lugh uses this method to cast a curse at his enemies in the Second Battle of Magh Tuiredh.

Geofon - (Britain) She was the ocean goddess.

Goibniu - Ireland, Wales; god of blacksmiths, weapon-makers, brewing. One of a triad of Tuatha De Danann craftsmen, he was called the Great Smith. Weapons that he forged always hit their mark and made fatal wounds. The other two craftsmen were **Luchtain the wright**, and **Creidne the brazier**.

Goidel - A mythical ancestor of the Irish.

Goleuddydd - (Wales) A Welsh princess who married a prince but remained barren. When she finally became pregnant, she “lost it” and refused to live indoors. She went into the forest and hid from everyone. When her time came to give birth, however, she regained her sanity. She found herself in a swineherd’s yard, where she bore a son, was aptly named **Culhwch** (pig). This folktale is really about an ancient sow goddess of fertility.

Govannon - (Wales) God of smiths and metalworkers. The weapons he makes are deadly in their aim, the armor unfailing in its protection. Those who drink from his sacred cup need no longer fear old age and infirmity.

Grainne - (Irish) She is betrothed to Fionn MacCumhaill (Finn), but falls in love with Diarmuid (Dermot), when at their (Fionn’s and her’s) wedding feast, a sudden breeze lifts the long bangs of the handsome Diarmuid and she sees the magical love spot on his forehead (magical because any woman who sees it falls hopelessly in love with him; thus the long bangs, as he is “tired” of all the love affairs). She slips drugs into the drinks of everyone, and when they are all asleep, she demands that Diarmuid flee with her. They flee together to

the Wood of the Two Tents; so called because for their first few nights together Diarmuid refuses to sleep with Grainne no matter her entreaties. A gigantic monster accosts her and Diarmuid rescues her; Grainne sarcastically remarks that at least something was interested in touching her, and Diarmuid, humiliated, moves into her tent. The new lovers are eventually found by Fionn and his band, but Diarmuid gives Grainne a cape of invisibility in which to escape. So the lovers begin traveling to stay ahead of the vengeful Fionn. Eventually, Aengus, the god of poets, appears to Fionn to plead the lovers’ cause. Fionn’s heart is touched, and Grainne and Diarmuid are allowed to return to the company.



Goibniu/Govannon

Grian - (Irish) An early goddess of the sun. She is believed by some to be a twin of Aine, another sun goddess.

Grannus (Gaul/Roman) - In another fascinating example of Gallo-Roman syncretism, Grannus was perceived as one of the (originally) Celtic gods of healing, who was later associated with Apollo and often venerated as a composite deity of Apollo-Grannus in the Roman world. To that end, Grannus was typically linked to the hot springs and often worshiped in conjunction with **Sirona** – a Celtic goddess of healing. Unsurprisingly, his cult centers were often focused on areas with thermal and mineral springs, with the most famous one pertaining to Aquae Granni, which was later known as Aachen – the royal center of the later Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne. And it should be noted that Grannus was also regarded as a solar deity, thus symbolically linking his powers to that of the healing rays of the sun.

For anyone traveling over the long, gray and misty cold landscapes of the Northern European woodlands, a hot spring would seem like a god-send!

Gwendydd - (Wales) Also called Gandieda or Gwendolyn. She was Merlin’s sister (or twin, or lover, or all of the above, depending on which sources you believe).

Gwethyr - Wales; King of the Upper world, this god was the opposite of Gwynn ap Nudd.

Gwyar - (Wales) The wife of the god of heaven.

Gwydion - Wales; god of enchantment, illusion, magic. A son of Donn, the sea goddess, and brother to Govannon, Arianrhod, and Amaethon (god of agriculture). Known as a great wizard and bard in northern Wales. He was many skilled, like the Irish god Lugh, he was a shape shifter whose symbol was a white horse.

Gwyllion - (Wales) A spirit of the mountains. She was so ill-tempered that she always gave travelers the wrong directions.

Gwynn ap Nudd - (Wales) first known as King of the Fairies and Lord of the Underworld and master of the wild hunt. This god later ruled over the Plant Annwn, subterranean fairies.

In Dagda or Daghdha - (Irish) He is the leader of the gods. He has a secret affair with Boann which results in the birth of Oenghus.

Latis - (Britain) Goddess associated with water.

Lêr (Llŷr) - (Wales) God of the sea.

Lleu - (Wales) The god who is the Welsh equivalent of the Irish Lugh. He was pictured as young, strong, radiant with hair of gold, master of all arts, skills and crafts. Also see Lleu Llaw Gyffes.

Llew Llaw Gyffes - (Wales) Son of Arianrhod and raised by his uncle Gwydion. A curse prohibited him from having an earthly wife, so his uncles made him one out of flowers and named her Blodeuwedd. She and her lover, Gronw Pebr, plotted Llew's death, but because of Llew's divine origins, the death simply became an annual duel between the two men. His symbol is a white stag, and is celebrated on August 1, the Celtic ceremony of Lunasa. Another name for **Lugh**.

Llud Llaw Ereint - Wales; God of harpers, healing, poets, smiths, sorcerers, and waters.

Luchtaine - (Celtic) He was the god of wheel making.

Llŷr - Ireland, Wales; god of sea and water, may have also ruled the underworld. The father of Manawydan, Bran the Blessed, and Branwen.

Lugh - (Lugus in Gaul) 1. (Celtic) A sun god of all crafts and arts, healing, journeys, prophecy. Son of Cian, a Tuatha De Danann. Of legend, his skills were without end; in Ireland he was associated with ravens; and a white stag as his symbol in Wales. He had a magic spear and otherworldly hounds. His sacred symbol was a spear. He was always accompanied by two ravens. Sometimes he is shown as one-eyed. Predecessor of the Germanic Wotan and the Norse Odin.

2. (Irish) The sun god. Also known as Lugh of the Long Arm. He killed his grandfather, Balor, during a battle in which the new order of gods and goddesses took over from the primal gods. He defeated his enemies with a magic spear. Also known as Lug Samildanach or Lug. His festival was Lughnassadh, or Lunasa - August 1. Variants: **Llew**, **Lug**, **Lugus**, **Lugh Lamhfada** (of the long arm), **Lug Samildanach** (much skilled).

Though rarely mentioned in inscriptions, Lugus or Lugus (as known in Gaul) or his cognates Lugh Lámhfhada (Lugh of the Long Arm) in Gaelic Irish and Lleu Llaw Gyffes (Lleu of the Skillful Hand) in Welsh, was an important deity among the Celtic gods and goddesses. Often revered as the resplendent sun god, Lugus or Lugh was also perceived as a dashing (and often youthful) warrior responsible for slaying Balor – the one-eyed chief of the Formorii, the old adversaries of the Tuatha Dé Danann. The heroic act achieved by a precise slingshot into Balor's eye heralded the ascendancy of the Tuatha Dé Danann as the dominant tribe of gods in Ireland (over the Formorii, who were portrayed with darker characteristics).

Interestingly enough, in spite of being the champion of the Tuath Dé,

in the narrative sense, Lugh himself descended from the one-eyed (or one-limbed) Formorii, with Balor being his maternal grandfather.

Also known as the Samildánach (Skilled in All the Arts), Lugh (or Lug) was additionally associated with thunderstorms, ravens, and even lynxes. And befitting his status as one of the preeminent Celtic gods, he was often portrayed with his armor, helmet and invincible spear Gae Assail. In the mythical narrative, Lugh was perceived as the divine father of Cú Chulainn, the most famous of Irish heroes, whose character and feats bore similarities to both Greek Heracles (Hercules) and Persian Rostam.

As for history, due to the Roman cultural trait of interpretatio Romana, Lugus was possibly perceived as the Gallic equivalent of Roman god Mercury –



Lugh

and as such, the ancient settlement of Lugdunum (modern Lyon) had its place-name derived from the Celtic god – meaning ‘fort of Lugus’. Quite intriguingly, the very term ‘leprechaun’ is also possibly derived from Luchorpain or ‘little stopping Lugh’ – a blanket term used for the fairy in Gaelic.

Mabon - (Celtic) The Son of Light (akin to the Roman Apollo). He was the god of liberation, harmony, music and unity. Divine child from the divine mother **Modron**.

Mider - Gaelic god of the Underworld.

Mac Da Tho - (Irish) A god of the otherworld.

Macha - (Irish) The third of the three war goddesses known as the **Morrigan**. Macha feeds on the heads of slain enemies. Goddess of cunning, death, sheer physical force, war; protectress in both battle and peace. Known as Crow, Queen of Phantoms, and the Mother of Life and Death, she was honored at Lunasa. Variants: **Mania**, **Mana**, **Mene**, **Minne**. Macha is actually synonymous with Morrigan, but she was also cognate with **Maev**, **Medb** and **Morgan Le Fay** (three mortals in three different time periods).

Manannan mac Lir - (May-nah-naun) Ireland, Wales; a shape shifting god of the sea, magic, navigators, commerce, storms, rebirth, weather. The chief Irish sea god whose special retreat was the Isle of Man. In Wales his name was Manawydan ap Llyr. He had several magical weapons and a suit of armor that made him invisible; and his swine kept the Tuatha De Danann from aging. Also named **Barinthus**.

Margawse - Wales, Britain; originally a Mother Goddess, she was transformed in the later Arthurian sagas.

Math ap Mathonwy - Wales; legend has him as a king who was also a god of enchantment and magic.

Matrona - (Celtic) The river Marne is named after her. A local river goddess.

Matronae - A name given to the tree facets of the goddess mother figure, the maiden, the mother and the crone.

Medb - (Irish) Queen of Connacht, her name means “she who intoxicates”. A goddess of war. Where the Morrigan use magic in battle, Medb wields a weapon herself. The sight of Medb blinds enemies, and she runs faster than the fastest horse.

Merlin - Wales, Britain; god of all forms of magic and prophecy, healing, illusion, the arts. Originally an ancient Welsh Druid, priest of the fair religion, and great magician. He was transformed in the later Arthurian sagas. Tradition says he learned his powerful magic from the Goddess in her forms of Morgan, Viviane, Nimue, and Lady of the Lake. Legend says he now lies sleeping in a hidden crystal cave. Variants: **Merddin**, **Myrddin**.



Midir - god of the Underworld/Annwyn; He is the son of Dagda and Morrigan, and (according to some sources) the father of Anpao and Cernunnos. He is the brother of Andraste, Bodb Derg, Brigit, Ohgma, and Rhiannon. Midir was not an underworld god like Hades; he was ruler of the faeries, elves and leprechauns that lived there; they were distant relatives. He was sort of the elf king.

Milé - The ancestor of the Gaels.

The Milesians - Landed in the South-West of Ireland from Mediterranean Europe on the feast of Bealtaine and their poet Amairgin is the first to put his foot on Irish soil. He says a poem of thanks and blessing. The Milesians are greeted with a magical army which Ériu has conjured up from the sods of the earth but this does not phase them as they perceive it to be an illusion and their bards sing incantations which dissipates the magical army. Then Ériu changing tactics decides to welcome them, Amairgin accepts the welcome but Donn is very rude and condescending. For this Ériu blesses Amairgin and his kin and says they will prosper in Ireland but she says there will be no future for Donn and his kin. Amairgin also promises that the land will be named after Ériu forever. They also meet with Fodla and Banbha the sisters of Ériu, and Amairgin promises to them that their names will be remembered as one of the names of Ireland. They travel to Tara where they meet with the three kings of Ireland: Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht and Mac Gréine, and agree to retreat for a period of three days beyond the ninth wave. However when they sought to land again the Tuatha Dé Dann had created a magical wind which drove their ships from the shore. In the ensuing magical storm the ship of Donn is wrecked and all her crew is drowned. So the prophecy of Ériu is fulfilled. Amairgin sings an

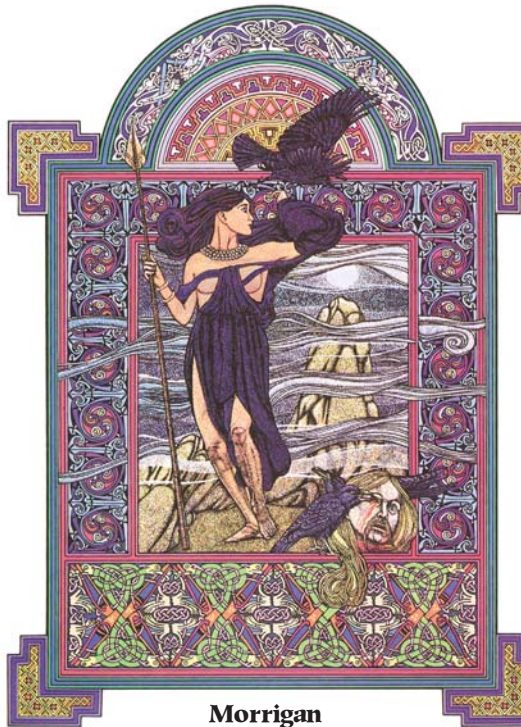
incantation over the waves and calms them and the Milesians are able to land. They fight a battle with the Tuatha Dé Dann at Teltown, Co. Meath (named after Tailtiu foster-mother of Lugh) and the Tuatha Dé are finally defeated it is said because iron weapons were used against them. The Tuatha Dé still used their magic powers against The Gaels and deprived them of their corn and milk and so it was decided that the Milesians should rule the upper half of Ireland and that the Tuatha Dé Danann should retreat underground into the Otherworld and rule there.

Modron - (Wales) Goddess whose name means “divine mother”. Sacred mother, divine mother’s name left from earlier paleolithic times. Further, the Divine Ancestress of the Celtic Boii tribe was known as Boann, and linked with the River Boyne in Ireland. Sequanna, a goddess of France, became linked with the River Shannon of Ireland. Linking their goddesses with various bodies of water in turn appears to have linked the Celtic reverence for the goddess as The Great Mare, for the white breakers of the ocean were described in Irish legend as the white mane of the Morrigan’s head. If we ponder how the sea and horse draw a parallel in the Celts’ mind, we may see a connection in the double use of the word mare. It means sea in Latin and Russian, and is the root of the English word ‘marine’. At the same time it was used to designate a female horse. Both meanings of mare may have been derived from the same initial Indo-European source word, possibly the Sanskrit ‘mah’ meaning mighty. This word may also be the foundation of the goddess names: Morrigan and Morgan--the roots ‘gan’, ‘gin’, and ‘gen’ meaning birth, as in genesis and begin. This interesting connection between the two words may suggest that the origin of the Pantheon was not in Ireland itself, but came from across the sea, and that the symbol of the first God, Dana, may very well have been that of a horse. As an aspect of the Irish goddess worth noting is their wonderful and magical ability to shape-change, not only as creatures, but also switching from an ugly Hag-state to that of a beautiful woman. The Morrigan becomes an eel, a wolf, a heifer, a raven, and several other diverse images of a mortal woman. Macha and the Cailleach Bera take the form of horses, and the Badb takes the form of Royston crows, and also alternating between Hag-state and a young woman. In addition to these powers, there is the martial prowess of Celtic Goddesses, who often acted as ambassadors in battles and rivalries between the Celtic tribes, sitting in on

peace councils when disputes were discussed. There is the less documented image of the goddess among the Celts as the figure of the Goddess of Victory, as well as the mother of some of the gods, such as Tailtiu, the step-mother of Lugh, and the goddesses of healing, poetry, and fate.

Mogons - (Britain) His name means “great one”.

Mor - (Irish) Celtic goddess of the sea and sun. She is identified with the setting sun and is depicted as sitting on a throne.



Morrigan

Morgen or Morgana - (Britain) Celtic goddess of the sea, fate, death and rebirth. (Sea-sprites in Brittany are still called “morgans”). She was a great healer and shape shifter. Supposedly King Arthur resides with her in Avalon as he heals. She evolved into the wicked **Morgan Le Fay**, an evil sorceress, in later versions of the King Arthur legend.

Morrigan or Morrígú - (Celtic) High Queen and goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Known as Great Queen, Supreme War Goddess, Queen of Phantoms, and Specter Queen, she kept company with Fea (hateful), Badb (fury), and Macha (battle). She was a trinity; Macha, Badb, and Neman (Nemain or Nemhain), all three bloodthirsty and feared by the enemies of the Tuatha Dé Danann. As Macha she was goddess of war and fertility who could take the shape of a crow or a raven. As Badb (Nechtán) she was the water-god whose sacred well was a source of knowledge. As **Nemain** she was the goddess of war and battle. Variants: **Morrighu, Morrighan, Morgan.**

She was perceived as a mysterious and rather ominous female deity among the Irish Celtic gods and goddesses, associated with both war and fate. In modern Irish, her name Mór-Ríoghain roughly translates to the ‘phantom queen’. Befitting this cryptic epithet, in the mythical narrative, Morrigan was capable of shape shifting (who usually transformed into a crow – the badb) and foretelling doom, while also inciting men into a war frenzy. On the other hand, in contrast to these seemingly chaotic and ‘war-mongering’ attributes, Morrigan was possibly also venerated as a Celtic goddess of sovereignty who acted as the symbolic guardian of the land and its people. Morrigan was often associated with other warlike Celtic gods like Macha, Badb, and Nemain, and thus sometimes she was pre-

sented as a composite figure of the trinity (who were also collectively portrayed as a group of beautiful women having the ability to transform into balefully screeching crows over battlefields). And talking of the mythical narrative, Morrigan was romantically linked with the aforementioned Dagda (and had a tryst with the chieftain of gods on Samhain). Consequently, she magically aided him against the war with the Fomorí. On the other hand, a nascent sinister aspect of Morrigan is revealed when she settles in triumph on the shoulder of the dying hero Cú Chulainn – after the hero unknowingly wounded the goddess in her shape shifted form. In essence, her characterizations and prophetic powers are often associated with the premonitions of a warrior's violent death, thus suggesting a link to the folkloric Banshees – derived from bean sidhe ('woman of the fairies').

Myrddin - British god akin to Zeus, after whom Britain was once named (Clas Myrddin). Married to Elen Lwyddawg.

Nantosuelta - (Gaul) Goddess of nature; the wife of Sucellus.

Naoise - Romantically linked to Deirdre. Son of Uisneach.

Nehalennia - (Gaul) Goddess of the sea.

Nantosuelta - (Gaul) Goddess of nature; the wife of Sucellus.

Neit - (Ireland) god of battle. Neit was another god that the family of the Tuatha de Danann introduces to us. He was the grandfather of Balor of the Poisoned Eye; Balor was Lugh's grandfather. Neit was a member of the Tuatha de Danann; however, his grandson was one of the Fomorians. But, that was not surprising, as the same applies to Balor's grandson, Lugh who was from the Tuatha de Danann. Irish mythology can be confusing. Neit was also the uncle of the Dagda and he gave him his Stonehouse. This place now is what people refer to as the grave of Aed, who was son of the Dagda.

