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**THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF THE GODDESS IN CELTIC AND
CLASSICAL RELIGIOUS BELIEF AS SEEN THROUGH THE
INTERACTION IN THE IMAGERY ASSOCIATED WITH
THEIR GODDESS TYPES**

by

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INTRODUCTION

Between the cultures of The Celtic and the Classical world an interaction in the imagery associated with goddess types arose which crossed the boundaries of civilised and barbaric peoples. This interaction was made possible by the fundamental importance of religion to both cultures. When the Romans swept the barbaric lands they brought their deities with them, but not only did they worship the Classical gods and goddesses, they adopted or made concessions to those of primary importance in the areas they conquered.

This began the interflow between the two cultures, which continued when the Celts chose to favour some imported goddesses. However, examination will show that there was no wholehearted adoption by the Celts of the goddess types of another people. Rather they chose to worship goddesses associated with their own religions, or even to continue to worship native goddesses under the guise of a Classical deity.

The absence of written material relating specifically to this subject made it necessary to compile information from diverse periodicals, essays and the relevant sections of generalised books. In an area where much of what is known today remains partly conjectural, ideas suggested by one author must be considered in the broader context of the study and perhaps related to material evidence, in order to build up a consistent picture. Anne Ross's two books, 'The Pagan Celts' and 'Pagan Celtic Britain', proved invaluable in providing a rich background picture of Celtic religion, drawing information from ancient literary sources and mythology as well as from material remains. Claire Lindgren's clear thesis, 'Classical Art Forms And Celtic Mutations', provided good illustrations and an interpretation of these based on the attributes of the deities and variations in figural type outlined by her. Graham Webster's essay on the pairing of Roman and Celtic deities is a good introduction to this complex area, and Professor E. Anwyl's essay on 'Ancient Celtic Goddesses' provides an overview of the proliferation of dedications to a goddess in a specific area.

This thesis does not attempt to cover all the goddess types which were ever transmitted between both cultures. In many cases localised goddesses could

have been involved in the Romano - Celtic interplay and never have been named in inscriptions or depicted figuratively. The goddess types described were chosen for their importance in outlining the areas of most concern to both societies and the different results that the interaction between the two cultures produced.

CHAPTER ONE
THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION AND THE GODDESS TO
THE CELTS AND ROMAN POLICY TOWARDS
CELTIC RELIGION

It is generally accepted that Celtic society began to emerge around 500 BC to 450 BC, from the indigenous Urnfield people, although some see the earlier Hallstatt D culture as the first of Celtic origin. The Celts expanded into new areas from their territories of northeast France and the middle Rhine, southwards into Italy and to the east through the Balkans and Asia Minor. Celtic culture also spread through to western France and the islands of Ireland and Britain, in each area intermingling with the ancient traditions of these lands.

The Celts were a nomadic people, described by Anne Ross as a "scattered barbarian society" with an economy based on cereal dependent agriculture and animal herding. (Ross, 1986, p.7) The importance of horses and wheeled transport to the Celts can be seen from the bronze cult wagon from Strettweg, Austria, dating to about the seventh century BC. (Fig. 1) Found in a male cremation burial, the cult wagon is illustrative of the huge importance placed on funerary traditions. The ashes of the deceased would have been put in the shallow dish held aloft by the central (female) figure. The scale of this figure in relation to the others and the fact that she carries the ashes indicates that she held a position of some importance. The figure could even represent a goddess connected with the underworld. The cult wagon is indicative of the extraordinary ceremony that surrounded death, and shows how life and religious beliefs were inextricably woven together.

Caesar stated that the Celts were a people 'exceedingly given to religion' and his writings provide us with some of the little written documentation on the Celts. The Celts themselves left no literate records but relied heavily on a oral tradition, handing down mythology and religious beliefs through word of mouth. The written accounts of classical observers, by no means all first hand, must be considered in the light of their own prejudices. The Graeco-