Sometimes, mythology refers to the wife of Neit as Nemain, another goddess of the Tuatha de Danann. However, it sometimes claims that Badb was his real wife. Some people believe that Badb makes more sense as the wife of Neit. That was because she was the goddess of War, just like him. People usually confuse her with Morrigan as well as Macha. The Three of

them bear the same depiction in Irish mythology. They were goddesses of war and appeared in the form of crows to manipulate the battles according to their favor. Maybe, that is why the mythology has what is called the Triple Goddesses. It describes the similar abilities of the three goddesses despite being different characters.

Nemain (Irish) - The modern spelling of her name is usually Neamhain or Neamhan. She was a goddess that interfered with battles and controlled the results of the battle according to her favor. The Irish mythology seems to always make things confusing. But, this description makes Nemain one of the goddesses of war. It means she was part of the trio of goddesses that make up

the Morrigan. However, most of the sources claim the triple goddesses were actually Macha, the Morrigan, and Badb. The only explanation that would make sense at the moment, that one of them was Nemain. In other words, Nemain was one of the three goddesses; however, she had more than one name depending on the source.

The Nemedians - the third wave of Invaders to Ireland. The Nemed traveled from Scythia near Greece. He traveled towards the right from the mountains of Ural until he came to the Ocean of the North then he turned left towards Europe until he came to Ireland with thirty four ships and thirty persons in each one of them. As he approached Ireland he was attacked by the Fomorians who had already laid claim to

the Northern Islands around Ireland. Nemed won three battles over them and sent them back to their homes. After they had settled on the northern region of Ireland, Nemed died of a sickness. Then the Fomorians took their revenge and enslaved the people of Nemed and oppressed them greatly. Conaing the Fomorian king had many ships at Tory Island in the north. He forced great tribute upon the children of Nemed, to the extent that two-thirds of their children, and of their corn, and of the milch cows of their region were taken by the Fomorians every year at the feast of Samhain. Then the Fomorians put even more pressure on the people of Nemed, they demanded of every household three full measures of the cream of the milk, of the flour of the wheat, and of butter, to be brought to Conaing's Tower on Tory Island. Liagh the female steward of the Fomorians, enforced this tax throughout Ireland. This was the



Neit or Nemain - Irish War Goddess

final straw for the men of Nemed. Three warriors, sons of Nemed, raised an army and traversed the waters and took Conaing's Tower and killed Conaing. But Morc, the Fomorian, brought reinforcements from Africa to Tory Island and struck back at the sons of Nemed so that they conceded defeat and decided to fare away from Ireland and back towards the land of their ancestors in the east. Most of them fled Ireland and whoever was left was in servitude to the Fomorians until the coming of the Fir Bolg two hundred and seventeen years afterwards. It is interesting that they came from Scythia as this was a small country which was surrounded by hostile forces in ancient times they were constantly at war with the Greeks and their women were not allowed to marry until they had killed a man in battle. Children of both sexes were trained in the arts of war from the age of seven. It is supposed that the legends of the Amazonian Women came from contacts with the Scythians who were not a patriarchal culture. Women were held in equal esteem with men, it is interesting as the Celtic peoples were also a non-patriarchal culture in contrast to the Greek and later the Roman Cultures in the ancient world.

Nemetoma - A British war goddess.

Nemon - A Gaelic war goddess.

Niamh - (Ireland) this goddess was called Beauty and Brightness and helped heroes at death. Possible Lady of the Lake in Arthurian Legends. The mythology professes that Niamh was the daughter of Manannán mac Lir, god of the Sea. Manannan was a member of the Tuatha de Danann, so Niamh was, at least, half-Tuatha de Danann. Her name was pronounced as Niaf. She was a queen of Tir na nOg; there were many other queens along with her. While the sources are not definite about this fact, some claim that Fand was her mother.

Nodens - (Britain) God of healing, akin to the Irish god Nuadu.

Nuada - (Noo-ada) Ireland, Wales; god of harpers, healing, historians, magic, poets, warfare, writing. King of the Tuatha De Danann at one time, he had to step down when he lost his arm in battle; it was replaced by a silver one. Variants: **Lud**, **Lludd**, **Llaw**, **Ereint**, **Nudd**, **Nodens**. Also known as **the Silver Arm** or the **Silver Handed**.

Oberon - (Britain) King of the elves.

Oenghus mac Oc or **Angus** - (Irish) He is the son of Daghdha and Boann, conceived and born in the same day through his fathers magic. The parallel in Scottish lore, Angus the Ever Young features in the story "The Coming of Angus and Bride". In this story, Angus clearly represents the sun, returning to Scotland again and again to take his crown as the king of summer. He is the god of fatal love (akin to Cupid). Angus' kisses turn into singing birds, and the music he plays draws all who hear it to his side.

Ogmios (Ogma in Ireland) - (Gaul/Celtic) God of eloquence, inspiration, language, magic, music, physical strength, poets, writers. Invented the Ogam script alphabet and carried a huge club similar to Hercules'. Variants: **Oghma**, **Ogmios**, **Grianaineach** (sun face), **Cermait** (honey-mouthed).

In most ancient mythical narratives, we rarely come across divine entities that are solely associated with language. Well, Ogmios, as one of the ancient Celtic gods, goes against this 'trend' since he was simply considered as the god of eloquence. 2nd century Hellenized Syrian satirist and rhetorician Lucian of Samosata mentioned how Ogmios was like the older version of Hercules in appearance, with both wearing lion skins and carrying clubs and bows. However, Ogmios does one better on the 'bling' factor by having long chains (made of amber and gold) attached to his tongue (inside his smiling mouth) that connect him with his group of followers. Essentially, the visual scope symbolically represented how the Celtic god had the power of eloquence and persuasion to bind his followers to him.

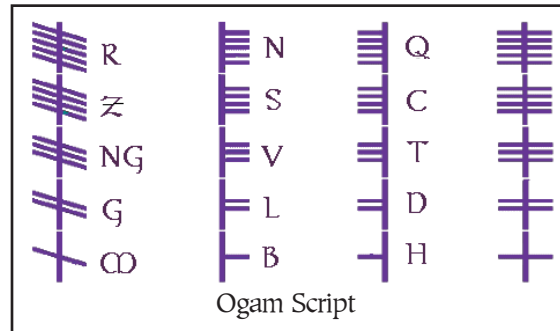
Ogmios' later Irish equivalent Ogma also plays a crucial role in the Gaelic myths. Regarded as the son of Dagda, and thus a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Ogma is credited as being the inventor of Ogham – the earliest system of writing in Ireland. Given the epithet of the 'Lord of Knowledge', Ogma was also portrayed as a capable warrior who went to slay the Fomorian king Indech and claim a magical sword that could recount his heroic deeds. In another version, he dies along with his enemy Indech in single combat.

Ogyrvran - British god of the Underworld.

Onagh - A queen of the Irish fairies.

Oisin - (Irish) Son of Finn.

Partholon, Partholan or **Parlan** - (Irish) The leader of the first people (called Partholonians) to colonize Ireland after the flood. His people landed



in Ireland in the year 1484 BC, Partholon died in 1454 BC, and the entire colony was wiped out by plague 300 years later in 1184 BC, according to some legends. In others Partholon and his followers arrived in about 2679 BC. The Partholonians stayed 600 years; most died of the plague at that time. Partholon (and Nemed, a succeeding peoples) had come in ships "from other worlds." The race of Partholon found Ireland a barren plain. But during the 300 years of their reign the earth blossomed. For they not only constructed buildings, planted crops, hunted and fished, they even cooked for the first time the food that they ate.

Pwyll - Wales; god of cunning and virtue. Called Pwyll pen Annwn (Pwyll, head of Annwn) because he replaced Gwynn ap Nudd as ruler of the underworld at one time. In Ireland he was king of a land which had a magic "kettle of plenty".

Rhiannon - (Wales) Believed to be the Welsh counterpart of Gaulish horse goddess **Epona**. Her son, Pryderi, succeeded his father Pwyll as the ruler of Dyfed and of the otherworld. Rhiannon is the goddess of horses, and is the daughter of Dagda and Morrigan, and the sister of Andraste, Bodb, Brigit, Mider, and Oghma.

Rigosamos - A war god worshiped in Britain.

Rosmerta - (Gaul) Goddess who was the native consort of the Roman Mercury; her name means "great provider".

Sadb - Daughter of Bobd the Red, and mother of Ossian.

Scathach - (Scau-ahch) Ireland, Scotland; goddess of healing, magic, martial arts, prophecy. Called the Shadowy One, She Who Strikes Fear, and the Dark Goddess, she was a warrior woman and prophetess who lived in Albion, possibly on the Isle of Skye, and taught martial arts to Celtic warriors. Variants: **Scota**, **Scatha**, **Scath**.

Sequona - (Celtic) The river Seine is named after her.

The **Shamrock** Symbol - (Irish) The three green leaves of the Shamrock is more than the unofficial symbol of Ireland and one of the marshmallows in Lucky Charms. The Shamrock has held meaning to most of Ireland's historic

cultures. The Druids believed the Shamrock was a sacred plant that could ward off evil. The Celts believed the Shamrock had mystical properties due to the plant's three heart-shaped leaves. The Celts believed three was a sacred number. Some Christians also believed the Shamrock had special meaning- the three leaves representing the Holy Trinity.

Sidhe or Fairies - Sidhe is the collective term for Irish fairies, so that includes Leprechauns. For a millennium, they've been said to deliver Ireland both fortune and disaster, variously protecting it from invasion or cursing it with famines and plagues. These acts are said to have been committed by an invisible, supernatural creature that exists alongside the Irish people.

There are thousands of so-called "fairy forts" across Ireland, some of which are more than 1,500 years old. In Irish mythology, these forts are viewed as the gateway between the human world and the underworld, where the Sidhe reside. This mythology births more Fairy Tales than can be outlined here.

Sirona - (Gaul) Another goddess of healing.

Souconna - (Celtic) The river Sône is named after her.

Sreng - A famous warrior of the Fir Bolgs.

Sualtam - The mortal father of Cuchulainn.

Sucellus - (Gaul) God of agriculture and forests, and of alcoholic beverages (he is often shown carrying a beer barrel suspended from a pole), and a hammer god. His consort is Nantosvelta.

Sulis or Sulevia - (Celtic) Goddess of healing (she presided over sacred, healing springs). She was called Brigantia by the Britons; and later Saint Brigid (after Christianity). She is akin to the Roman goddess Minerva.

Tailtiu - The Gaelic gods defeated by the Milesians.

Taliesin - Wales; god of magic, music, poetry, wisdom, writing. Known as Prince of Song, Chief of the Bards of the West, and Patron of Druids, he was a great magician, bard, and shape shifter who gained his knowledge from the goddess Cerridwen directly.



Artist rendering of a Sidhe Mound

Taranis - (Gaul) God whose name means “thunderer”. Taranis is the god of the wheel, associated with forces of change. In other sources he was just a name the Celts gave to Zeus when the Romans invade Briton. **Taranis, Taranos, Taranus** [W, Bret. taran, thunder]. One of the three principal divinities, along with Esus and Teutates, of Gaul and Britain, according to the Roman poet Lucan (1st cent. AD) in his *Pharsalia*, on the subject of Julius Caesar’s conquest 100 years earlier. While each of the deities was associated with human sacrifice, according to Lucan, the cult of Taranis was crueller than that of the Scythian Diana; victims could be burned alive in wooden (wicker man) vessels, as Taranis is associated with fire, be it the fire of the sky or the fire of the air.. Speculation on the death of the 4th-cent. BC man found in Lindow bog in 1984 has suggested that he may have been sacrificed to either Taranis or Teutates. A 9th-century commentary on Lucan describes Taranis as ‘master of war’ and links him to Jupiter. Other commentators link Taranis to the Roman **Dis Pater** and to the British **Etharun** and **Etirun**.

Archaeological evidence does not, however, support Lucan’s contentions. The name of Taranis survives on only seven altars, and although they range from Britain to the Balkans, their size and implied wealth does not match that of gods like Gaulish Mercury, whose worship is much more widespread.

In the visual scale, the god was portrayed with a lightning bolt, thus bearing more similarity to Zeus. However, literally, on the other hand, Taranis was also depicted with a solar wheel – one of the most prevalent symbols found on Celtic artifacts, which suggests his eminence in the related pantheon. In any case, interestingly enough, the very name Taranis (as mentioned by Lucan) is unattested when it comes to historical inscriptions, though related forms like Tanarus and **Taranucno-** have been identified by archaeologists. And talking of archaeology, the cult of Taranis probably carried and venerated small votive wheels known as Rouelles that symbolized the solar shape.

Totem Animals - Animals and animal power were seen as symbols by the early Celts. All animals were associated with attributes and expertise in the mythos. Animals and animal forms are often associated with gods not only in the Celtic world but in all religious myth. It is most likely a strong indication of the archetypes that we as human beings derived from our neolithic past. Some of the animals often mentioned and prominent in animal totems are:

Some examples: The boar or pig, a symbol of valor and unstoppable charge, fertility and an animal that acts as a bridge between the human world and the underworld. The Bear, a symbol of power and intelligence. The Celtic word for bear is ‘artos’, which is used in more than 200 places as a bases of the name and most likely formed the bases for the goddess Artemis in Greece. The Bull, an animal featured strongly in many myths, is a symbol of fertility, strength and prophecy. The Serpent is a symbol of the underworld, birth and sexuality. The Stag is potent symbol of nature, stamina, the god Cerrunos and lordship. The Hare, a symbol of speed, stealth and witchcraft.



Toutatis - (Gaelic/Celtic) From the Gaelic scope, we move on to ancient Gaul and their Celtic gods. To that end, in our modern context, Toutatis is made famous by the Asterix comics catchphrase ‘By Toutatis!’. And while not much is known about the mythological scope, Toutatis (or **Teutates**) was probably quite an important Celtic deity, with his very name roughly translating to ‘**God of the People**’. In essence, he was possibly perceived as a crucial guardian entity who took up the role of the tribe protector, and thus his inscribed name (**TOT**) has been found in quite a few ancient artifacts in both Roman-Britain and Gaul.

The first century Roman poet Lucan mentioned Teutates as one of the three major Celtic gods (along with **Esus** and **Taranis**), while by the aforementioned trait of interpretatio Romana, Toutatis was seen the equivalent of both Mars and Mercury. On the macabre side of affairs, later Roman commentators mentioned how victims were sacrificed in the god’s name by plunging their head into a vat of unknown liquid (possibly ale). Interestingly enough, Toutatis possibly also had his Irish counterpart in the form of **Tuathal Techtmar**, the legendary conqueror of Ireland – whose name originally referred to the eponymous deity **Teuto-valos** (‘Ruler of people’).

Three Faced Deities - “Triplism, ie, triple faces, triple heads, three horned bulls (Tarvos Trigaranus), triskeles (3 armed spirals) etc are a recurrent feature of Celtic spirituality and art, a legacy from earlier Indo-European traditions”.

Triplism reflects a way of “expressing the divine rather than presentation of specific god-types. Triads or triple beings are ubiquitous in the Welsh and Irish mythic imagery” (examples are the battle-furies, Macha, and Brigit). The Morrígan also appears sometimes as one being, and at other times as three

sisters, as do the three Irish goddesses of sovereignty, Ériu, Fódla and Banba. "The religious iconographic repertoire of Gaul, southern Germania and Britain during the Roman period includes a wide range of triple forms: the most common triadic depiction is that of the triple mother goddess the **Matronae**. The Christian concept of the father, the son and the holy ghost, is not an inaccurate perception of the three faces of god.

Triple Goddess - Celtic goddesses are frequently shown or described in triple form. They are identified as Maiden, Mother and Crone or virginity, fertility and death. A summation of all cycles of beginning, increasing and death. Also referred to as the **Matronae**.

The Tuatha Dé Danann - The mythical race of people (descended from the goddess Danu) responsible for all the tales of fairies that Ireland is famous for telling. They were said to be adept in magic and, because of this, were banished from heaven. They possessed four talismans of great power: the 'stone of Fal' which shrieked under the true heir to the throne; the spear of Lug which made victory certain; the sword of Nuadhu which slays all enemies; and the ever full cauldron of Daghdha from which no man ever goes away hungry. They came to Ireland where they were forced to go into hiding when that country was invaded by the Milesians, forerunners of today's Irish.

This race was also known to believe in Goddess Danu. She was sometimes referred to as the mother. The Tuatha de Danann brought fascinating skills and wisdom to Ireland when they arrived there. They gained those skills from four wise men who resided in the four cities; one in each. Senias was the wise man who resided in Murias; Morias in Falias; Urias in Gorias; and Arias in Finias. Over and beyond, the Tuatha de Danann brought four treasures from the four cities; treasures that were beneficial to Ireland. Later, we will discuss the four treasures in details shortly.

Tylwyth Teg - Collective name for the Welsh fairies.

Vitiris - (Britain) God of wisdom.

White Lady - (All Celtic countries) The goddess of death and destruction. Called the Dryad of Death and Queen of the Dead, this goddess was a Crone aspect of the Goddess.

Celtic History and Legends

Story of the Tuatha Dé Danann

Tuatha de Danann were a magical race with supernatural powers. They represented ancient Ireland, for they were the folks who lived in Pre-Christian Ireland for centuries. Before their unexplained disappearance, they stayed in Ireland for around four thousand years. There have been more than a few claims regarding their disappearance; however, the truth remains unraveled.

The Tuatha Dé Danann (which means the people of Danu) arrived in Ireland bearing with them their stone of destiny called the Lia Fail which they placed on the mound of Tara and ever after the rightful kings of Ireland were chosen when it called out. They also brought the spear of Lugh which ensured victory to whoever wielded it, The Sword of Nuada from whom none could escape and the Cauldron of the Dagda from which none would go unsatisfied.

It remains ambiguous how the Tuatha de Danann arrived in Ireland. Some sources claim that those people arrived through flying in the air and landing there. While traveling in the air, they were in the form of mist or fog. Other sources claim they arrived on dark clouds. The latter escorted people to believe they came from heaven rather than from earth. Surprisingly, some people professed that the race was actually extraterrestrial aliens. In ancient Greece, there were texts that suspect it was meant for the Tuatha de Dannan. The text included the following "...in ancient Greece... there lived a race of nomads known as the Pelasgians.



The Tuatha Dé Danann as depicted in John Duncan's Riders of the Sidhe

Tribal in nature, they were seafarers who claimed to be born from the teeth of the Cosmic Snake Ophion, and the Great Goddess Danu.” It reveals that the Tuatha de Danann came from Greece. They tried to destroy the rulers of Greece, the Pelasgians, at that time and take over, but their attempts failed. They then had to leave for Denmark before heading to Ireland.

The only rational opinion regarding how they reached Ireland was through ships and reached the shores of Ireland. One more claim was mixing between two of the claims. It states that the smoke or that fog in the air was actually the evidence where their ships burned.

Seemingly, opinions regarding the origin do not cease, making things more shadowy and shrouded in mystery. Sources have it that the Tuatha de Danann come from the north while others claim they come from the west. There was even a whole different theory that claimed they came from Denmark. Traditions were the reason that this theory showed up. Those traditions admitted that the Tuatha de Dannan lived in Lochlonn; a place that has been related to Denmark. And before Denmark, they stayed in Achaia which was suspected to be their real country. After Denmark, they moved to the northern side of Scotland for seven years. They stayed in Lardahar and Dobhar and particular before moving to Ireland.

There is a story that they came to Ireland in flying ships but could not land as the Fomorians had set up a great protective field that they could not enter. So they had to circle Ireland nine times before finding a hole in the field and setting down on Sliabh an Iarainn (The Iron Mountain) in Co. Leitrim. They clashed with the Fir Bolg (the men of the bags or pot-bellied ones) who they defeated at the first battle of Magh Tuiredh (Moytura) and routed towards the West of Ireland where they allowed them to stay. After defeating the Fir-Bolg they were challenged by the Fomorians and had to fight another battle this time in Roscommon, which

became known as the second battle of Magh Tuiredh, where they defeated the great Fomorian warrior Balor, and so laid undisputed claim to the land.

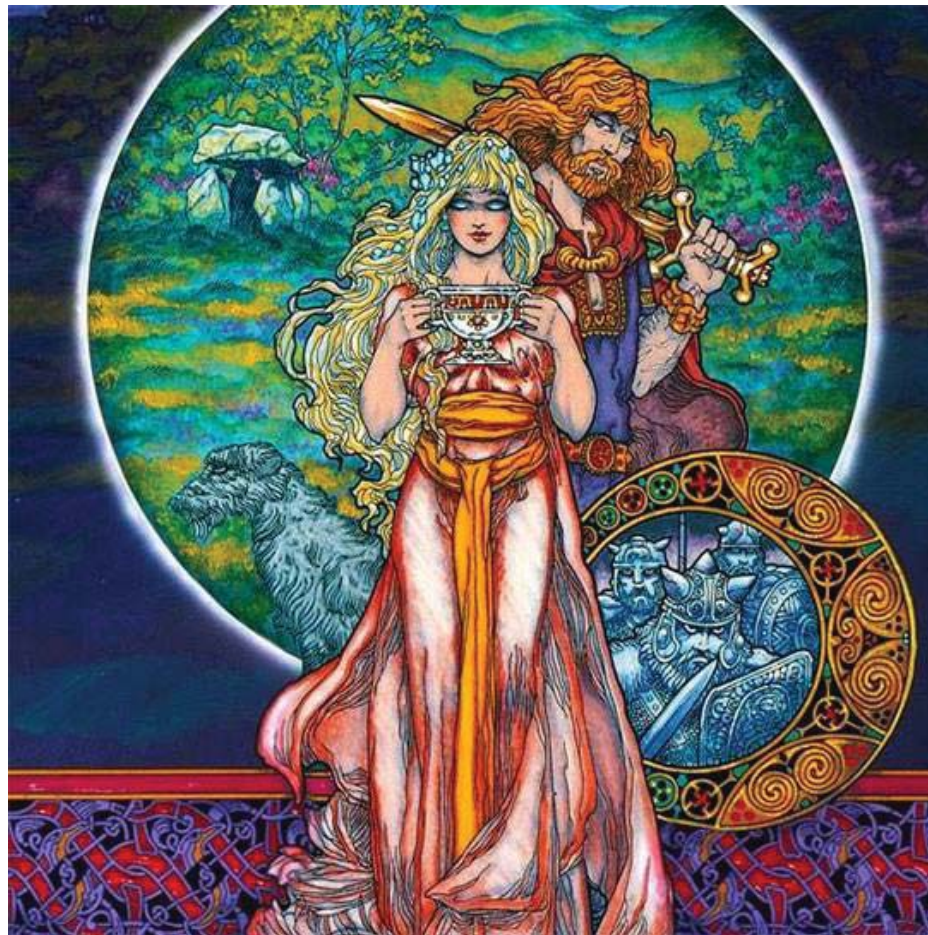
They prospered under their two great heroes Nuada of the Silver Arm and Lugh of the Long Arm. They were eventually defeated by the Milesians at Teltown. As they were a magical people they decided to go underground into another dimension of space and time the entrances to which are at many sites

around Ireland; one of the most famous being Brugh na Boinne (Newgrange). It was reputed that only iron weapons could injure them. They became like gods to the later Celtic people and were worshiped as such. They became known as the people of the Sidhe (mounds) and there are many fairy mounds in existence in Ireland today.

Significant Members of the Race

Definitely, each of the races had its own leader and king. Nuada was the king of the Tuatha de Dannan. Over and beyond, there were also chiefs where each of them had a task or vocation to handle. They all played significant roles among their folks.

Those chiefs included Credenus; the one who responsible for crafting; Neit, the god of battles; and Diancecht was the healer. There were many more than that. Goibniu was the Smith; Badb, the goddess of battles; Morrighu was the Crow of Battle, and Macha was the nourisher. Lastly, there was Ogma; he was Nuada's brother and he was responsible for teaching writing.



The Tuatha Dé Danann as depicted by Jim Fitzpatrick

Fighting Against the Firbolgs

When they first snaked into Ireland, the Firbolgs were the rulers by that time. The march of the Tuatha de Danann surprised them, escorting to a failure in resisting them. Both races fought over the rule of Ireland. Legends have it that their first battle took place near the Shore of Lough Corrib on the Plain of Moyturey. Eventually, victory was on the side of Tuatha de Danann; they won the battle and took over Ireland. The latter happened after defeating and

slaughtering the Firbolgs. Their king died in the battle and they had to choose another leader. Eventually, the choice fell on Sreng; he was the new leader of the Firbolgs.

While some sources claim the overthrowing of the Firbolgs, others seem to have a different opinion. The History of Ireland, Ancient and Modern was a book that had a manuscript that states a distinct version of the events. It states that the battle did not end with the defeat of the Firbolgs; however, both races agreed to compromise. They both decided to split Ireland between them; however, the Tuatha de Danann shall have the greater portion. As a result, the Firbolgs only took Connaught while the rest was accounted to the Tuath.

Nuada had to Step Aside

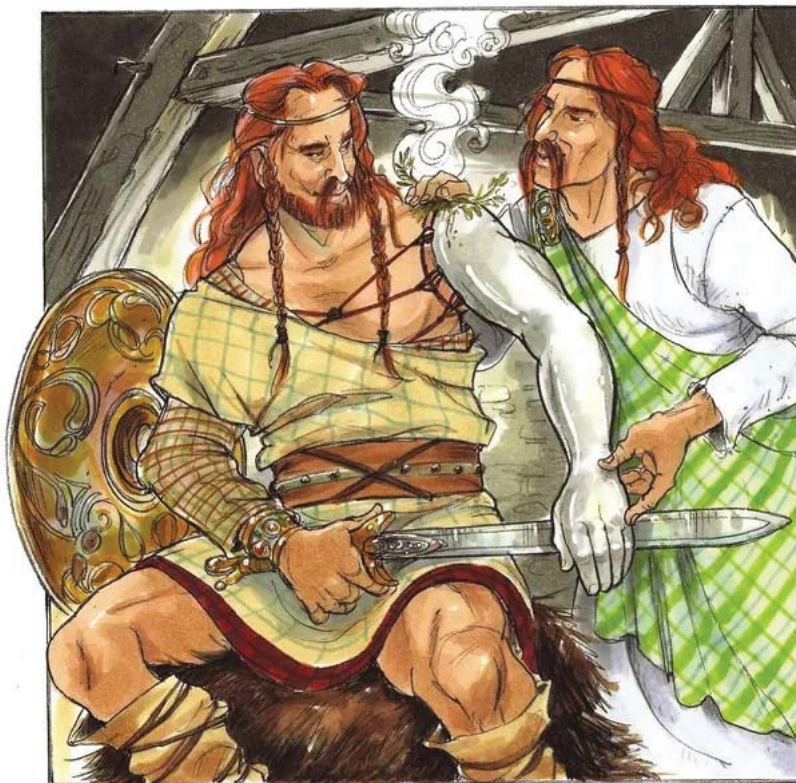
Before the Tuatha de Danann arrived in Ireland, Nuada was their king. He remained the king of the Tuatha de Danann for about seven years. After those years, they entered Ireland and fought the Firbolg. Before fighting the Firbolg, Nuada asked if they could take a portion of the Island for the Tuatha de Danann. However, the king of the Firbolg refused and they both prepared for the upcoming war. As we previously mentioned, that was the Battle of Mag Tuired where the Tuatha de Danann won. Unfortunately, Nuada lost his arm in this battle and fifty soldiers carried him out of the field by Dagda's orders. Despite the loss of Nuada's arm, the Tuatha de Danann gained Ireland as a land for themselves.

There was a law that stated that whoever takes over as the king had to be in perfect shape. Since Nuada was no longer in that shape, the kingship was given to Breas, but it was temporary. After seven years, Nuada took back the kingship. Credne Cerd was an Irish man who succeeded in giving Nuada a silver hand, so he became whole again. Miach, the son of Diancecht, was the physician who aided in fitting the hand. For that reason, the mythology sometimes refers to Nuada as Nuadhat the Silver Hand.

That whole process took them seven years to be as perfect as possible. It was evidence of the exceptional skills that this race possessed and brought to Ireland along with them.

Sharing the Land with the Firbolg

Things were going in favor of the Tuatha de Danann; however, there was a change of fate. Sreng, the leader of the Firbolg, wanted to challenge Nuada in a man-to-man battle. While Nuada could have refused and gone on with his life, he actually accepted the challenge. He said he would fight Sreng under one condition; if Sreng tied one of his arms up, but he refused to do so. That saved Nuada lots of trouble, for the Tuatha de Danann had already won. Sreng had to take his people and leave after the defeat. They had to leave the country for good. However, the Tuatha de Danann were generous enough that they left one-quarter of the land for the Firbolg. That part of Connacht; the part offered was smaller than that dealt about before the battle.



Nuada gets a new arm...

Bres, the New King of the Tuatha de Danann

As we already mentioned, the king had to be in a perfect shape. When Nuada lost his arm, he had to leave the authority for a more eligible king. Bres was the new leader though he was a half-Fomorian. The new king had very oppressive rules that worked for the favor of his other half. He let the Fomorians into Ireland although they were the country's enemies.

Conversely, he made the Tuatha de Danann slaves for them. Bres's kingship was only a matter of time. As soon as Nuada had a replacement for his lost arm, he took back the kingship. Bres ruled for seven years while Nuada ruled for seven years at first and then for twenty more years. Definitely, Bres was not satisfied with that twist of events. He wanted to restore the kingship back, so he asked Balor for help. Balor was the king of the Fomorians. They tried to retake it by force and constantly starting wars against the Tuatha de Danann.

The Fomorians: A Ceaseless Wheel of War and Peace

During the seven years of achieving the perfect arm of Nuada, Breas was the temporary king. However, he wasn't purely from Tuatha de Danann; his mother belonged to that race, but his father was a Fomorian. Probably, his mother's origin was the reason he made it to the kingship.

After the seven years were over, Nuada had to pick up where he left off. He retook the kingship; however, things were no longer as peaceful as they were. Breas was bitter about having to leave the chair. Thus, he initiated a war with the Fomorians against the Tuatha de Danann. There were also still refugees of the Fírbolg around the area; they supported the war since they were their enemies.

Balor was the leader of the Fomorians. He was giant and incredibly strong. Also, the Irish traditions claimed that he had only one eye; however, that did not affect his strength. In that battle, Balor succeeded in killing Nuada, the king of the Tuatha de Danann. However, his victory was short lived, for he died as well. Lugh Lamhfhada, the champion of the Tuatha de Danann; managed to avenge Nuada's death by killing Balor.

The Interrelation Between Both Races

Superficially, there were several members who were half-Fomorians and half-Tuatha de Danann. Both races happened to have the same ancestor. They were both descendants of the god of Battles, Neit. Lugh Lamhfhada, like Breas, was a result of intermarriage between the two races. Surprisingly, he happened to be the grandson of Balor, leader of the Fomorians. Well, this may sound a bit odd, but here's the whole story:

In an Irish legend, Balor had been informed by a foretelling that his own grandson was going to kill him. Balor only had one daughter, Ethniu; he decided to lock her in a glass tower. It was a place that would ensure her being unable to meet a man, so she'd never get pregnant.

On the contrary, Balor's strategic plans did not go accordingly. His plans started to fall off the trail when he stole a magical cow from Cian. The latter happened to know about Balor's daughter, so he broke into the tower

in order to take revenge. Having met Ethniu, Balor's daughter, he seduced her, escorting her to be pregnant with three children. When she gave birth to them, Balor knew about the incident, thus, he ordered his servants to drown them.

Fate had a different plan where two of the children drowned, but one managed to remain alive. That one child was saved by a druidess who took him to Ireland. The child happened to be Lugh; he lived among the Tuatha de Danann all the way through adulthood.

Joining the Tuatha de Danann

Lugh Lamfada was half-Fomorian and half-Tuatha de Danann. However, he

grew up with the Tuatha de Danann. When he was young, he traveled to Tara and joined the court of King Nuada. Lugh arrived at the Tara to find the doorkeeper refusing to let him in. Entering the court required having a skill that was going to be beneficial to the king.

As luck would have it, Lugh possessed quite a few talents that would provide the king with amazing services. Lugh offered himself as a historian, a hero, a harpist, a champion, a swordsman, a wright, and more. However, they always rejected him, for the Tuatha de Danann was not in need of the services that Lugh offered.

The last time Lugh went to the court, he was furious for the rejection. He asked if they have someone with all of those skills together. That time, the doorkeeper was not able to deny him

from the entrance. After joining the court, Lugh became the Chief Ollam of Ireland. Lugh was capable of captivating the Tuatha de Danann and fascinating them with his many skills and contests he would win.

The Reign of Lugh

After Lugh avenged the death of Nuada by killing his own grandfather, Balor, he became the king. He had shown great courage and wisdom. Lugh was a truthful king; he believed in laws and oaths. Since he was half-Fomorian, he was also responsible for spreading peace between the two races. His reign stayed for almost forty years. During that period, he managed to establish what



Lugh Battles Balor by Jim Fitzpatrick

was known as the public fair. Those games took place on the hill of Tailltean. They were a mean of honoring Taillte, Lugh's foster-mother. They remained around until the 12th century. The place is no longer working, but it's still there and people nowadays refer to it as Lugh's fair.

The Sway of the Milesians

The Milesians were another race that existed in ancient Ireland. Legends refer to them as the Sons of Mil. In ancient times, when the Tuatha won the battle and took over, they had a deal with the Milesians. They kicked them out, but they said if they managed to land again in Ireland, the country shall be theirs. That was according to the rules of war. Just then, the Milesians withdrew and went back to the sea. Then, the Tuatha raised a great storm to dash their ships and ensure their loss, so they wouldn't come back. After that, it is said that they kept Ireland invisible to them.

In 1700 B.C, the Milesians arrived in Ireland to realize that the Tuatha de Danann had entirely taken over. However, they managed to find the land, they did and marched into their cities from their landing site. The Tuatha Danann were not prepared for resisting the Milesians; they didn't expect them to find the land ever again.

The Defeat of the Tuatha de Danann

As soon as the Milesians arrived in Ireland, it wasn't so long before the Tuatha de Danann disappeared for good. Regarding their disappearance, there had been several claims. But, in all cases, they were certainly defeated. One of the theories states that the Tuatha de Danann did not fight the Milesians at all. That was because their foretelling skills suggested that they were going to lose the country anyway. Instead, they built their own kingdoms under several hills or mounds around Ireland. It's said that they built them long before the arrival of the Milesians. This theory suggests that the Tuatha de Danann evolved into the fairy folk of Ireland because they lived underground for good.

Another theory suggests that the two races entered a battle in which the Milesians won. They took over Ireland and had most of the other races around Ireland as their allies. What happened to the Tuatha de Danann after the defeat was divided into two different opinions. Some say that their Goddess Danu sent them to live in "**Tir na nOg**", the Land of the Young. On the other hand, it's claimed the Milesians came to terms with sharing the land with the

Tuatha de Danann. The latter was given the underground part as their own land as part of the agreement

This last story is pretty similar to the previous one. It states that the Milesians did not defeat the Tuatha de Danann. Instead, they decided to keep them living side by side with them. The reason behind their claimed decision was that the Tuatha captivated them by their magical skills. As we previously mentioned, the Tuatha de Danann arrived in Ireland with fascinating incomparable skills. For that reason, the Milesians wanted to keep them living around in order to take advantage of their great knowledge. In addition, the Tuatha de Danann owned horses that all history professed could never be found anywhere else. Those horses had large eyes, broad chests, and were as speedy as the wind. They exerted flame and fire and they resided in a place called "the Great Caves of the Hills." For these many reasons, it seems unlikely that the Milesians (even with great help) could have defeated the Tuatha de Danann.



The Milesians Return

Four Cycles of Irish Myth

The Celtic mythology of Ireland is best summarized as consisting of four broad cycles.

Foundation Cycle—myths of the early founding of Ireland, its deities, as well as the beginnings of the Irish Celts. Includes the "Lebor Gabala" (The Book of Invasions) and other works. The time period covered in this cycle is roughly the dawn of man to about 400 BC

Ulster Cycle—myths of the Red Branch Champions of Ulster, including Cuchulainn and King Conchobar. The best known work in this cycle is the "Táin Bó Cuailnge" (The Cattle Raid of Cooley). The time period of this cycle is roughly the first century A.D.

Fenian Cycle—myths of Finn MacCool and the Fenians, the band of elite soldiers that protected Ireland. This cycle covers a time period of about a century and a half beginning with Conn of the Hundred Battles in 177 A.D.

Historic Cycle—legends associated with historical figures in Ireland, from Naill of the Nine Hostages to St. Patrick (both 5th century A.D.), and from St. Columba (d. 597) to Brian Boru, the Irish high king who drove out the Vikings in 1014.