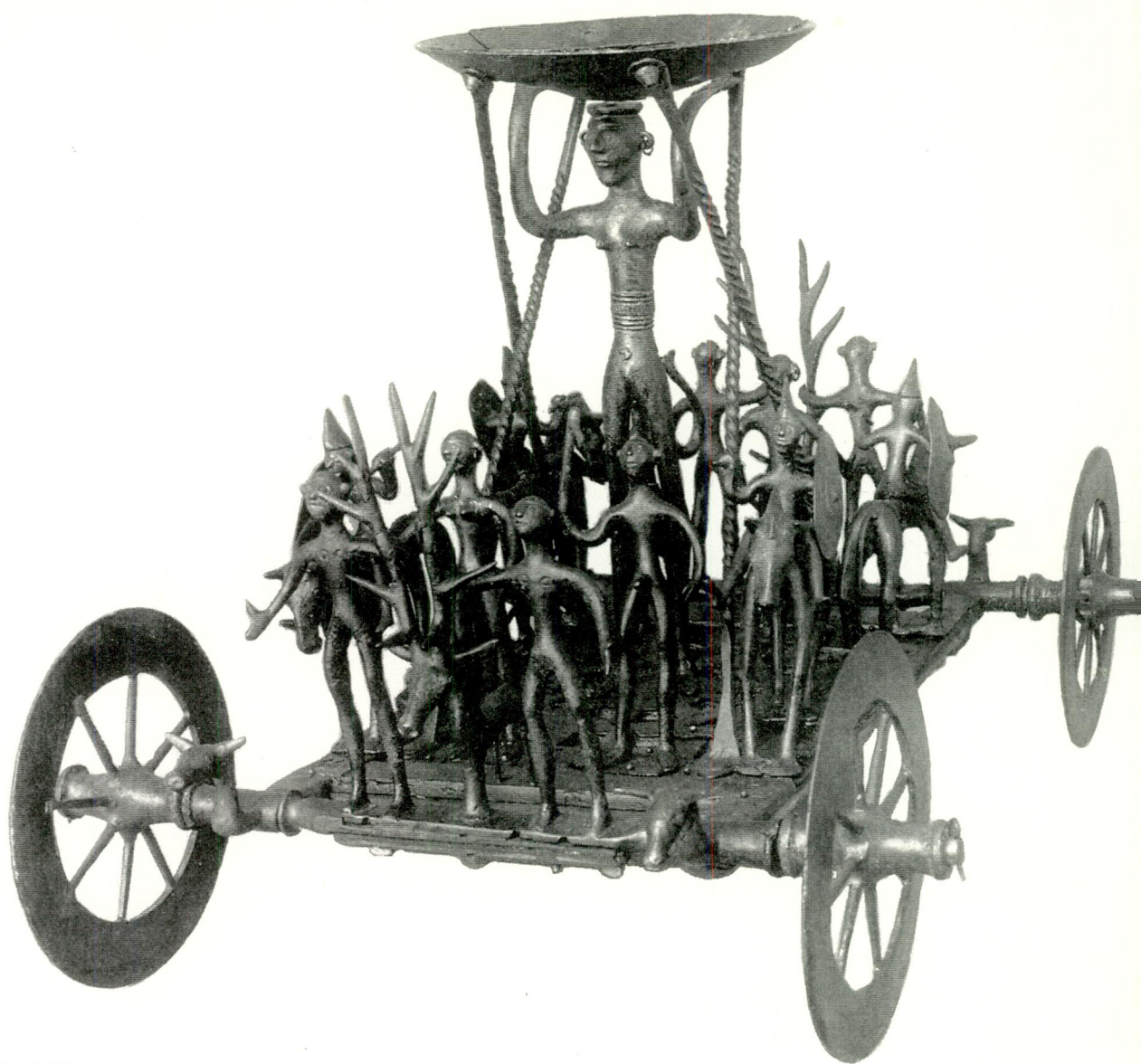


Figure 1 Bronze Cult Wagon, Strettweg, Austria. 7th century BC.



The next difference is in the way it is necessary that a good

Romans regarded the Celts as a barbaric people whose way of life provided a background against which they could measure their own civilisation. (Dept Classical Art, Museum Fine Arts Boston 1978 p.IX).

How then, do we glean any information about Celtic religious concerns, particularly the emphasis they placed on their goddesses? Classical sources provide at least the view of outsiders, however partial this view might have been. Irish and Welsh written sources, such as mythology and codes of law, give us an insight into the types of legends and concepts important to the Celts. Finally, material remains provide the most tangible record of these people, but archaeological finds can never be truly representative when we consider what has been excavated in terms of what must have been lost. However, by piecing together all these elements a picture begins to form, from which a certain amount of information regarding the functions and importance of Celtic goddesses may be gleaned.

These functions must in some sense reflect the function of the woman in Celtic society, and her most potent and striking characteristics. (Ross, 1992, p.266).

Similarly, certain spheres of influence of a goddess must vary according to geographical location and economic importance, even if the main concerns were themselves universal.

As the Celts formed a loosely-knit cultural grouping rather than a single ethnic unit, goddesses with the same concerns could be invoked under different names according to region, and various regions also had their own localised deities.

For example, the goddess Brigid appears in Ireland, in Britain a similar name Brigantia is invoked, whereas in Gaul the goddess is named as 'Brigindu'. Another goddess is named as 'Anu' in Ireland and is equated to the British 'Anna' and the Gaulish 'Anoniredi'. (MacCulloch, 1991, p.125).