The Ulster Cycle

In the territories of Celtic northern Ireland, the ancient provincial capital was Emain Macha. This center today exists as an actual archaeological site, though the stories surrounding it are mythic and fantastical. For this was the home

of the mythic Conchobar mac Nessa, the mighty king of the Ulster province, at the time when Eochaid Airem was high king of Ireland at Tara. King Conchobar surrounded himself with a band of hearty warriors, called the Red Branch Champions. The Red Branch itself was the name of one of the large houses where Conchobar held court in Emain Macha. It contained, according to the stories, “nine compartments of red yew, partitioned by walls of bronze, all grouped around the king’s private chamber, which had a ceiling of silver, and bronze pillars adorned with gold and carbuncles.”

This was the golden age of Celtic Ulster, when no other province was its match. And holding up the mythic pillars of Ulster were the Red Branch Champions. Most famous was Cuchulainn, of whom epics were written. Next in order came his two friends, Laeghaire the Battle-winner and Conall the Victorious. Fergus was another hero, though he sometimes fell out of favor with King Conchobar. Sencha was a wise man among them, Fedlimid their bard, and Cathbad their druid. Bicriu held the role of a mischievous troublemaker at Emain Macha; for instance, when he would try to get the heroes at a feast to argue over the “champion’s portion,” the best cut of the meat being served, given to the foremost champion.

Cuchulainn, himself, was of lofty lineage. His father was the god Lugh, and his mother was Dechtiré, a half-sister of King Conchobar, and a descendant of the god Angus. Cuchulainn’s original given name was Sedanta, and when he was young, the druid Cathbad warned him that if he took up arms he would become renowned down through the ages, but that he would die young. Cuchulainn’s reply was: “Provided that my fame lives, I care not if I be on this earth but a single day!”

After young Cuchulainn defeated a number of enemy champions, the women of Ulster all swooned in his presence. The warriors at Conchobar’s court grew jealous, and insisted that a wife be found for him, lest they lose their women to this young victor. But, Cuchulainn had eyes for only one lady: Emer, the daughter of Forgall the Wily. She had eminence throughout Ireland for the six maidenly gifts: the gift of beauty, the gift of song, the gift of sweet speech, the gift of needlework, the gift of wisdom, and the gift of chastity.

Forgall said that he would yield his daughter to Cuchulainn only if he accomplished a feat: to go to the Island of Scathach the Celtic Amazon and

learn warrior-craft from her. This was a dangerous trip, and Forgall assumed that Cuchulainn would die before returning. But after much peril he did return, and Cuchulainn drove his chariot to Forgall’s palace, took Emer, and traveled to Emain Macha where they were married.

Táin Bó Cuailnge

Some say this, “The Cattle Raid of Cooley,” is the foremost work of ancient Irish literature. The story grows from Queen Medb (Maeve) of

Connaught’s desire to own the famous Brown Bull of Cuailnge, to match beside her husband’s (King Ailill’s) White-horned Bull of Connaught. The owners of the Brown Bull of Cuailnge, who in the story live in Ulster, refuse to give the animal up. Queen Medb goes ballistic, and assembles an army of warriors from the rest of Ireland to attack Ulster and capture the bull, hence the makings of a huge cattle-raid. Medb expects a quick victory because the Red Branch Champions of Ulster are under a “geasa,” a taboo, which in this case results in the warriors lying in a weak state for a number of days each year. This geasa was the product of a curse pronounced by a goddess who was insulted by one of King Conchobar’s ancestors in a previous generation. But, Queen Medb is bothered when a prophetess she consults forewarns her that in a vision Medb’s soldiers all appear in red and crimson, the color of blood. How can this be, when all the warriors of Ulster are in a magical stupor?

The answer is that Cuchulainn has been freed of the geasa, and he alone will face the brigade of Queen Medb’s soldiers. At age 17, he has the battle of his life ahead of him. In good honor, single combats are organized, and in this Cuchulainn slays a hundred of Medb’s soldiers every day. Morrigan, the great war-goddess, watches this from afar, and love is kindled in her untamed heart. One night, after a day of

victorious battle, Cuchulainn is awakened from sleep by a fierce shout from the north. He sees an imposing woman with red eyebrows riding a chariot drawn by a red horse. She wears a red dress and a red cloak, and carries a gray spear. Morrigan, it is, and she instantly proclaims her love for him. Cuchulainn spurns her affections, for which Morrigan then proffers her hatred and enmity. Vengeance will come, she says, and then shape-shifts into a crow, an image for him to beware of.



“Cuchulainn in Battle”, illustration by J. C. Leyendecker

Cuchulainn continues to defeat every soldier of Queen Medb who comes before him in single combat. But finally, he is forced to fight and kill his old friend Ferdiad, which brings much heaviness to Cuchulainn. He proclaims that he can no longer defend all of Ulster by himself. Cuchulainn's foster-father Sualtam hears this and gallops to Emain Macha on Cuchulainn's warhorse, the Gray of Battle. Sualtam shouts again and again: "Men are being killed, women carried off, and cattle lifted in Ulster!" An accident happens while nearing King Conchobar's palace, and Sualtam is beheaded—yet his severed head continues to shout: "Men are being killed, women carried off, and cattle lifted in Ulster!"

This amazing spectacle brings Conchobar and his warriors out of their slumber, and they rise up to help Cuchulainn, thus soundly defeating Queen Medb and her forces. However, she briefly captures the Brown Bull of Cuailnge. The bull encounters the White-horned Bull of Connaught, and tears it to pieces. The Brown Bull then escapes and goes back to Ulster, and in its madness, the bull's heart bursts in a loud bellows. And so ends in an ironic twist the Táin Bó Cuailnge.

The Story of Deirdre

Deirdre could easily be considered as a sort of Gaelic Helen of Troy. When she was born, Cathbad the druid prophesied that she would become the most beautiful woman ever seen, but that her beauty would bring death to many champions, and danger to Ulster. King Conchobar decided that he would keep the infant in hiding until she grew, and then take her for his own wife. So, Deirdre for years lived in a mountain hut where her only companions were the birds and animals. As she grew, she more and more aspired to be loved, and by a young handsome man.

When she was of age, Deirdre chanced upon a fair-haired young man named Naoise, the son of Usnach. She offered him her love, and begged Naoise to take her to a far away land and from the clutches of King Conchobar. Naoise was bewitched by her beauty, and he and Deirdre decided to run away to the Island of Alba, to be accompanied by his brothers Ardan

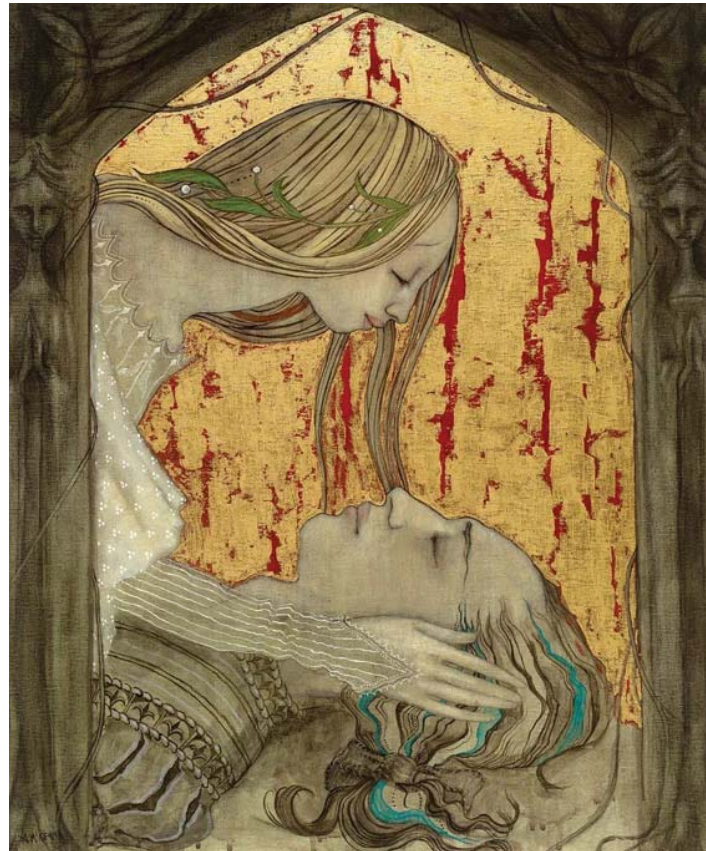
and Ainle. So the three sons of Usnach, warriors in their own right, broke ties with Ulster and took Deirdre away.

King Conchobar was furious. He sent his champion Fergus to Alba to persuade the sons of Usnach to return with Deirdre. Soon they were back at Emain Macha, and Conchobar housed them at the Red Branch palace. But vengeance was on his mind. At nighttime, Conchobar ordered the Red Branch to be burned and all to be killed, but for Deirdre. Battle ensued, numerous heroes perished, and the three sons of Usnach were beheaded. Conchobar had no solace, because Deirdre died soon thereafter.

Many in Ulster were disgusted with how Conchobar had handled the affair. Fergus left to join forces with Queen Medb in Connaught, and Cathbad the druid placed a curse that none of Conchobar's descendants would ever again reign in Emain Macha. Ulster was now in peril. Would Cuchulainn be ready to defend it if threats arose?

Queen Medb had never forgiven Cuchulainn for her defeat ten years earlier. She began conferring with the relatives of all those whom Cuchulainn had slain, and soon she had an army raised to march on Ulster again. Cuchulainn stood ready for battle. But prophecies had warned him that his hero's light might be fading, and that death may soon be near. His battle-fury ire was raised, but a spear mortally wounded Cuchulainn. Struggling to stand, Cuchulainn tied himself to a pillar stone, so that he would not die lying down. Thus at the age of 27 years Cuchulainn died, leaving his face as pale as "a one-night's snow." A crow came and perched on his shoulder, a reminder of the vengeance of Morrigan.

It was said that the prosperity of Ulster soon faded after the loss of the greatest mythic warrior of the Gaels. But there were still stories to tell, and bards to bring entertainments to Erin.



Deirdre Weeps for Naoise by Ann McKinna

The Fenian Cycle

The Irish annalists record a succession of four part-mythic, part-historic high kings of Ireland whose story begins in 177 A.D. These are 1) Conn of the Hundred Battles, and his descendants: 2) Art the Lonely, 3) Cormac the Magnificent, and 4) Cairbré. It is during King Cormac's time that the bulk of the

Fenian cycle occurs. Finn MacCool, the leader of the Fenians, was said in the myths to have died around 283 A.D.

The Fenians, themselves, were the common name for the “Fianna Eirinn,” or the Soldiers of Ireland. They were an elite fighting force that traveled throughout Ireland defending its coastline against outside invaders. The Fenians consisted of three regiments of 3,000 men each, modeled in some ways like a Roman legion. To become a Fenian, an aspirant needed to pass a series of stringent tests of physical strength and agility.

Finn, son of Cumhal, became the Fenian leader by virtue of his wisdom, gained in his youth by eating the salmon of knowledge, from which he acquired the gifts of foreknowledge and magic counsel. Finn’s son was Ossian, whose Bardic tradition is famous in Gaelic lands, and his grandson was Oscar, perhaps the mightiest of the Fenians. Other Fenians were Caoilte the Thin Man (known for his swift-footedness), Goll mac Morna, Finn’s nephew Diarmaid, and a comic character named Conan.

The Story of Diarmaid and Grainne

The tale of the Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne is an epic story of willful love, broken trust, relentless passion and ultimate tragedy. A familiar triangle, the old king, his young wife, the trusted knight.

The three involved in our story are the great Fionn mac Cumhaill, the beautiful but headstrong Grainne, and the noble young warrior, Diarmuid Ua Duibhne. It’s a saga of magic, sorcery, murderous mayhem, bloody vengeance, relentless pursuit and a final act of treachery. In other words, a love story.

Diarmaid was incredibly handsome, and no woman could see him without falling instantly in love. A problem arose when the Lady Grainne saw him, and of course became enamored. She was the daughter of King Cormac, and the betrothed wife of Finn himself. Thus were the makings of an intrigue.

She offered her love to Diarmaid, but he refused it in honor of Finn. But Grainne placed a “geasa” taboo on Diarmaid, requiring him to return her love. He became perplexed, and asked other Fenians what he should do. They told him that a hero should never break a geasa placed on him by a woman. The

same advice was given him by Finn, when Diarmaid asked without divulging the actual name of the woman.

So Diarmaid and Grainne took flight from Tara and traveled deep into the woods. Finn found out, became furious, and led a armed band of soldiers out to capture the lovers. They found Diarmaid and his mate, but could not capture them for the couple had the help of the gods. The god Angus gave Grainne a mantle of invisibility, a cloak that enabled her to escape unseen. The god Manannán gave Diarmaid two of his magic spears and two of his magic swords, and with enchanted speed, Diarmaid was able to escape.

The lovers settled again further in a woods beneath a magic rowan tree. Finn and his troupe again came near, but with the help of the invisible cloak and speed, Diarmaid and Grainne were again able to escape. Finally the god Angus came out as an ambassador to Finn, and settled that the lovers would no longer be harassed.

The Fenians did not last long after the death of Finn MacCool. It is said in myth, that King Cormac’s son Cairbré disbanded the Fenians in 284 A.D. But stories of the Fenian members Ossian and Caoilte appear even later, as we shall see in the coming months.

The Conquest by the Gods

When the Tuatha Dé Danann arrived in Ireland, being gods and goddesses, they realized immediately what a marvelous isle it was. Of course, they wanted Ireland for themselves, to serve as their new home. But first they needed to contend with the Fir Bolgs and the Fomor giants.

The Tuatha Dé Danann moved on the Fir Bolgs first. Morrigan with the help of Badb and Macha sent a shower of fire and blood upon the Fir Bolgs for three days and nights, to warn them that change was impending. Nuada, the king of the gods, attempted to work diplomacy with the Fir Bolg king Eochaid the Proud, offering to divide Ireland in half between the gods and the humans. But Eochaid rejected this, saying: “If we once give these beings half, they will soon have the whole.”

So the winds of war stirred between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fir Bolgs. Their two armies met near the village of Cong in the province of Connaught, in western Ireland. At first, fighting began as a sort of deadly hurl-



ing match where thrice nine warriors on each side fought to the death. Then single combats commenced, and continued on for four days. In one, Streng the Fir Bolg sheered off the hand of King Nuada. But, the Fir Bolgs, thirsty and in search of water, then traveled as far as Ballysadare in County Sligo. They were pursued by the gods, and there, King Eochaid of the Fir Bolgs was killed. By then the Fir Bolgs were down to three hundred men. The Tuatha Dé Danann offered them peace and a fifth of Ireland. The Fir Bolgs consented, and chose Connaught as theirs. And even up to the 17th century of our age, there were men in Connaught who claimed their lineage traced back to Streng the Fir Bolg!

But the war with the Fir Bolgs left a toll on the Tuatha Dé Danann. Nuada had lost his hand in battle. Diancecht, the physician of the gods, made Nuada a silver artificial hand that worked nearly perfectly (hence Nuada's name, the Silver Handed). But this artificial hand was still a blemish, the gods could not have an impaired being sitting on their throne. So Nuada was required to step down.

The gods decided that it would be wise to make a diplomatic move with the Fomor giants, and form a peaceful alliance with them. So, they offered the throne of the gods to Bres, the son of the Fomor king. And too, marriage unions were formed: Brigid of the gods married Bress the Fomor; and Cian, the son of the god Diancecht, married Ethniu, the daughter of Balor the Fomor.

But, the idea of Bres the Fomor being king of the Tuatha Dé Danann wasn't working out. Bres was oppressive. He exacted heavy taxes on the gods, and Bres required that even the greatest of gods do work tolls for him. So there were situations like Ogma being sent to chop firewood for Bres, and the Dagda being required to build forts and castles for him. To make matters worse, Bres had no generosity at feasts: he would provide no bards, musicians, or jugglers to give pleasure to the gods. Discontent was in the air. Finally, Bres made a grave mistake--he insulted the bard of the gods, Cairpré. To this, Cairpré wrote a stinging satire against Bres, ending with these words: "May Bres's cheer be what he gives to others."

The children of Diancecht thus went to work to fix Nuada's hand. With great magic, they restored his hand from silver to actual flesh. No longer with a blemish, Nuada was now free to regain his throne of the gods. Bres was forced to abdicate. He went back to the Fomors, and their assembly agreed to make war against the Tuatha Dé Danann.

Preparations for war lasted seven years. In this time, Lugh arrived at the court of the gods at Tara, and took a leadership position under King Nuada. The Dagda was sent as a pre-battle ambassador to the Fomors, and there ate an enormous meal of porridge, a meal that took so long that it gave the

Tuatha Dé Danann more time to prepare for war. On the eve of Samhain the hostilities began. The battles were so fierce that Nuada was slain. But the gods and goddesses won the war with the Fomors. In vengeance the retreating Fomors stole the Dagda's harp, but Lugh, Ogma, and the Dagda pursued them and fetched the prized possession, thus assuring the change of seasons. Morrigan, Badb, Mider, and Angus finally forced the last Fomors off of Ireland for all time. The gods and goddesses now possessed the Emerald Isle.



Nuada The High King by Jim Fitzpatrick

Other Celtic Stories & Myth

The River Goddess Boann

The River Boyne is a momentous river in Ireland; it exists in Leinster.

According to the Irish mythology, Boann was the Irish goddess of that river. She was a member of the Tuatha de Danann and all of her family descended from the same race. Her father was Delbaeth, another member of the Tuatha de Danann, and her sister was Befind. In Old Irish, her name was written as Boand and later it changed to Boaan. She was the wife of Elcmar; however, she had an affair with the Dagda. Their affair resulted in conceiving their son, Aengus, the god of love and youth of the Tuatha de Danann.

For some reason, today's critics and analysts believe that there is a connection between goddess Boann and goddess Brigid. They speculate that since Brigid was more significant, Boann might be a minor symbolism rather than a whole different goddess. On the other hand, modern paganism suggests

that Boann may be the daughter of the goddess Brigid. Their speculation was not supported by any Celtic sources, so it may just have been a random guess.

At some point, River Boyne was either inexistent or unknown to the people. Once it became a prominent river in Ireland, stories about its creation started to evolve. The creation of the river has always been associated with Boann. So, it is easy to speculate the reason behind her being the goddess of this river. How Boann created the river has always had two versions. The tale of Dindsenchas illustrated one of the versions.

This version narrates the story of the magical Well of Segais; some people call it the Connla's Well. Around the well were a lot of scattered hazel trees. Boann's husband in that story was Nechtan, and he prohibited her from going near that well. Those hazelnuts also fell into the well and the salmon ate them. Boann ignored her husband's order and kept walking around the well. Her circular motions stimulated the waters of the well to fiercely upwell. When the water surged up, it rushed down forming a sea. That was how River Boyne came into life. During that process, the goddess Boann lost an arm, eye, and a leg due to the coursing flood. Eventually, she lost her life as well.

In the Second Version of the Creation of River Boyne, the difference between the two versions is very slight. The difference lies in the fact that Goddess Boann hadn't died tragically. Different sources claim that Boann went to the Well of Segais. This well was the source of wisdom and knowledge. Like the other version of the story, Boann kept walking around the well. Her counter-clockwise spin caused the water to flush out of the well violently and throw her into the sea.

When Boann dashed into the sea, she changed into a salmon; like the ones that lived in the well. Becoming a salmon made her the goddess of the new river and the salmon of wisdom. Celtic people called her the mother of the river. She was not only mother of the river Boyne, but also of the most important rivers around the world.

Boann, as the goddess of river Boyne, had quite a lot of roles in the Celtic tales. She was once the protector of the mortal Fráech. Besides, she was his maternal aunt as well and that was in the tale of Táin Bó Fraích. According to many tales in the mythology, Boann had many husbands. No one is sure who the real one was, for they were different persons, varying from one tale to another. In one tale, Boann's husband was actually the mortal Elmar and in others, he was Nechtan, the god of water. Analysts speculate that Nechtan

might have been the Dagda, leader of the Tuatha de Danann. They believe that both characters were actually the same person. However, there is a tale that contradicts their speculation. There was a Celtic tale that claims that Boann had an affair with the Dagda while her husband was away. In this story, Elmar was her husband. She got pregnant and the Dagda had to stop the time to conceal her pregnancy. It was the tale when Aengus, the god of love and youth, was born.

The Dagda, leader of the Tuatha de Danann, once had a harpist, Uaithne. In one tale, he was the husband of Boann. He used to play music for her that even sources attribute the birth of the music's stains to her. Those

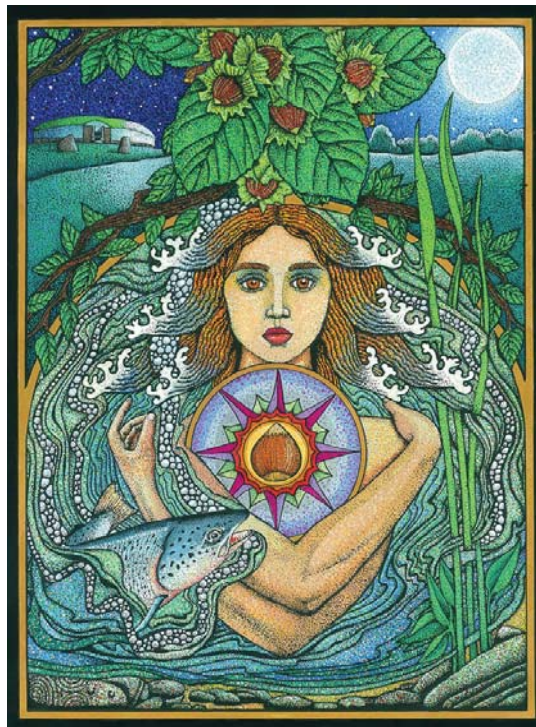
three stains are sleep, joy, and weeping. Boann and Uaithne had three children together. With the birth of each child, Boann introduced one stain of music.

When they had their first son, Uthaine played the healing music while Boann was crying out. That was supposedly the first introduction of the lamentation music to the world. The music of joy came to life with the birth of the second child, for Boann was crying in joy. She was in pain yet she was happy for the arrival of her second baby. Boann's third delivery seemed to be so easy that she actually slept while Uthaine played music. That was the reason that the sleep music was born.

Boann lived in Brug na Bóinne. That site was a popular destination for spiritual travelers. It was full of chambers where guests resided; interestingly, some chambers were meant only for the Fairy folks. At this site, there were three fruit trees; they were magical where they provided fruits all year round. Sources claim that these trees produced hazelnuts although other sources believe they were apple trees. However, the theory of the hazelnuts makes more sense. At those trees, visitors performed their spiritual rituals and connected with their inner souls. Here is when Boann's role comes; she assists those visitors in getting in touch with their spiritual side. For that reason, people refer to her as the goddess of inspiration besides being the goddess of the river. The mythology claims that Boann was able to clear your mind and banish any negativity with her powers.

The Goddess Morrigan Story

The Morrigan was popular for being a shape-shifter and the Goddess of war, death, and fate in the Celtic mythology. Morrigan was also capable of con-



Credit: Courtney Davis for Boann

trolling all forms of waters, including lakes, rivers, oceans, and fresh waters. Celtic mythology usually refers to her with quite a lot of names. These names include The Queen of Demons, The Great Queen, and The Phantom Queen.

Everything in the Irish mythology seems to be usually unclear, especially the origin of the characters. The origin of Goddess Morrigan is ambiguous yet some sources claim that it has a connection to the triple goddesses. The latter is a trending Cult of Mothers that is very popular in the Irish legends. However, other legends appear to depict her as a single figure rather than part of the triple Celtic goddesses. Different sources have different claims. Some say that she married the Dagda and they both had a child named Adair. Contrariwise, some say that she was not his wife, but they once met at a river and that was it.

The Celtic mythology seems to know very little about the life of Goddess Morrigan story. What is obvious from all legends is that she was part of the Tuatha de Danann. She also had quite a few siblings and that includes Macha, Eriu, Banba, Badb, and Fohla. Her mother was Ernmas, another goddess of the Tuatha de Danann.

The Irish mythology never has one depiction of gods or characters and the Morrigan is no exception. She had been represented in different forms. However, that was mainly because she was a shape-shifter; she can shape herself into whatever creature she wanted to be. Most of the legends claim that the Morrigan was a very beautiful woman yet a frightening one.

When she is in a human form, she is a young beautiful woman whose hair flawlessly flows. She possesses long, dark hair and usually wears black. However, her clothes were most of the time exposing her body. In some tales, she wears a cloak in order to hide her face away from recognition. Those descriptions apply when she's in the form of a human being, which is a very rare case. Most of the time, The Morrigan appears in the form of either a wolf or a crow.

Sometimes, the Morrigan appears in the form of a human being, but not that pretty young lady. In some cases, she appears as a frightening woman who is actually a laundress. Mythology refers to her as the Washer at the river sometimes. When she is a washerwoman, she appears as if she is washing the clothes of the soon-to-die soldiers. Sometimes she washes armors as well and

the piece of clothes she holds are usually blood-stained as a symbol of death. This description escorted people to confuse between her and the Banshee. The latter is a scary woman who only appears at scenes where death is going to take place, after a battle.

Morrigan had always played part in wars and the behavior of the soldiers. Some sources even claim that she was the reason that the Tuatha de Danann defeated the Firbolg. They also claim that she helped the Tuatha de Danann in their battle against the Fomorians. Her control over wars and victory escorted the researchers to believe she actually was responsible for life and death.

Legends say that the Morrigan's engagement in battles was through hovering over the field. She never physically engaged in them. At those moments, she took the form of a crow and manipulated the outcomes of the battles. In order to help throughout the battles, she summoned soldiers that would help the party she was with. After the battles ended, those soldiers leave the battlefields and the Morrigan later claims the trophies.

The Goddess Morrigan is often the symbol of battle, death, and life. In some cases, the legends depict her as a symbol of the horse, but that is very rare. There was a different perspective on the role of the Morrigan that the modern Pagans believed in. They view her role somehow differently from the Ancient Irish. The Pagans believe that she was a protector and healer while the Irish believed she was frightening. People who follow her still honor her using items like blood bowls and feathers of crows. Some people even hold red clothing as a symbol of her being a laundress.

The Morrigan appeared in quite a few tales and legends of the Irish mythology. Some of them she only appeared as a crow that controlled battles. And,

in other stories, she appeared in her human form. One of the most prominent stories of the Morrigan was the Myth of Cu Chulainn. In this story, she fell in love with a powerful warrior named Cu Chulainn. The Morrigan attempted several times to seduce him; however, he always rejected her. She never accepted the fact that he rejected her, so she decided to avenge her broken heart.

She used her ability to shift her shapes in order to distract Cu Chulainn and ruin his plans. Staying near him was her best way to gain more inner strength. The first time she appeared to him after the rejection, she was a bull.



Valerie Herron: Badb Catha: Battle Crow

She tried to make him lose track of his path, so she told him that he had to run away. Cu Chulainn did not listen to her and he kept going on his way. The second time she appeared as an eel and attempted to make him trip. His tripping over would help her to use her magic on him and gain more strength. She failed once again. The third time she changed her appearance into a wolf, trying to scare him and send him off his track.

At last, she stopped changing into animals or strange creatures and decided to take the human shape. That was her final attempt. She appeared to Cu Chulainn as an old woman whose job was milking the cows. Cu Chulainn saw her in that appearance; however, he was able to recognize her. She offered him to drink from the milk of the cow and he agreed. That made him even stronger.

The Morrigan did everything in order to make Cu Chulainn fail from accomplishing his plans. All her attempts had failed and that surged the rage inside of her. She decided that Cu Chulainn must die. On one fine day, Cu Chulainn was roaming around on his horse. He noticed Morrigan sitting by a river and washing his armor. She appeared in the portrayal of the Banshee at that scene of the story. When Cu Chulainn saw his armor, he knew that he was going to die. It was the price he had to pay for discarding her love.

On the day of the battle, Cu Chulainn was powerfully fighting until a severe wound hindered his ability to fight. He realized that he was inevitably dying, so he brought a large stone and tied his body to it. Doing that would keep his body in an upright position when he was dead. He was already gone when a crow sat on his shoulder to inform the other soldiers that he was dead.

The Story of the Goddess of Fire

Brigit was a Celtic goddess that existed during the Pagan times of Ireland. She was the daughter of the Dagda, the father god, and Boann, the goddess of the rivers. They were all members of the Tuatha de Danann. Brigit was the Goddess of fire; her name means the Glorious one. However, she possessed another name in the ancient Irish times which is Breo-Saighead. The latter means the Fiery Power. The significance of her name is quite obvious though.

Legends state that when she was born, her head fired out flames to prove her control over the sun. Some state that she shared a great unity with the universe, for she had the amazing power of the sun. As the goddess of the

sun or fire, the modern depiction of her usually includes rays of fire. Those rays usually stem from her hair as if she had a fiery, scorching hair.

Brigit was one the Tuatha de Danann prominent goddesses; she definitely had her own worshipers. Some of them called her the Triple Goddess, believing she had three different powers. Brigit was also the patroness of healing, music, fertility, and agriculture. She descended from the Tuatha de Danann who had always used magic with wisdom and skillfulness. Apparently, the ancient Celts were not the only worshipers of that goddess; some islands

of Scotland worshiped her too. All of them remained faithful to their goddesses throughout the years. But, things had taken a slight detour during the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. Brigit had to evolve in religious aspects. She did so because she faced massive pressures. Brigit had to keep her followers; she wanted to remain a worshiped goddess. Otherwise, the worshipers of her would exile her out of their lives for good. That was the evolution of Saint Catholic Brigid.

Celtic mythology used many names to refer to Brigit. Those names include the Goddess of the Well and Mother Earth. The names had significance for sure. Brigit is the symbol of the sun and fire; however, she had ties to the element of water as well. Her ties to the water stem from the fact that she was the Goddess of the Well. That well branches from the womb of the earth, according to the Irish mythology. For that reason, mythology referred to her as Mother Goddess.

Once again, Brigit faced vast pressures when Christianity was popular in the Celtic community. Even the religious and spiritual places changed were Christianized. People would have started to attack her, for Christianity prohibited worshiping gods outside the religion. Because Brigit was part of the Celts' lives, she

evolved from being Goddess of Sun and Fire to Saint Brigid. The latter was only a new version of the goddess. However, it was one that was more suitable for the community. Her transformation resulted in emerging a whole new story of Saint Brigid.

The era of St. Brigid started around 450 AD. Legends refer to her as St. Brigid of Kildare. She was reborn again into a pagan family. When Saint Patrick arrived in Ireland, he converted most of the Irish people to Christians. Brigid's family was among those who converted to Christianity. As a young girl, Brigid was very generous and compassionate. That was reflected in her behavior towards those in need; she always helped the poor.



The Goddess Brigit

Brigid's overly generosity had enraged his own father, the chieftain of Leinster. His name was Dubhthach; he thought of selling his daughter away after she gave away some of his treasured possessions. On the other hand, the king realized the saintliness of Brigid. That was because of her generosity and constant assistance to the poor. Thus, the king decided to gift Brigid with a portion of land to do whatever she would like with.

Brigid made use of the land by building a church under an oak tree. The tree was prominent in the Celtic legends and its place is what now people refer to as Kildare. Kildare is actually pronounced as Kill-dara and it means the Church by the Oak Tree. The Holiness of Brigid became significant and girls learned about it, thus, seven girls followed her. All of them started a religious community there.

The legend of St. Brigid of Kildare stated the powerfulness of Brigid. She had lots of magical powers which she used to heal wounds and do miracles. She definitely learned her magic from her people; the Tuatha de Danann. It was the reason behind the spread of her popularity around the country. People referred to her as the goddess-saint and people started associating her with the Virgin Mary. For that, people referred to her as Foster Mother of Jesus and sometimes as Mary of the Gaels.

On February 1st comes the day of the Celtic festival day. That day is when people celebrate the phenomenon of Goddess Brigid and worship her. On the very same day, the annual Saint Brigid Feast Day occurs as well. Irish people celebrate this day in the modern times; they make crosses of reeds in honor of St. Brigid.

The Irish Goddess of War: Macha

The mythology refers to her as the goddess of war or of land. Crunnius was her husband and people believed she was one of the triple goddesses. Many tales confuse her and the Morrigan. Both of them usually appear as crows at the battlefields and manipulate the battles' results. However, the difference between both of them is that Macha usually appeared as a horse. Morrigan was usually a wolf and had never been a horse. One more similarity between the two goddesses is that both were described as Washer at the Ford. The legend of the Banshee has connections with both of them.

While some people believe she is part of the triple goddesses, she has three elements that make the name suitable. One of those elements was the

maternal reproductive part; the second was the element of lands or agricultural. The last one was the element of sexual fertility. Those three elements were the reason behind forming the figure of mother goddess. She was mother of land as well as war.

The Celtic folk tales feature three versions of Macha. Each version illustrated Macha with specific personalities and different traits; they were all equally interesting. One common thing that three versions claim is that Ernmas was her mother. However, the first version states that Macha's husband was Nemed.

The literal meaning of his name is Sacred. Nemed was the one who invaded Ireland before the Tuatha de Danann. He fought the Fomorians and stayed in Ireland. Legends claim that there was a race, the Nemeds, that resided in Ireland long before the Tuatha de Danann came.

The second version of Macha was that where people referred to her as Mong Ruadh. The latter means Red Hair. She had a red hair in this tale and she was both a warrior and a queen. Macha, in this version, had beaten her rivals and had power over them. She forced them to build a fort for her and they had to do it. At last, the third version was the one we stated at the beginning. It was that version when she was the wife of Crunniuc.

Macha appeared in several tales; however, there was a specific one that is the most popular about her. In this tale, the third version of Macha was very prominent. The story revolves around Macha who had supernatural powers. She was capable of outrunning any creature on earth even the fastest animals. Crunniuc was her husband in that tale and she asked him to conceal her magical

powers. She did not want anyone to know.

However, her husband ignored her demand and bragged about his wife in front of the king of Ulster. The king seemed interested in the secret that Crunniuc had let out. Thus, he ordered his men to capture Macha who was pregnant at that time. He wanted her to run against horses in a race, not paying attention to her condition as a pregnant woman.

Macha had to do what asked her to do. She ran the race and surprisingly, she won. However, her condition started to deteriorate as soon as she crossed the finish line. She gave birth at the end of the race and she was in extreme pain. One version claims that she died after giving birth to twins. The most popular scene was Macha cursing all the men of Ulster while she was



Macha: Three Form Goddess

dying. She wanted them to endure the pain of childbirth and suffer as they made her do.

Dian Cecht the Healer of the Tuatha De Danann

Among the Tuatha de Danann, there was a physician and a healer. Dian Cecht was his name and he was a significant member of the Tuatha de Danann. Dian Cecht was a great healer; he had always healed any man even those who had severe and deep wounds.

The mythology claims that his way of healing followed the Celtic rituals of bathing and drowning. Dian actually threw those who had wounds into a well and then he pulled them up. He healed the wounded and whoever was dead came out of alive. People referred to that well as the Well of Health, or Slane in Old Irish. Dian Cecht blessed it and used it for curing the wounded soldiers of the Tuatha de Danann. Dian once used that well to replace an eye for Midir. He replaced it with an eye of a cat.

The Dagda was the father of Dian Cecht. Dian ruled a tribe of gods and was a prevailing healer for the soldiers of the Tuatha de Danann. He had two sons; Cian and Miach. Cian was the one who took revenge of Balor by sleeping with his daughter and conceiving Lugh. Miach was a healer like his father; however, Dian Cecht was usually jealous of his own son. Although Dian Cecht and Miach were healers, they both used different methods.

Dian Cecht believed in his own healing powers. He claimed that whoever was injured should receive a payment in any form. This payment could be money or valuable stuff. Lots of people believed in this method and used it until 8 BC. They refer to it as The Diancecht's Porridge. However, people in the modern world stopped believing in this porridge. His son used different methods of healing. Miach preferred using herbs and prayers for healing.

When Nuada lost his arm during the battle of the Tuatha de Danann against the Fomorian, he had another one created. Dian Cecht crafted this arm; it was metallic silver in color. For that reason, people referred to Nuada as Nuada of the Silver Arm. The hand looked and seemed real; its movement was very real that no one suspected its reality. On the other hand, Miach, his son, was more skillful at healing than his own father. He was capable of changing Nuada's arm into a real one as if he never lost it at all.

Thus, it made Dian Cecht erupt with fury and jealousy. Those emotions drove him to kill his own son.

The Myth of the Boiling River

Ireland possesses a river that people call The River Barrow. The literal meaning of the name of the river is "The boiling river." Irish legends and myths are plentiful; they never seem to cease or have an end. The story of this river is one of them. People connect it to Dian Cecht, the healer of the Tuatha de Danann. The tale claims that Dian Cecht saved Ireland. He did so by delivering Morrigan's, goddess of war of Tuatha de Danann, child.