The power of the goddess is described in the 'Lebor Gabála Éirenn', 'the Book of the taking of Ireland', where the three goddesses Ériu, Banba and Fódla oppose the invaders of their land through various magical means, (Ross, 1992, p.266). The description also shows the deep concern of the goddess with the

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the existence of solutions of the system of equations

which are satisfied by the functions u_i and v_i in the domain G of the plane.

2. In the second part we shall consider the case when the functions u_i and v_i are assumed to be continuous in the domain G and to satisfy the boundary conditions

on the boundary Γ of the domain G .

3. In the third part we shall consider the case when the functions u_i and v_i are assumed to be continuous in the domain G and to satisfy the boundary conditions

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6. In the sixth part we shall consider the case when the functions u_i and v_i are assumed to be continuous in the domain G and to satisfy the boundary conditions

land, both territorial and in a broader sense with the whole earth. This concern is manifested in various ways in Celtic iconography, supported by the vernacular tradition.

Perhaps because of the goddess's fundamental link with the land, there appears to be no Celtic goddess of love and beauty like the Classical Venus. Rather the emphasis is placed on fertility and life giving aspects.

Similarly the Celtic goddesses are associated with war, in a society where the women participated in battle along with their menfolk. Reports of Celtic women of outstanding bravery exist in Classical literature, and the Greek authors who tell of them were particularly struck by their deeds in comparison with the restricted Greek women. (Rankin, 1987, p.245).

Celtic war goddesses intervene in battle through magical means, the triple Mórrígan of Irish legend changing at will into ravens and back again. Their influence is not benevolent even if it is protective, unlike that of the Classical Athena who exists to inspire men and to uphold right through her nobility and purity.

Anne Ross summarises the Celtic goddesses as powerful female deities concerned with the earth, the fertility of crops and stock, with sexual pleasures and with war in its magical aspects. (Ross, 1986, p.128) Thus it is not surprising that when the Romans began to conquer the Celtic realms they sought to control the nature of Celtic deities by containing them within the regulated orders of the Roman pantheon. Yet "Celtic religion like Celtic art and the Celts themselves was stubbornly resistant to assimilation, adapting only so far as was necessary for survival". (Megaw, 1989, p.23.)

This, however, did not necessarily present a problem for the conquering Romans. They adopted a policy of absorbing the local deities into their own religious belief systems, and imposing their Classical gods and goddesses on the Celts. What they regarded as a Roman interpretation of the gods of the Celts had its inseparable complement in a Celtic reinterpretation of Graeco-

Roman deities to express Celtic ideas, described by J.J. Hatt as "Interpretatio Romano - Interpretatio Gallica" (Hatt, 1970, p.244).

Due to the fact that religion was so closely bound with politics and administration in the Roman world, they established a provincial centre of the imperial cult in Gaul. The altar at Lyons was to enable the Celts to join in personal worship of the goddess Roma and the emperor Augustus. This altar appears to have been designed with consideration of native building structures, a measure which indicates how far the Romans wanted the Celts to be assimilated with their religion while still appearing to recognise the need for native continuity. Similarly, although the Celtic druids were undoubtedly persecuted during some periods of Roman rule, they were not destroyed and probably had a large input into the 'Interpretatio Gallica' of the Classical deities.

Although the non Greeks or Romans were considered barbarians they could be educated in the Classical traditions if they adopted the language, artifacts and gods of the Graeco-Roman world. In fact, the barbarians who lived away from city centres became important to the Roman Empire as a source of new ideas (Dept. Classical Art, Museum Fine Arts Boston, 1976, p.VII). For this reason the interaction between the Celtic and Classical tradition was not discouraged, and allowed the Celts to continue some of their inherent religious beliefs under the mantle of Classical deities.

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CHAPTER TWO

FERTILITY

VENUS - GODDESS OF LOVE AND FERTILITY

In a society where the lives of the people were so dependent on the land and seasonal cycles, it is not surprising that their goddesses should be primarily concerned with these aspects. Thus there is a proliferation of Celtic goddesses of fertility and childbirth, both regional and more widespread. In fact, the fertility element is common to almost all Celtic female deities, regardless of their other spheres of influence. Classical goddesses, however, do not have the same all-embracing fertility aspect, but rather were invoked as patrons of love, wisdom or beauty. Indeed, in the hierarchy of Classical gods and goddesses, Zeus triumphs for his ability to give birth to his children Athena and Dionysus, adding that most fundamental of female powers to his list of attributes and abilities.

When this difference between Celtic and Classical concerns is considered, it seems strange that Venus, the Classical goddess of love, would have appeared to have been almost as favoured as those Classical deities listed by Caesar as being most popular with the Celts - Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva. However, examination of various representations of Venus indicates that the Celts recognised in her a vehicle for the expression of their own concerns.