When the child came to the world, Dian Cecht suspected it to be an evil, so he killed the baby. He took the baby's body, opened its chest, and figured out the child had three serpents. Those serpents were capable of causing massive destruction to every living body. Thus, Dian demolished the three serpents and took their ashes to a river. He threw the ashes there and that was when the river boiled, hence the name.

Dian was one of the clever healers of the Tuatha de Danann. However, he was a jealous and murderous father that no one would wish for. The end of Dian Cecht life was a very tragic one. He died in the Battle of Moytura due to a poisoned weapon. He deserved it.



Dian Cecht & His Children

Airmed, Herbalist of the Tuatha De Danann

Airmed is one of the goddesses of the Tuatha de Danann. She was the daughter of Dian Cecht and sister of Miach. Like both of them, she was a healer. Her name sometimes is written as Airmid instead of Airmed. Either way, she was one of the healers of the Tuatha de Danann. She helped her father and brother in healing the injured members of the Tuatha de Danann in battles. Not only was she the healer of the Tuatha de Danann, she was also an enchanter. She was one of the prominent enchanters

of the Tuatha de Danann, along with her father and brother. Their singing was capable of reviving the dead.

Airmed was popular in the Celtic mythology as the only one who knew about Herbalism. She and her brother used herbs and incantations in healing the wounds. Her brother was very talented that their father was jealous of him. When Miach gave Nuada a real arm instead of the silver one that

his dad gave him, Dian killed him. In fact, Dian Cecht was jealous of both of his children, for their skills were obvious to everyone. People realized how skillful they were and knew that their skills were superior to their father's. However, Dian Cecht killed his son in particular because he changed Nuada's arms into veins, blood, and flesh. Airmed was devastated by her brother's brutal death. She buried him and wept an ocean of tears over his grave.

One day, Airmed arrived at Miach's grave to see that healing herbs grew around and on the grave. She knew that her tears were the reason for their growth and she was delighted with that fact. They were about 365 herbs; people claim that they were the world's best healing herbs. Airmed was joyful and started collecting the herbs and organizing them. Each herb spoke to her, claiming the power of healing that it had. She separated them according to their powers and particular usage. Airmed hid them in her cloak to keep them away from the blowing winds.

However, her cheerfulness was not to last as her father realized what Airmed was hiding. He overturned the cloak so that the wind would blow away all of the herbs. Airmed remained the one person who knew about and remembered the herbs of healing. But, she could not pass them to younger generations because of her father. Dian Cecht wanted to make sure no one would learn about the secrets of immortality. Apparently, his rage and jealousy had consumed him.

Airmed was furious, but there was nothing she could do about it. She made sure she remembered what the herbs told her about the healing powers. Thus, she used that knowledge in healing people with her magical skills. Some sources claim that Airmed is still alive and live in the mountains of Ireland. They believe she is still the healer of Elves and fairies, including the leprechauns and their hobbit counterparts.

Ogma the God of Language and Speech

Ogma or Oghma is another god of the many ones of the Tuatha de Danann. Besides, he made an appearance in both the Irish and the Scottish mythologies. The two mythologies refer to him as the god of language and speech, for he had the gift of writing. Ogma was also a poet; he had a prevailing talent that tales always mentioned. Who exactly Ogma was can be a bit confusing, for the mythology has different versions of that matter. The story of the Tuatha de Danann tells us about lots of people that goddess Danu and the Dagda

conceived. One tale claims that Ogma was the son of the Dagda and goddess Danu, mother of the Tuatha de Danann. Above and beyond, Ogma was the fairest son of Dagda and Danu. He even had a hair that emitted sunrays from it as it was very bright.

Ogma was the one who invented the Ogham alphabet; he taught people to write in the Ogham language. For that, the mythology calls him the god of language and speech. More tales profess that Ogma invented quite a lot of languages and not only the Ogham. He was responsible for teaching people about the art of words and poetry.

Again, the story of the Tuatha de Danann claims that the Dagda is Ogma's father and Danu was his mother. Different tales claim otherwise; they state that the Dagda is his brother and he had different parents. Some sources claim that Elatha was the father of Ogma and Ethliu was his mother. Besides these stories, there are more sources that profess that Etain was Ogma's mother. There had been more than a few debates about the parents of Ogma. And, who the real ones were remains ambiguous. Ogma was the father to Tuireann and Delbaeth although some tales show that he had three sons. The three sons of Ogma were married to three sisters. Those sisters were Eire, Fotla, and Banba. They had the talent of prophecy and prediction.

When the Tuatha de Danann were heading to Ireland, the land's name was still Inisfail. The three sisters were usually predicting the incidents that took place. So, Ogma promised to name the land as one of them. The choice was according to which sister made the most accurate predictions about the Tuatha de Danann. Eire was the one who was very accurate in her prophecies. Thus, as soon as the Tuatha de

Danann reached the shores of Inisfail, they called it the land of Eire. The modern version of the name Eire now is Ireland, which everyone is familiar with.

Besides being a poet and writer, Ogma was also an unbeatable warrior for his undeniable strength. Some sources also claimed that Ogma resembles Herakles of other cultural mythologies in his strength. When the Tuatha de Danann entered Ireland at first, they fought against the Firbolg in the Battle of Mag Tuired. Ogma participated in this battle and they won. However, the Tuatha de Danann had a new leader, Bres, who made them slaves to the Fomorians.

During the reign of Bres, Ogma was the one who carried firewood due to his athletic body. He was the champion of the Tuatha de Danann before



Ogma - The Sun Faced God

Lugh became one. When Nuada got the kingship back, Lugh was a threat to Ogma. He had always been threatening since he stepped into the court of Nuada. Ogma challenged him to carry an unbelievable weight of flagstones. Surprisingly, they were both equally strong.

During the reign of Nuada, Lugh was the champion of the Tuatha de Danann. However, when Lugh became the new leader of the Tuatha de Danann, he made Ogma the champion. They entered another battle against the Fomorians, but the result was shadowy. Some sources claim that Ogma got into a combat against Indech, the king of the Fomorians, and they both died. However, other sources claim that the Fomorians ran away where the Tuatha de Danann pursued them. To be more precise, Ogma, Dagda, and Lugh were the pursuers.

Aengus: The God of Love, Poetry and Youth

Aengus was a member of the Tuatha de Danann. He was the son of the Dagda and Boann, the goddess of the river. However, he was a result of an affair. His mother, Boann, the wife of Elcmar. Dagda had an affair with her and then learned she was pregnant. In fear of getting caught, Dagda made the sun stand still throughout his lover's pregnancy. After that duration of one day, Boann gave birth to their son, Aengus and things went back to normal.

The Dagda was a very generous father. He shared his own possessions with his children, especially his land. However, his son Aengus was usually away. When he came back, he realized that his father hadn't left anything for him, unlike his own siblings. Aengus was disappointed with that; however, he managed to trick his father and take his own home. He asked him if he could live in the Brú na Bóinne, where the Dagda lived, for, sometime. Conversely, he took possession of the place for good and betrayed his father.

Mythology had depicted him as the god of love and youth. However, some tales claim otherwise, for his father refused to give him possessions; he only gave them to the gods. This statement shows that Aengus was probably not a god. According to some sources, his portrayal usually included birds that fly above his head in circles. Aengus, despite being the god of love, seemed to be a bit ruthless. He committed several murders against more than a few people in many folktales.

Aengus may have been the son of the Dagda; however, Midir was his foster father. Some legends also claim that Aengus was able of reviving people as much as he was in killing them. He even brought his own foster son back to life after he died. Aengus owned four lethal weapons; two swords and two spears. They all had names as well. His swords' names were **Beagalltach**, which means the Little Fury and **Moralltach**, which means the Great Fury. The latter was a gift that Manannan mac Lir gave it to him. Later, Aengus gave

it to his son, Diarmuid Ua Duibhne, before his death. On the other hand, the two spears were named Gáe Buide and Gáe Derg.

Aengus had killed quite a few people for different reasons. He killed the poet of Lugh Lámhfhada because he lied to him. The poet claimed that Ogma an Cermait, Dagda's brother, had one of his wives having an affair. As soon as Aengus learned that it was a lie, he slew the poet. The other person that Aengus killed was his own stepfather. Again, Aengus was a result of an affair between Boann, the goddess of the river, and the Dagda. Boann was already married to Elcmar when she mated with the Dagda, so Elcmar was Aengus's stepfather. According to the mythology, Elcmar killed Midir, the brother of Aengus and his foster father as well. Aengus decided to avenge his death, so he killed Elcmar.

The Wooing of Etain is a prominent story in the Irish mythology that embraced members of the Tuatha de Danann. Editors and researchers have divided the story into three different parts. Each part involves a specific tales in which Aengus is included. Following are the three sub-tales of the Wooing of Etain.

Tale One - Aengus grew up possessing the land of the Brug na Boinne that he forcefully took from his father. On a fine day, his brother Midir visits him to confess that he was blind due to boys' ruthless play. After some time, Dian Cecht, the goddess physician, was able to heal him. Midir wanted to make up for the time he lost while blind.

So, he asked Aengus to help him with that compensation. He asked for several things that included marrying the most beautiful woman in Ireland. That particular woman was the daughter of the king of the Ulaid, Ailill. Her name was Etain. Aengus insisted to do it for his brother. Aengus performed all of the needed tasks to win the woman and she became Midir's second wife.

Etain was a goddess; she was the goddess of horses. Conversely, Midir already had a wife; Fuamnach. She was also the foster mother of Aengus and she played a vital role in this tale. Etain was the reason to erupt a volcano of jealousy inside Fuamnach.

Thus, she changed her into a fly; one that mythology claims to have been beautiful. Etain was able to be a woman at night. Aengus fell in love with Etain, especially at night when she was a fine-looking woman. When Fuamnach knew about the relationship of Aengus and Etain, she sent her away. Aengus knew that his foster mother was the reason behind Etain's disappearance. He had to kill her for her betrayal.

Tale Two - The second part of the story revolves around the New High King of Ireland named Eochu. However, he would not be able to be officially a king until he had a queen. So, he had to find her as soon as possible. Just like Midir's request in part; he asked for the hands of the most beautiful

woman in Ireland. Definitely, she was Etain. Eochu fell in love with her and they both got married.

On the other hand, Eochu's brother, Ailill, also loved Etain and he got sick due to his one-sided love. For a tour around Ireland, King Eochu had to leave the Hill of Tara for some time. He had to leave Etain with his brother who was on his last legs. Ailill then took advantage of his brother's absence and confessed to Etain the reason for his sickness. Etain was surprised, but she wanted him to be fine, so she told him the words he wanted to hear.

Despite getting better, Ailill became more greedy and he asked Etain for more. He claimed that the healing would be complete in case she met him above the house, on the hill. The reason Ailill wanted to meet her outside of his brother's house was thinking that it would be less shameful. He didn't want to disgrace his brother in his house, especially that he was the High King at that time.

Etain agreed to Ailill's request and she supposedly met him for three different times. However, Midir learned about Ailill's plans, so every time he put him to sleep and go meet her instead. Etain never realized that fact because Midir succeeded in taking the appearance of Ailill. Conversely, he confessed to her at the third time. He uncovered his true identity and asked her to go away with him. Etain was not familiar with Midir, but she agreed to go with him anyway just if Eochu let her go.

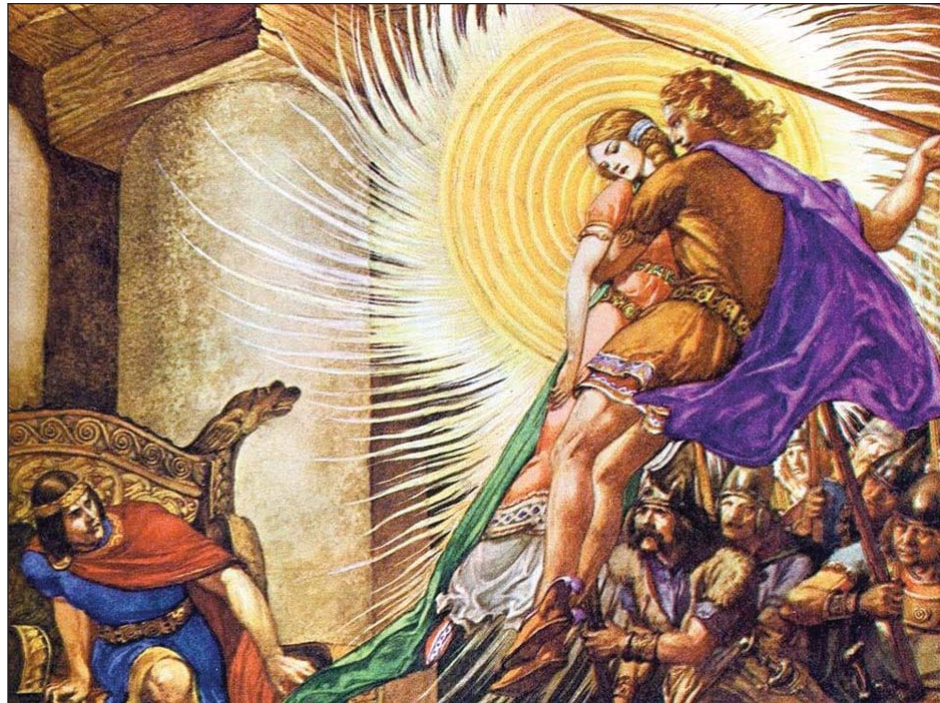
Tale Three - This one is not a whole new story on its own; it is an extension of part two. The reason behind the researchers and editors to split that part is unclear though. The third part rotates around the duration when Ailill received a full recovery.

It was at the same time when his brother, Eochu, returned back home from his tour. Midir learned about Eochu's return, so he had a plan in mind that would get him Etain. He went to Tara and deals with Eochu to play fidchell as a challenge. Fidchell was actually an ancient Irish board game where the loser pays up. In their challenge, Eochu kept winning and Midir's constant loss obliged him to build the Corlea Trackway. It is a causeway across the

bog of Móin Lámrige. Midir was sick of losing all the time, so he offered a new challenge where Eochu agreed. He suggested that whoever won, he would embrace and kiss Etain. However, Eochu didn't grant Midir's wish; he told him to leave and come back collect his winnings after one year.

He knew that Midir would not leave that easily, so he had to prepare for his return. Later, Midir managed to get inside the house in spite of the guards that were trying to stop him. At that moment, Eochu suggested that he could only embrace Etain. While Midir was embracing her, they turned into swans and flew away together.

Eochu's inner volcano erupted in rage when Midir took Etain away.



Etain and Midir

He ordered his men to search in every fairy mound in Ireland and look for the whereabouts of his wife. Eochu would not settle down until his wife got back to him. After some time, Eochu's men found Midir who gave up and promised to give Etain back to her husband. His promise was accompanied by some conditions though; it was a mental challenge for Eochu. Midir brought around fifty women who look the same, and similar to Etain, asking Eochu to select his real wife. After some confusion, Eochu went for the one who he thought to be his wife and took her home. They reignited their love life and the woman became pregnant with Eochu's daughter. He thought that he would live in peace after taking his wife back; however, Midir reappeared to interrupt that peace.

Midir's appearance was only to inform Eochu that he had fooled him. He confessed that the woman he had selected was not the real Etain. Instead, she was Eochu's own daughter; she was born at Midir's place, for Etain was already pregnant. Shame had filled Eochu and he ordered to get rid of the young daughter that resulted from their blending.

They got rid of the baby girl and a herdsman found her. He raised her up with his wife until she grew up and got married. Her husband was Eterscél, the successor of Eochu. Later, she got pregnant and became the mother of High

King, Conaire Mór. The story ended with Midir's grandson, Sigmall Cael, killing Eochu.

The Wooing of Etain is one of the most prominent tales where Aengus appeared. In fact, it is not clear whether he was among the gods of the Tuatha de Danann or not. He was a significant member of the Tuatha de Danann, though. However, Aengus only appeared in the first part and the rest was concerned with Etain and his brother, Midir.

There were more tales where Aengus played more vital roles, including the tale of The Dream of Aengus. It is a tale of pure love; this tale is one of the most romantic legends in Celtic mythology. Aengus was also a guardian of Diarmuid and Grainne. According to Irish mythology, the two of them were once running from Finn McCool and his men. They bumped into Aengus on their way. He then gave them the advice to take a specific path along their journey. Aengus was very generous with them; he offered his protective cloak along with his sword.

Apparently, this tale was all about Aengus and searching for his love. In this legend, Aengus had a dream about a woman whom he fell in love with. He wanted to find her, so he asked, the Dagda, king of the Tuatha de Danann, and Boann, for help.

The Dagda wanted to help his son; however, he would not be able to do it all on his own. Thus, he asked Bodb Dearg for help; he asked him to search for the woman. Bodb spent a whole year doing research until he claimed that he had gotten to the place of the girl. She resided by the Lake of the Dragon's Mouth; however, she was not the only one who lived there. Her name was Caer and she was a swan. Along with her, there were one hundred and fifty other maiden swans. Each pair was tied with gold chains.

Aengus went to the lake and he quickly identified his own dream lover. He recognized her because she was the tallest among all of the other swans. She was also the daughter of Ethel, but he wanted to keep her around for good. That was why he turned her into a swan and refused to ever let her go.

Aengus was frustrated with her father's decision, so he decided that he could carry her away. Unfortunately, Aengus's strength wasn't a good match for a swan's weight, so he kept weeping for being that weak. Bodb wanted

to help, but he knew he needed allies, so he went for Meadhbh and Ailill. They went for Ethel, asking him to let his daughter go, but Ethel insisted on keeping her.

The Dagda and Ailill decided to use their powers against Ethel until he let her go. They held him as a prisoner and asked again to take Caer. At that point of the story, Ethel confessed why he was keeping his daughter in the body of a swan. He claimed that he knew that she was stronger than he was.

Later, Aengus went to the lake once again and admitted his love for

Caer. At that moment, he changed into the form of a swan as well to live with her. The two lovers flew together to a palace on the Boyne. The tale professes that during their flying, there was a music that put people to sleep for three consecutive days.

Lir of the Hill of the White Field

In Ireland, there's a hill that people call the hill of the white field. The Irish equivalent of the site's name is Síd Fionnachaidh. This field has great connections to a sea; the description of the sea resembles that of Lir's. Lir was a god that descended from the Tuatha de Danann. He was the father of the sea god, Manannán Mac Lir, who also was one of the Tuatha de Danann.

According to the Irish mythology, Lir was a caring and considerate person. He was a fierce warrior and one of the gods of the Tuatha de Danann. In one of the Celtic tales, the Tuatha de Danann wanted to choose a new king for themselves. Lir thought himself

to be the best candidate; however, he wasn't the one who got the kingship. Instead, Bodb Dearg became the King of the Tuatha de Danann. When Lir learned about that result, he got furious and left without a word. He was very sad for not being able to become the King of the Tuatha de Danann. Bodb Dearg, sometimes named Bov the Red, wanted to compensate Lir. Thus, he offered Eve, his daughter, for Lir to marry; she was his eldest daughter.

Legends of Ireland claim that Eve was not Bodb's real daughter. It states that he was her foster father while the real father was actually Ailill of Aran. Lir married Eve and they lived happily together. From their marriage comes the tale of the Children of Lir.



Aengus Og with the Swans

The Children of Lir is one of the most popular legends in the Irish mythology. It revolves around the beauty of the swans and their symbolism. In fact, more than a few tales have included swans in their plots. They have always been symbols of love and fidelity. The tale of The Children of Lir is all about love, faithfulness, and patience. The story is very sad yet heart-touching. Briefly, it narrates the life of four children who were forced to spend the rest of their lives as swans. Here are the necessary details in the plot of the story:

The story starts with Lir who agreed to marry Eve, the daughter of the King of the Tuatha de Danann. They both married and lived happily ever after. They had four children; a daughter, a son, and a twin. The girl was Fionnuala, the son was Aed, while the twin boys were Fiacra and Conn. Unfortunately, Eve died while she was giving birth to the youngest twins. Lir was really devastated and disturbed. He loved her too much. After the death of Eve, Lir and his children became miserable and their home was no longer a cheerful place. Bodb realized their sadness and wanted to act upon it. He had always been solution-oriented. To fix those matters, Bodb offered his other daughter, Aoife, to Lir. He thought that Lir would be happy again and the children would love to have a new mother. Lir agreed to marry Aoife and he, along with his children, were happy again. He was a very caring and loving father who showered his kids with attention constantly. Lir even let his children sleep with him and Aoife in the same room. He wanted them to be the first thing he woke up to and the last thing to sleep to. However, Aoife was not satisfied with the situation and things started going poorly.

According to the Irish mythology, Aoife was a woman warrior that played several roles in various legends. She was Eve's sister, Bodb's step-daughter, and Ailill of Aran's real daughter. Aoife married Lir and was very happy with him until she realized his affection for his children. She was very jealous and decided to send the kids away. However, she was too cowardly to kill them by herself, so she ordered one of the servants to do it. The servant certainly refused to do so, thus, Aoife had to find a different plan. On a fine day, Aoife took the four children to play and have fun in a nearby lake. It was

a little nice trip that the children enjoyed. However, that lake was the place where it all started.

When the children were done playing and swimming, they got out of the water. They were ready to go home, unaware of their awaiting fate. Aoife stopped them by the lake and cast a spell that turned the four of them into beautiful swans. The spell would leave the children trapped in the bodies of the swans for three hundred years. Fionnuala cried out, asking Aoife to take the spell back, but it was already too late.

Bodb learned about what his daughter did to his grandchildren. He was surprised and furious with her unbelievable act. Thus, he turned her into a demon and exiled her for good. Lir was so sad for what happened to his children. However, he remained the same loving father he had always been. He wanted to stay close to his children, so he set a camp and resided by the lake. The site that had taken became a residence to many people and they would hear the swans sing. Bodb joined Lir and lived near the children as well. Despite what had happened to them, they were all happy together.

Sadly, the spell that Aoife cast involved that the children shall live nine hundred years as swans. Each three hundred years would be on a different lake. The children's time on Lake Derravarragh was over. They had to leave their family to go to the Sea of Moyle. Their last three hundred years were on the Atlantic

Ocean. At times, they flew back to their home to look for their father, grandfather, and people. Unfortunately, they were all gone and nothing was left. Even the castle in which they used to live in as humans were in ruins. The Tuatha de Danann already had gone underground.

What is "Tir na nOg"?

The literal meaning of Tir na nOg is the Land of the Young. Sometimes, the mythology refers to it as Tir na hOige, instead, which means Land of the Youth. Both ways, they both have the same meaning and this place, actually, refers to the Otherworld. At several points along the mythos, the Tuatha de Danann went to the Otherworld. They had to do that after the Milesians were capable of captivating the lands of Ireland and residing there. Thus, the Tuatha de



Lir's Children Are Transformed Into Swans by Aoife

Danann are usually the residents of the Otherworld or Tir na nOg. They settled there and took that place as a new home for their race.

The location of Tir na nOg or the Land of the Young does not exist on the map. Some people claim that it does not exist on the map because it sits under the surface of Ireland. However, other people believe it is just a mythical place that exists in the tales of the Irish folklore. The depiction of this place is usually heavenly. The tales always illustrate the Land of the Young as a paradise. It's an empire where you forever stay young, healthy, beautiful, and happy. That explains the belief that the Tuatha de Danann are still alive in spite of being ancient. Above and beyond, they seem to be the only inhabitants of the lands of this Otherworld. But some fairies and elves live there, including the leprechauns. Legend has it that the leprechauns descend from the Tuatha de Danann.

In many tales of Irish mythology, some heroes and warriors visit the Land of the Young throughout their journey. However, someone from the residents shall be the one who invited them, so that they can get into that world. There were several ways for heroes to reach to Tir na nOg although it does not exist on the map. The most common way of reaching there is going underwater or crossing the sea to the other side. It usually involves waters and overcoming them. On the other hand, some tales claim that heroes entered Tir na nOg through burial caves and mounds. They reached there through ancient undergrounds that people have abandoned for a very long time.

Among the most popular Irish folktales lies the tale of Tir na nOg. There is an actual tale that bears that name and it describes how that place looks like. It also states how people there stay young and beautiful for good. The hero of this story was Oisín, pronounced as Osheen. He was the son of Finn MacCool. One of the residents of the Tuatha de Danann invited him to come and live in Tir na nOg.

This popular tale of Oisín was the reason people became aware of the Tir na nOg. The tale falls in the Fenian Cycle. Oisín was an invincible warrior who descended from the Fianna. He was son of Finn MacCool as well. The whole tale revolves around Oisín and Niamh, a beautiful woman of the Otherworld. She was one of the residents of the Otherworld, so she might be one of the Tuatha de Danann.

Going straight to the point, the tale starts with Niamh going to Ireland and paying Finn MacCool a visit. She was in love with his son Oisín and she asked him if he can accompany her to Tir na nOg. Niamh was a very attractive woman; Oisín fell in love with her the moment he saw her. He agreed to go

with her to her own world and live there. Thus, Niamh brought her horse, Enbarr. It possessed a lot of magical powers. One of them was walking and running over the surface of the water. Waters were usually the most guaranteed passages to lead to Tir na nOg. Oisín mounted the magical horse and their journey began.

Oisín was happy there and stayed young for a very long time. He even had two children with Niamh. However, after three hundred years, he felt homesick. He wanted to go back to his home, Ireland, and see his people. In fact, he was not even aware of the years that have passed. He thought that he had been there for only three years. Oisín asked Niamh to take the horse, Enbarr, and visit his place. She agreed, but

she warned him that he should never dismount the horse or let his feet touch the ground. If he did, he would die right away.

Oisín agreed to stay on the horse as long as he was there in Ireland. He went to Ireland only to find his home covered in ruins and that his people were no longer there. They died a long time ago as three hundred years had passed. Oisín was sad for not being able to meet his people one more time. He decided to go back to Tir na nOg. While he was starting his journey, he met a group of men who were building some kind of structure. He believed they needed help, but he knew he shall not dismount the horse as his wife warned



Niamh and Oisín riding on the magical steed Enbarr

him. Thus, he decided to help them while being on the horse. Oisín was lifting something off of the ground when he accidentally fell off the horse's back. Suddenly, he rapidly began to grow up; catching up with the three hundred years he had missed. As a consequence, he became an old man of 300 years and died. Enbarr, the horse, had to leave Oisín behind and he ran away. The horse went back to the Land of the Young. When Niamh saw it without Oisín mounting its back, she realized what had happened.

Another version of the story claims that Oisín hasn't died right away when he fell off the horse. It states that he remained old for a very short period of time. Saint Patrick showed up to him and Oisín started telling him his story. Before he died, Saint Patrick converted him to Christianity. Nobody knows which version was the original one, but they both share the same ending of Oisín's death.



Poetry and Muse of Celtic Europe

Stories, poems, songs and family lore are a rich tradition in the Celtic regions. The culture is somewhat unique with preserving their oral traditions and taking great pride in being able to recite the stories of yore. There are too many poems, lyricism and stories to innumerate here, but these are a couple of examples:

Invocation To Arianrhod

O' Arianrhod of the Silver Wheel,
By all the many names men give to Thee-
We, all Thy hidden children, humbly kneel
Thy truth to hear, Thy countenance to see.
Here in the Circle, cast upon the Ear
Yet open to the stars-unseen, yet real-
Within our hearts give understanding birth,
Our wounds of loss and loneliness to heal.
Isis Unveiled, Isis Veiled, Thou art;

The Earth below our feet, the Moon on high.
In Thee, these two shall never be apart-
The magic of the Earth and of the Sky.

Song to the Lady of the Fair Hair, from the Book of Heroes.

"O Lady of the Fair Hair,
Sing to me of the fair ancient land.
Yours divine voice
Whispers the poetry of magic
that flow through the wind,
Like sweet-tasting water of the Boyne.

"Girls, forever young and beautiful,
Dancing around the broken dun,
Where long forgotten heroes
sang of victory
And drank ales
to old memories.

"Sing to me one last time,
Goddess of the Fair Hair,
Before my old ear fail me.
Let me see you dance,
Before your beauty fade away
from my failing sight."

The Arthurian Saga Origins: It is generally accepted that the main characters in the King Arthur legends were based upon older Celtic mythological characters. The following shows the possible kinship.

Original Celtic Character

Artaius (A Celtic god)
Gwenhwyvar (wife of Artaius)
Peregrin
Myrddin (a Celtic bard)
Gwalchmai (nephew of Artaius)
Medrawt (nephew of Artaius)
Gwalchaved (nephew of Artaius)
Kai: could go nine days under water,
could make himself as tall as a tree.

King Arthur Derivative

Arthur (King of Britain)
Guinevere
Percival
Merlin
Gawain
Mordred
Galahad
Kay

Main Celtic Deities: (An introductory list)

Celts:

Dagda, Math, Magog, Dwyon, Ogma, Belinus, Esos, Teutates, Taranis, Mabon, Borvo, Epona, Beli, Govannon, Diancecht, Ludd, Gwydion, Amaethon, Lleu, Dylan, Ler, Llyr, Bran, Manannan, Dana, Morrigan, Brigit, Blathnat, Arianrod, Blodeuwedd, Creirwy Keridwen

Wales:

Gwydion, Aranrhod, Dylan, Bendigeidfran, Branwen, Manawydan, Pwyll, Pryderi, Caridwen, Bran, Penarddun, Branwen, Manawydan, Nisien, Efnisien, Belatucadros, Dewi, Govannon, Gwynn ap Nudd, Lleu, Llyr, Math ap Mathonwy, Modron, Rhiannon

Ireland:

Balor, Bres, Elatha, Eriu, Bile, Boann, Nechhtan, Oengus, Banbha, Fodla, Brigit, Cliodna, Creidhne, Goibhniu, Luchta, In Dagda, Danu, Donn, Dian Cecht, Lir, Lug, Morrigan, Macha, Nemhain, Nuada, Ogma, Cathbadh, Conall Cernach, Conchobar, Cu Chulainn, Cu Roi, Deirdre, Naoise, Fedelma, Ferghus, Finn, Grainne, Mac Da Tho, Medb, Oisín, Partholon

Britain:

Belatucadrus, Cocidius, Condatis, Tyne, Coventina, Cuda, Mogons, Nodens, Sulis, Vitis

Gaul:

Rosmerta, Nantosuelta, Sucellus, Abnoba, Andraste, Belenus, Borvo, Cernunnos, Damona, Epona, Esus, Nehalennia, Ogmios, Sirona, Taranis, Teutates, Lugus

Notable Magic Items in Celtic Myth

The mythology refers to those items as the four treasures of the Tuatha de Danann. They were a supernatural race who held marvelous powers and skills. From each city, they had learned valuable skills from four wise men. Above and beyond, they obtained valuable items as well. Some sources even call them the Four Jewels of the Tuatha de Danann. Each one belonged to a significant character and had a prominent function. Some people also refer to them as the Four Jewels of the Tuatha de Danann. Here are the four treasures and details about each one of them:

1) Lugh's Spear



Lugh was half-Fomorian and half-Tuatha de Danann. He was the champion of the Tuatha de Danann who killed his own grandfather, Balor. Lugh owned spears that were used in battles. Whoever used them never failed in a battle. Legends have it that this spear was the weapon Lugh used while killing Balor. He threw the spear into Balor's poison eyes right before taking him down.

Some versions of the story state that Lugh used stones or slings. However, the spear seems to be the most reasonable weapon to use. In fact, Lugh owned more than a few spears; he had a fine collection of them. However, a specific one of them was the most famous and it had certain specifications as well.

This most famous one is referred to as Lugh's spear. Sources claim that it was brought to Ireland from the city of Falias. The latter was one of the four cities that the Tuatha de Danann came from. The spear's head was made from dark bronze and it was sharply pointed at its finest. It looked fearful as well. Attached to it was a rowan branch that had thirty gold pins.

Most importantly, the spear possessed magical abilities as well. Another spear that Lugh possessed was The Slaughterer. In Irish, its name is Areadbhar. According to the Irish mythology, that spear would burst into flame all on its own. So, its user had to keep it in cold water; that way the water would put down the flame.

Lugh's spear disappeared somewhere along the way. Later, a hero among those of the Ulster Cycle found it once again. His name was Celtchair mac Utthechar and he was a champion of the Red Branch Knights. When Celtchair found Lugh's spear, its name became Luin Celtchair instead. It was like the possession transferred from Lugh to Celtchair. Despite the transfer, it belonged to the Tuatha de Danann.

However, the spear seemed to be Celtchair's own enemy. According to traditions, he once killed a hound with that spear. The hound's blood was poisoned and it stained the spear. While holding the spear, a drop of this blood fell down and got into Celtchair's own skin. It sent him to death right away. Apparently, Lugh's spear appeared in more than a few stories. Conversely, it possessed different names other than the spear of Lugh. There was a story that belongs to the King Cycle. It revolves around four brothers who led Clan Deisi. Those brothers were Oengus, Brecc, Forad, and Eochaid. Forad has a daugh-

ter named Forach. Their enemy, Cellach, kidnapped and raped her. He was Cormac mac Airt disobedient son.

The four brothers negotiated with him to give up the girl and let go; however, he refused to do so. His refusal resulted in a battle where Oengus had a small army and attacked the residence of the High King. In spite of the army's small number, Oengus managed to kill Cellach. The dread spear was the weapon he used in murdering him.

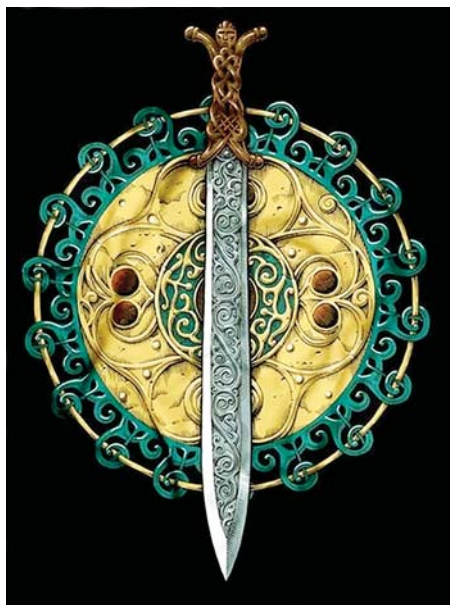
Oengus had accidentally hurt the eye of Cormac while throwing the spear. According to the law of war, the king had to be in a perfect physical state. Thus, Cormac had to renounce his position and hand it over to his other son, Cairpre Lifechair.

2) The Sword of Light

Here's the second treasure of the Tuatha de Danann. It was a sword that belonged to Nuada, the first king of the race. It came from Finias city. The sword has actually made an appearance in plenty of the Irish folktales. It took part in those of the Scottish culture as well. There were several names to it; Shining sword, White Glaive of Light, and Sword of Light. The Irish equivalent to its name is *Claíomh Solais* or *Claidheamh Soluis*.

There were many tales that featured the sword. Those which did feature it obliged the keeper of the sword to execute three sets of tasks. He shall also be a hag or an unbeatable giant. However, he shouldn't do the tasks all by himself; he needed to have some helpers. Those helpers are usually animals with skills, a supernatural being, and a female servant.

The sword makes the keeper impossible to defeat. If someone ever beat the hero, then that was through secret means. It was one more item that ensured the strength of the Tuatha de Danann. Despite the strength of the sword, it was never enough in beating an enemy. That was the enemy was usually a supernatural being, so the hero had to attack him on defenseless body's spot. As we previously stated, it could be a specific part of his body. Conversely, it could sometimes be in the form of an external soul. The soul could possess the body of an animal.



3) Stone of Fal or Lia Fail

This stone is present at the Hill of Tara, at the Inauguration Mound in particular. It is the third treasure of the Tuatha de Danann that comes from Falias city. The literal meaning of Lia Fail is the Stone of Destiny. Some people claim that the meaning is actually the Speaking Stone.

The High Kings of Ireland had actually used it as the coronation stone. Thus, some refer to it as the Coronation Stone of Tara. It was the place where every king of Ireland had gotten crowned. However, the origin of how that stone arrived in Ireland seems mysterious. There are several legends about that fact.

The Lia Fail was a magical stone that roared with joy when the High King put his feet on it. It exists during the reign of the Tuatha de Danann since it was one of their treasures. Besides, it lasted for some time even after the Tuatha de Danann. More things the stone was capable of was awarding the king with a long reign as well as reviving him.

Unfortunately, the stone lost its abilities at some point along the way. Cuchulainn wanted it to roar under his feet, but it did not. Thus, he had to use his sword to split it into two pieces and it never roared again. Surprisingly, it only did under the feet of under Conn of the Hundred Battles.

Some sources state that the Irish people are keeping it hidden and safe. They say they will keep it away until the reign of the High Kings is back once again. On the other hand, the theory of the unoriginal stone has a different opinion; a Scottish one though. The theory says that someone stole the original Lia Fail and brought it to Scotland. It is now the Stone of Scone that is present in Scotland. People there using for crowning the Scottish royals.