Venus is the Roman counterpart of the Greek Aphrodite, and veneration of her as goddess of love and beauty is probably of Eastern derivation. Although her earliest associations are as a fertility goddess or as protectress of vegetation and gardens, to the Graeco-Romans she became the goddess of pure and idealised love and beauty as well as of lust and seduction. These twin Venuses are known as Venus Coelestis and Venus Naturalis. (Clark, 1956, p.64.)

The figural depictions of Venus by the Graeco-Romans spring from the Greek

concept where man is the measure for all, expressed through idealised natural proportions and aesthetically satisfying ratios. This concept sees spirit and body as one, therefore if the body is perfect and pure in its beauty the spirit is likewise.

The philosophical significance of beauty in Classical culture would have been irrelevant to the Celts. Their depictions of Venus are testament to this, placing emphasis on bodily functions rather than on ideal Classical ratios. Their concerns with the land and fertility could have caused the Celts to adopt Venus for her earliest associations, but more probably they chose to do so because they realised that figurative representations of this Classical goddess could express one of the most important aspects of Celtic ideology, fertility.

Mythology tells of the birth of Aphrodite from the foam of the sea, and this association with water could also have been of some importance to the Celts, who were concerned with its healing and regenerative qualities. A relief stone carving from High Rochester, Northumberland, depicts a central goddess with two water nymphs, identified as Venus because of her 'crouching Aphrodite' position with her hands to her hair arranging it. (Lindgren, 1980, p.83) (Fig. 2) This depiction of Venus indicates her link with water, and the fact that she appears with two nymphs could have had some significance in terms of triplication, such as at the Shrine of the Three Nymphs at Carrawburgh. (Fig. 3)

The Classical Venus was a deity of much public note, being named frequently in dedications, having temples erected to her and even being used as a reverse type on imperial coinage. (Fig. 4.) Public sculptures of the goddess were large scale, emphasising her beauty and the aesthetic ratios of proportion beloved by naturalistic Classical sculptors. In direct contrast to this public worship are the representations of Venus found in Britain and Gaul. She appears to have been favoured by those in a lower stratum of society, for although no inscription to her appears, the large number of small statuettes and pipe-clay figurines indicate her immense popularity. Pipe-clay figurines of Venus were often used as votive offerings, and it has been suggested that many



Figure 2 Venus, High Rochester, Northumberland. 2nd, 3rd or early 4th century AD.



Figure 3 Shrine of the Three Nymphs, Carrawburgh.



Figure 4 Venus as reverse type on imperial coinage.

- (i) Denarius of Augustus with reverse of Venus, 28-26 BC.
- (ii) Denarius of C. Considius Nonianus with obverse of Venus Erycina, 63-62 BC.
- (iii) Denarius of M. Cordius Rufus with reverse of Venus Verticordia, 46 BC.

homes would even have had shrines to the goddess. (Lloyd Morgan, 1986, p.184) Votive offerings indicate a deep human need, in this case for fertility and a safe delivery during childbirth. Indeed, a statuette of Venus has been found at the Sanctuary of the Great Mother at Ostia. (Lloyd Morgan, 1986, p.184) This would appear to signify a double wish for fertility or a safe pregnancy.

The Celtic representations of Venus, identified as such for their similarity with the usual Venus depictions outlined by Lindgren, illustrate their concerns. (Lindgren, 1980 p.73)¹ For example, a bronze statuette of Venus from Bokerly Dyke in Dorset, dating to the third or fourth century, shows how the emphasis was placed on the stomach and pubic area, implying fecundity and fertility aspects. (Fig. 5) This emphasis would appear to have been deliberate, despite the awkward contraposto and lengthened torso that indicate the misunderstanding of mediterranean style by a native craftsman. Similarly, the many pipe-clay figurines found, illustrate Celtic concern with female bodily functions, despite the attention paid to attaining a Classical type format. (Fig. 6)

Perhaps one of the most startling of these Venus depictions is the mosaic from the Roman villa at Rudston, England. (Fig. 7) The nude female figure holds a mirror in her left hand and an apple, which according to legend was awarded to her by Paris for her great beauty, in her right. These attributes identify the figure as Venus, for her facial features are heavily abstracted and show great Celtic influence, while her body is shaped like a pregnant pear. (Lindgren, 1980, p.85) The figure to her right is thought to be a conflation of a triton or mermaid with the goddess's son Cupid. (Stead, 1980, p.134) In this context it appears to represent a link with her fertile, healing water association.

Interestingly, even in areas further removed from Roman influence, figurines have been found which illustrate similarities with a Venus type. A bronze figurine from Neuvy-en-Sullias, Loiret, France, dated to between the first century BC and the first century AD, holds her hand up as if arranging her hair, and stands in a manner reminiscent of the 'Venus Anadyomene' type

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Figure 5 Venus, Bokerly Dyke, Dorset. 3rd/4th century AD. Bronze.



This is not a true statement. It is a false statement.



Figure 6 Venus, 2nd/3rd century. Pipe clay.



Figure 7 Venus, Rudston Roman Villa. 4th century AD. Mosaic, British stone.

described by Lindgren. (Fig.8) The 'Venus Pudica' type is called to mind by a bronze figurine from Kunjic, Yugoslavia, dated to the first century BC. (Fig.9) Both these figurines illustrate the elongated torso, emphasised pubic area and abstracted facial features characteristic of Celtic depictions of Venus, despite their similarities with Classical figural types.

Another aspect of the Celtic Venus is her association with symbols of concentric circles and star-type shapes, thought to be solar signs implying seasonal cycles and fertility. (Fig.10) Whether these depictions of the goddess are actually of Venus or simply of any fertility goddess cannot be certain, what they do illustrate is the continuing use of Classical iconography to express Celtic concerns.

THE MOTHER GODDESSES

Just as Venus was worshipped privately by the Celts as a fertility goddess, so too were the mother goddesses. In fact, finds from the temple of Argentomagus, France, indicate that these deities certainly shared similar concerns, and perhaps were even worshipped simultaneously by the people of this area. Excavation of the fountain near the temple revealed that it had been filled by numerous terracotta representations of Venus and the mother goddess, as well as other articles such as pins and spatulas that suggest the existence of a fertility cult.

The mother goddess is probably a continuation of the early earth goddess common to nearly all societies and concerned with the fertility and prosperity of people and land in the broadest terms. Her continuing importance to the Celts is attested to by such legendary accounts as that of the three Irish goddesses Ériu, Banba and Fódla who protected their land with such bravery, and by the belief in goddesses such as Brigid. The fact that the Celts regarded the mother goddess as an absolute necessity can be seen in the presence of a statuette of the goddess in the ante-room of the Mithraeum, Carrawburgh, Northumberland. (Ross, 1992, pp.265,6) This illustrates just how strong the belief in powers exclusively female was, to place such a



Figure 8 Figurine, Neuvy-en-Sullias, France.
1st century BC - 1st century AD. Bronze.



Figure 9 Figurine, Kunjic, Yugoslavia.
1st century BC. Bronze.



Figure 10 Figurine, Allier, France. Pipe-clay.

statuette in the vicinity of a strictly male cult.

It appears that although the Romans had lost any early worship of an earth goddess through the establishment of a pantheon of deities on patriarchial terms, their influence did generate the figural representation of the Celtic mother goddess. Roman worship of the goddess would appear to have been based on their prosperity aspect and on their influence over the wellbeing of people and armies. The context and content of inscriptions to the *matres* indicates their importance to the Roman military forces.

The private worship of the mother goddess is indicated by small scale figurines usually made of pipe clay, although occasionally of bronze. These figurines were probably used when praying to the goddess for fertility, a safe pregnancy or the health of new-born babies. The presence of pipe-clay images at shrines such as at Trier and Alesia suggest that they were used as votive offerings. Indeed, the demand for these images was so high that it is thought they were manufactured in workshops in the Rhineland or Central Gaul. (Green, 1986, p.89) A figurine of the mother goddess holding two children, from Toulon-sur-Allier, illustrates how the fertility aspect was enhanced through various attributes of the goddess, such as children, fruit and cornucopiae. (Fig. 11)

A relief of a mother goddess from Bewcastle, Cumberland, shows her sitting on a chair which has a back, curved arms and legs and seems to place her in a position of authority. She holds a pile of fruit in her lap, emblems of fertility and plenty. A goddess from Ashcroft in Cirencester holds three apples, the number probably having a special significance. (Fig. 12) A depiction of the goddess from Caerwent, Wales, is identified as a mother goddess by her typical seated pose, and the context she was found in, at the bottom of the well, indicates the water association of the mother goddesses. (Fig. 13) However, the figural form is extremely simplified, not to say abstracted, and the facial features imply a strong Celtic background. This is unusual in the terms of the other depictions which suggest the Celtic stylisation of mediterranean naturalism. A bronze statuette from Woodeaton, Oxfordshire, dating to the third or fourth century, is suggested by Lindgren to



Figure 11 Figurines, Toulon sur Allier, France
Pipe-clay.



Figure 12 Mother goddess, Ashcroft, Cirencester.