4) Cauldron of the Dagda

Here comes the fourth treasure that came to Ireland all the way from the northern city of Muirias. The one who had brought it was Semias; a skillful druid who taught the Tuatha de Danann some magical skills. Regarding the cauldron, like all of its fellows, it was magical. The keeper of that cauldron was Dagda; the father god and one of Ireland's High Kings. We will get to details about the father god later. Sources claim that the power of this cauldron is very potent; it could do amazing good to the world. On the other hand, it could be a great misery if it happens to get into the wrong hands.

The cauldron was a symbol of generosity as well as bounteousness. It was large in size and its function was ceaselessly providing food to the gods. In Irish mythology, there were texts that state “from which all leave satisfied.” The generosity and constant providence of the cauldron was obvious for everyone in ancient Ireland.

In fact, people at that time referred to the cauldron as **Coire Unsic**. The literal meaning of this name is “The Undry” in English. That’s because it never ran out of food to provide to everyone; in fact, it was overflowing with food. Above and beyond, food was not the only power that the cauldron possessed. It could also revive the dead and heal the wounds of the injured.

Where the original cauldron is has been a matter of debate. Some people claim that it was buried with the mounds, so it’s safe from the curiosity of the earthly beings.

Another Famous Item is **Dagda’s Harp**. In Irish mythology the Dagda was a high priest who had a large and beautiful harp. During a war, a rival tribe stole Dagda’s harp and took it to an abandoned castle. Dagda followed the tribe and called to the harp. The harp came to Dagda and he struck the chords. The harp let out the Music of Tears and everyone in the castle began to cry. Dagda struck the chords again and the harp played the Music of Mirth and all the warriors began to laugh. Then, Dagda struck the chords a final time and the harp let out the Music of Sleep. Everyone but Dagda fell into a deep sleep, allowing him to escape with his magical harp unharmed.



Many of the Celtic deities had magical swords, cauldrons, knives, musical instruments, swords, spears, steeds or mounts, jewelry and miscellaneous items.

Supernatural Creatures of Celtic Lore

Ireland’s long history is riddled with ancient mythology and folklore. Ireland’s ancient societies, the Druids and the Celts, believed in the power of magic and many of these beliefs spread to modern day legends told again and again across the country. Stories of warriors with all the knowledge of the world, fairies playing pranks on farm owners and leprechauns hiding their gold at the end of a rainbow add to the mysterious appeal of Ireland.

Banshee - The Banshee was a woman who carried with her an omen of death. Sometimes you saw the Banshee as an old woman dressed in rags, sometimes

you saw her as a young and beautiful girl and sometimes you saw her as a wash woman, ringing out bloody clothing. Whenever she was seen, she let out a horrible cry and legend has it this cry brought death to any family that heard it. King James I of Scotland thought he was approached by a Banshee. Shortly after, he died at the Earl of Atholl.

Pookas - The Pookas are a certain type of fairy, one bent on creating havoc in the mortal world. The Pooka appeared at night across rural Ireland and the seaboard. On a good day, the Pooka would cause destruction on a farm, often tearing down fences and disrupting the animals. On a bad day, the Pooka would stand outside the farmhouse and call the people outside by name. If anyone came out, the Pooka would carry them away. The Pookas also loved to mess with the ships pulling away from Ireland, and were blamed for many shipwrecks along the rocky coast.

Changlings - As legend has it, female fairies often give birth to deformed children. Since the fairies prefer visually pleasing babies, they would go into the mortal world and swap with a healthy human baby, leaving behind a changeling. While the changeling looked like a human baby, it carried none of the same emotional characteristics. The changeling was only happy when misfortune or grief happened in the house. The changeling legend has lasted for centuries. William Shakespeare talks of a changeling in his play, “A Midsummer’s Night Dream.” Three hundred years later, Scarlett O’Hara believed Rhett Butler’s illegitimate child was a changeling in “Gone with the Wind.”

The Swans of Lir - The story of the Children of Lir comes from the Irish Mythological Cycle. Lir was the lord of the sea. He had a wife and four children. When Lir’s wife died, he married his wife’s sister, Aoife. Aoife was jealous of Lir’s children and wanted to be rid of them. One day Aoife took the children to a lake. While they were swimming she performed a spell on them and turned them into swans. Under the spell the children were to remain swans until they heard the sound of a Christian bell. The swans swam from lake, to river to stream for years, waiting for the sound of that bell, but it wasn’t until St. Patrick came to Ireland that the children could be free of the curse - 900 years later.

Saint Patrick - To most people, St. Patrick is the man who brought a day of good times and green beer to pubs across the world. In reality, St. Patrick wasn’t made a saint until centuries after his death and he wasn’t even Irish. St. Patrick was born in Britain to a wealthy family. During his childhood, he was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Ireland. During his years in slavery he converted to Christianity and once freed, he did spend the rest of his life teaching

the Irish about the Christian religion, but he was soon forgotten after his death. It wasn't until many years later that monks began telling the tale of St. Patrick forcing all the snakes out of Ireland. Something he never could have done as there never were any snakes in Ireland.

Fairies, Faerie Folk, or the Fey - Faeries exist in some form in mythology all over the world but hold a special importance to the Irish. The fairy society in Ireland is thought to be very much alive, and far from Peter Pan's Tinker Bell. An Irish fairy can take any form she wishes, but will usually choose a human form. They are said to be beautiful, powerful and hard to resist, which is unfortunate because most fairies in Ireland love to bring misfortune and bad luck to the mortals who come near them. They go by many names and temperaments, from elemental sorts, to woodland creatures to odd animal-like creatures and supernatural spirits.

Leprechauns - The leprechaun is likely the most widely known type of fairy living in Ireland. Leprechauns have been in existence in Irish legend since the medieval times. Traditionally, leprechauns are tall fairies and often appear to humans as an old man – much different from the modern view of a small, childlike fairy in a green suit. As legend holds, Leprechauns love to collect gold, which they store in a pot and hide at the end of a rainbow. If a human catches a leprechaun, the fairy must grant the human three-wishes before he can be released.

People of the Sidhe - The Irish mythology would usually mention a race name the Sidhe, pronounced as Shee. Historians believe that the Sidhe is another reference to the Tuatha de Danann. The latter was regarded as gods of the earth. There was also a belief that they had the ability to control the crops ripening and the cows' milk production. Thus, people in ancient Ireland worshiped them with sacrifices to have their blessings in return. When the Milesians first arrived in Ireland, they faced the trouble of rotten crops and

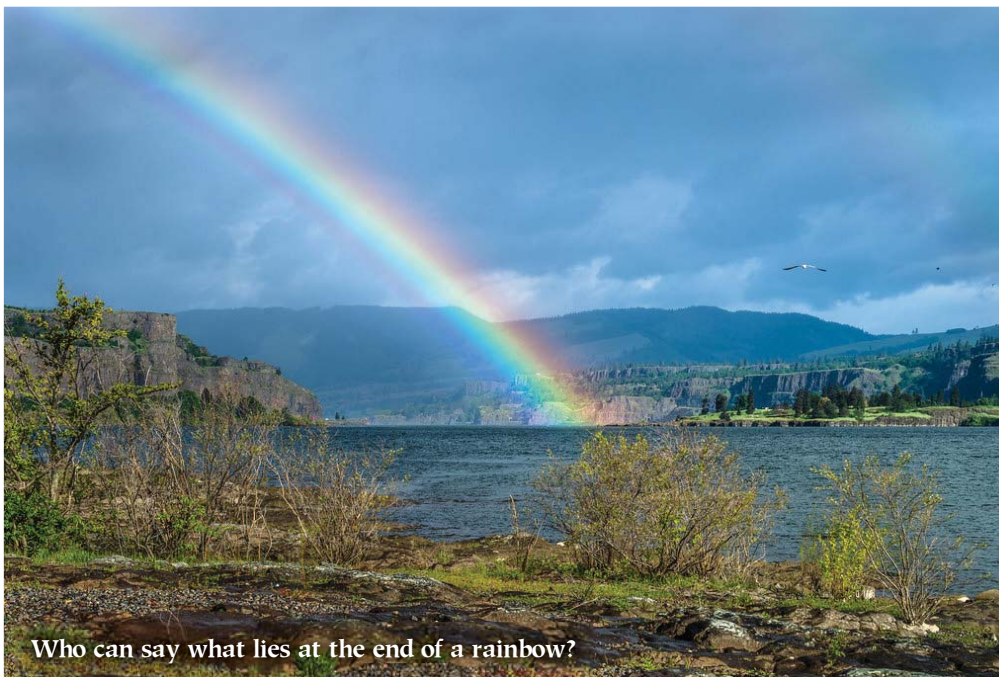
unproductive cows. They blamed the Tuatha de Danann for that incident, thinking that they were avenging for their stolen lands.

Spirits and Ghosts - The veil between the world of the dead and living, was very thin to the Celts. Spirits could take on many forms. Before the gods came to the Celts, they thought the dead still walked the earth and bothered the living, as if they still occupied the same spaces. Ghost would often look like their mortal counterparts, or take on malicious intent if they died poorly, had important business still to do, or were tasked by the gods or fairy folk to guard a particular place. There are no real rules to the dead coming back except cer-

tain times of the year were easier than others for spirits to be seen or cross over to interact with the living. Only one thing seemed to keep them at bay. Have a roaring and raucous party to entertain your friends. The mirth and noise seems to do the trick!

Notes on the Celtic Gods and Goddesses: *I am sure the reader has noted that spelling Celtic names is a bit of an art form. It is important to remember that most of the names (in written form) developed far after the oral tradition and that the grammar rules varied from place to place. Also, the root word meanings varied or changed over time and locations, as well a local dialects and accents accounting for some spelling differences. This had lead to many variations*

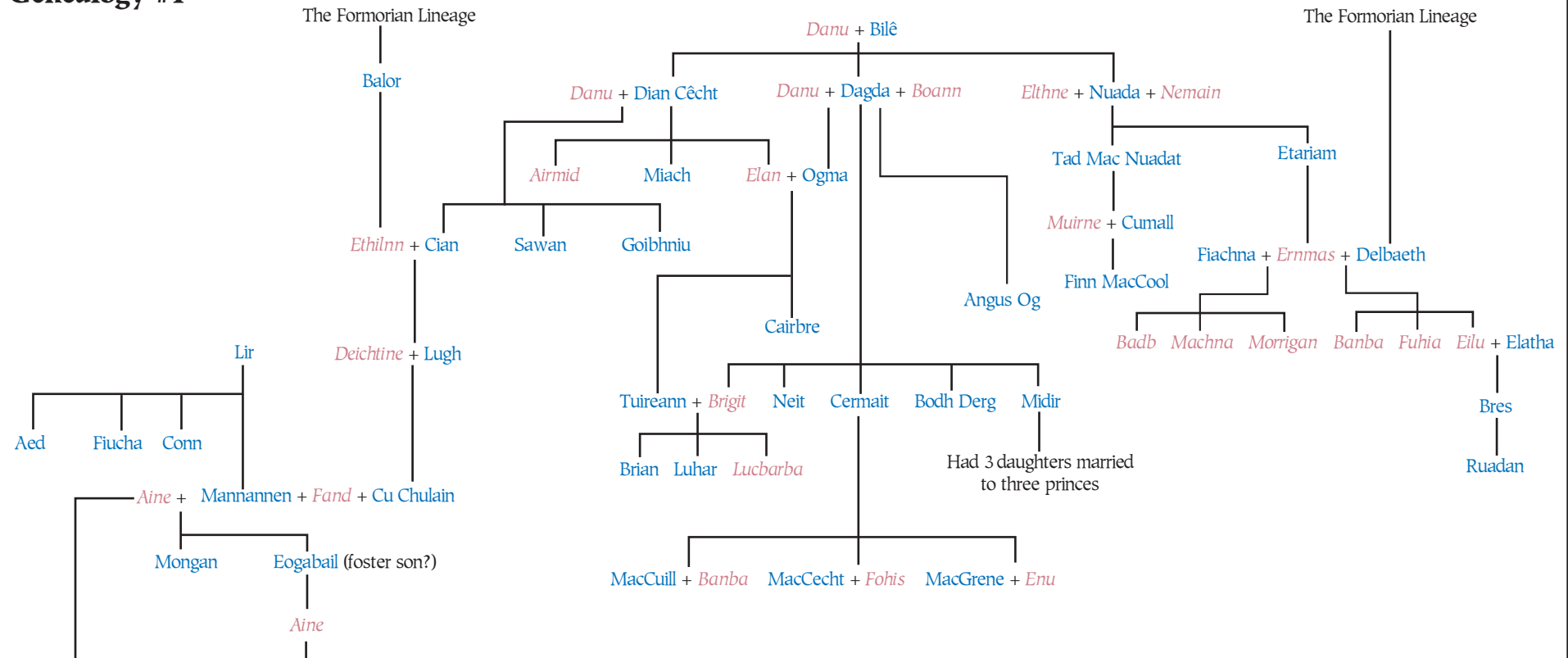
over time on spellings. It is also important to realize almost all the Celtic deities were more like mortals, than immortal gods. They lived and died like many of us. What was notable about them was their knowledge, skill in a particular area, and often their use of magic to affect others, enchant items or change their form. Besides their knowledge of magic, they were very much just like us mortal folk. In order to gain immortal status, the land of Tir na nOg was created to be a kind of haven for them, where no one ages and the land stays in idyllic form. While on Earth, they seemed to be more mortal than godlike.



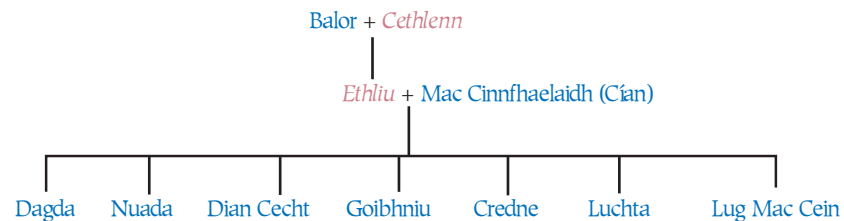
Celtic God Genealogy (Tuatha De Danann) - The Children Of Danu and Ethliu

The genealogy of Irish mythical figures is particularly confusing. Various sources relate the family trees in different ways or provide subtle differences. Being that the clan of gods was named the Tuatha De Danann (children of Danu) I picked this particular variation as my favorite. Depending on your point of reference the family tree of Celtic gods could look very different if pursued from the Formorian lineage. Some prominent gods are not accounted for in all the stories and regional stories can vary greatly.

Genealogy #1



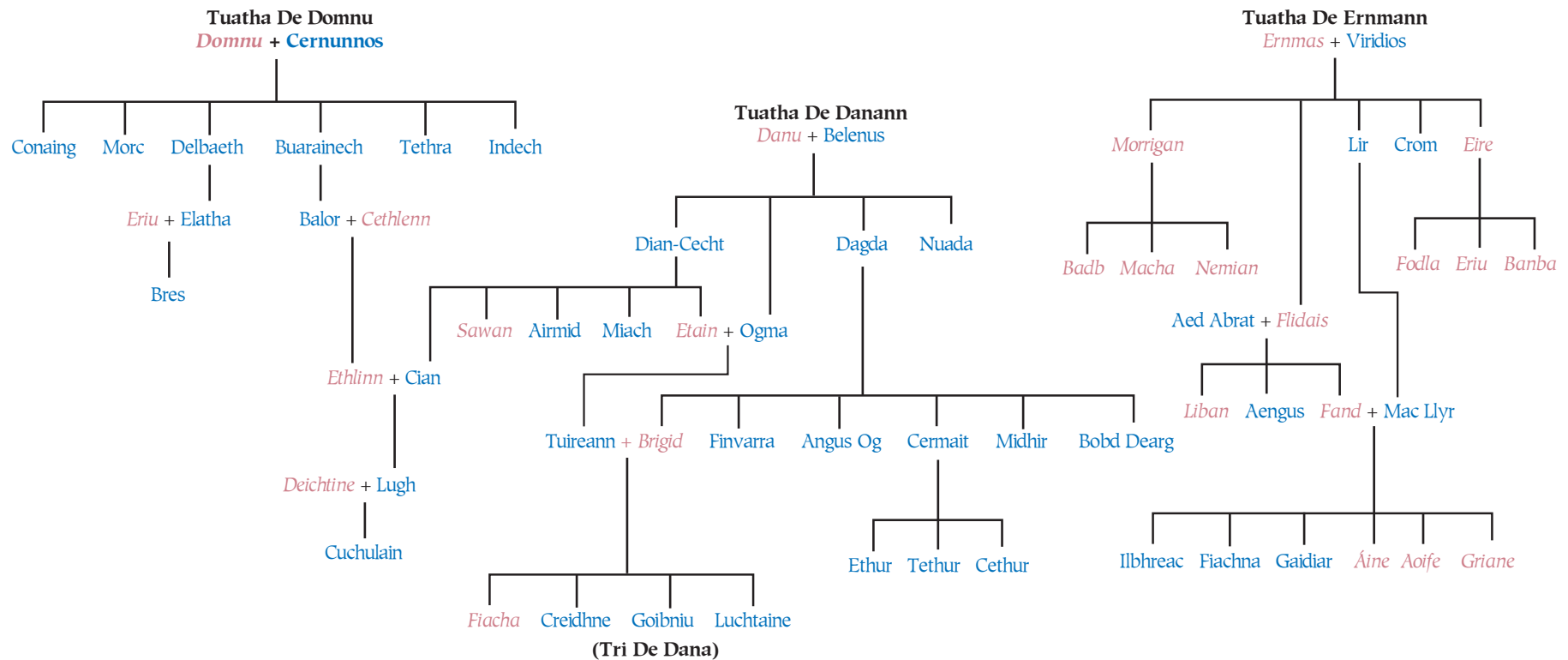
Genealogy #2



Celtic God Genealogy - The Children Of Danu , Domnu and Ernmann

In this third representation of the Celtic Deities, three distinct houses are listed in Genealogy#3. The names in pink are female, while the names in blue are male (on both pages). Because the stories vary so widely from the many different sources, I have provided three very different lineages based on different stories. There are no real similarities, so your guess could be good as any. Ultimately, there is no correct version, perhaps just variants based on point of view on the oral ambiguities passed down over time. Any real historical truthfulness has been lost over the generations that have retold the myths and taken artistic license with them.

Genealogy #3



Note: There is no chronological reference to the different genealogies, only that this-begot-that. The length of the lines do not represent any time frames or reference to other siblings or descendants of other family lines. Genealogy#1 is based on Irish sources, while genealogy#2 is based on the stories on the seven Danann champions of Ethliu (Esarg in some sources). Genealogy#3 is built from multiple local sources of myths and legend.