Figure 13 Seated goddess, Caerwent, Wales.



be a conflation of the classical goddess Venus with the Celtic mother goddess. (Lindgren, 1980, p.78) (Fig. 14) Perhaps an image such as this would hold a special power through the bringing together of the two most revered goddesses of fertility.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the *deae matre* or mother goddess cult is the triplication of the deity. This triple form, although an established Celtic concept, was imported representationally in Roman times. (Ross, 1982, p.267) T.G.E. Powell suggests that the triplication in Celtic iconography means the triplication of potency rather than the bringing together of three different aspects. (Powell, 1958). However, seldom are the three goddesses depicted without variation, even if only of attributes. R. Graves summarises the triplication of pagan goddesses into a cycle of Maiden, Mother and Crone, meaning beginning, increasing and destroying. (Stewart, 1990, p.63) While this theory would fit well into the ancient division of the year into three seasons, Spring, Summer and Winter, and thus with the Celtic concern with seasonal changes, the triple matres are not depicted as a young girl, a mature woman and an old woman. It would seem that the triplication of the mother goddesses springs from the Celtic belief in the power of threeness, probably both to enforce their influence and to link them with seasonal cycles of fertility, birth and regeneration, primary concerns of the Celtic goddesses.

The Roman influence in the depiction of the triple matres can be seen in a plaque from Cirencester. (Fig. 15) Although the stylisation of the folds of cloth and the treatment of the hair point to a Celtic sculptor, the hairstyles and robes themselves are Classical, and the full-frontal sitting poses display an interest in perspective. The mothers hold bread and fruit in baskets, symbols of their fertility and abundance.

Another plaque from Cirencester shows the mothers with fruits, the central goddess holding a child. (Fig. 16) A relief from Cirencester shows the goddesses sitting in a relaxed attitude, with children and dogs playing around them. (Fig. 17) Dogs occur as an attribute of the matres possibly because of their healing association - its lick was thought to have curative powers. A



Figure 14 Statuette, Woodeaton, Oxfordshire. 3rd/4th century. Bronze.

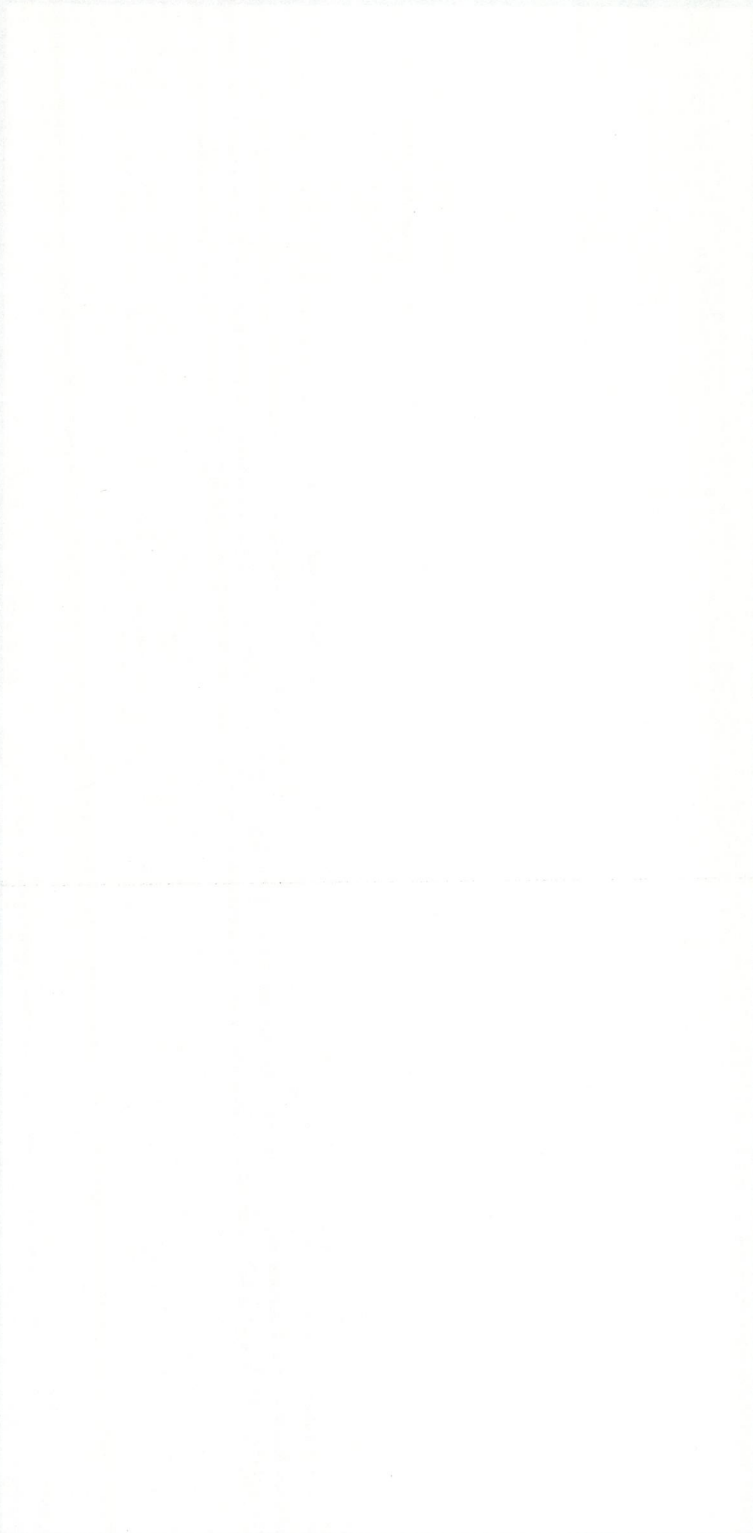




Figure 15 Plaque of the Triple Mothers, Cirencester.



Figure 16 Triple Mothers with fruit and baby, Cirencester.

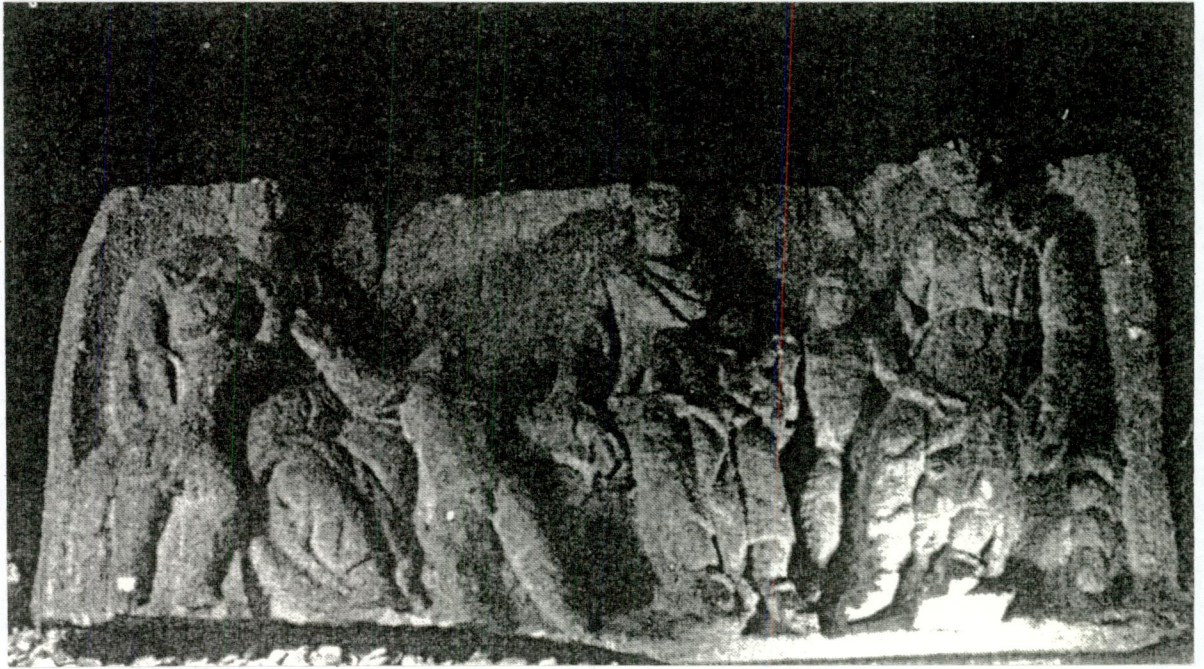


Figure 17 Relief of the Triple Mothers with children and dogs, Cirencester.

relief from Blackfriars in London, found re-used as foundation material in a late Roman wall there, shows four mother goddesses. Its use in a particularly Roman context may indicate an importance other than that of fertility, as may the four goddesses rather than three. This however, could be due to the sculptor, who appears quite skilled in naturalistic carving, and may have been a particularly Romanised native. Or indeed, the relief may have been imported.

A limestone altar dedicated to the three mothers is found in Bonn, dating to 164 AD. (Fig. 18) The Classical influence is apparent in the treatment of the drapery and facial features. The two older mothers who flank the central goddess have enormous headdresses, possibly deriving from native Rhineland headgear. The young girl and two older women may suggest the concepts of beginning and increasing fertility and thus of seasonal changes. Three figures look over the back of the seat, possibly the donor of the altar with his wife and daughter. (Toynbee, 1965, p.253) Goddesses in Gaul often appear with a variety of deities such as Epona, Mercury and Mars. The linking of Epona with the matres would appear to reaffirm her early context as a goddess connected with the earth, fertility and prosperity. Where Classical deities appear with the matres it is probably testament to their importance among Celtic deities and their all-embracing fertility and prosperity roles.

THE CONSORT GODDESS - THE PAIRING OF DEITIES IN A FERTILITY CONTEXT

Given that fertility seems to be such an important sphere of influence for Celtic female deities, instances where a goddess associated with fertility appears as consort of a god must have some significance. Although Classical gods sometimes had consorts, for example Juno and Jupiter, it was only under Celtic influence that gods such as Mercury, Apollo and Mars acquired regular consorts. The idea could have been developed from Irish vernacular tradition, where powerful goddesses mated with mortal sovereigns in order to consolidate their control of the land. It is possible that because the Celts regarded fertility as a female aspect they paired an associated goddess with a male god whose fertility attributes might otherwise have been defunct to them.



Figure 18 Limestone altar, Bonn. 164 AD.



On a relief from Gloucestershire, Mercury is accompanied by two goddesses.

The one in the centre of the group appears to be occupying a position of importance and has a larger head than the two accompanying deities. If she represents a mother goddess, then Mercury would come into contact with her fecundity powers through association. Classically Mercury is responsible for such diversified roles as messenger of the gods, protector of crops and herds and patron of profit. To the Celts he is primarily a god of prosperity, but when accompanied by his Celtic consort Rosmerta the couple can also become associated with fertility. Rosmerta's usual attribute, the cornucopiae, often shown overflowing with fruit, link her to the mother goddess type. A relief from Glanum shows Mercury and Rosmerta with a tortoise, purse, goat and the traditional caduceus used by Mercury to guide souls to the underworld. (Fig. 19) Rosmerta holds a fruit filled cornucopiae thus bringing the attribute of fertility and abundance to the couple.

A relief from Alesia shows a seated god and goddess, he is holding a lance, she holds a cornucopiae, surmounted by what appears to be a basket of bread or fruit. (Green, 1989, p.66) (Fig.20). Although the lance is an attribute of a warrior, his association with the fecundity of the goddess seems to cause the god to be seen in a more beneficent role, perhaps as protector or ruler of a tribe. Thus the couple could belong to father goddess, mother goddess type, an example of which is thought to be illustrated by the relief from East Stoke, Nottinghamshire. (Ross, 1992, p.274) (Fig. 21) The figures of the god and goddess each stand in a separate niche, the goddess holding some attribute in her hands, the god holding what is probably a hammer. If so, this couple could be, as suggested by Toynbee, identified with the couple Sucellus and Nantosuelta from Gaul. (Ross, 1992, p.274) Sucellus is a Celtic god sometimes associated with a healing cult, sometimes with forests, wildlife and nature. These aspects are all also associated with female deities, thus the presence of his female consort, Nantosuelta, often holding cornucopiae and fruit, would generalise the couple's spheres of influence as healers or deities of nature, by the addition of emblems of abundance and fertility. (Figs. 22,23)

The couple Sucellus and Nantosuelta illustrate how the pairing of a goddess



Figure 19 Relief of Mercury and Rosmerta, Glanum.



Figure 20 Relief of Mercury and Rosmerta, Alesia.



Figure 21 Relief of god and goddess, East Stoke, Nottinghamshire.

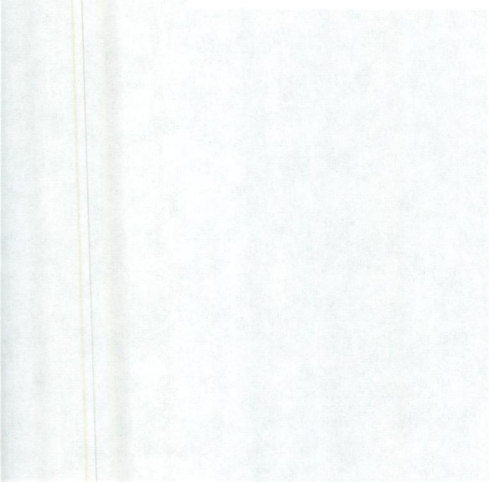




Figure 22 Seated couple with hammer, cornucopiae and jar, Dijon.



Figure 23 Seated couple with hammer, cornucopiae and pot, Pagny-la-Ville.

concerned with fertility with a male deity, imbue the couple and thus the god, with her associated powers. They also illustrate how this pairing of deities was not confined to a Classical god with Celtic female consort. Such instances probably had a certain significance for the Celts, however, in the light of the mythological mating of a goddess with a mortal sovereign. A Celtic goddess as consort of a Classical god may have not only allowed them to include fertility with the associated powers of the god, but may also have given them a certain amount of control over the Classical deity.

The fact that fertility was a fundamental goddess concern for the Celts is clearly shown by their adaptation of the Classical Venus as a fertility goddess.

The popularity of a Classical deity who could be used to express their own concerns in a figurative manner, whilst still paying lip service to the Roman ideology, is testament to the Celt's adherence to their intrinsic values. The mother goddesses, especially the triple matres, seem to be particularly Romano-Celtic in the use of a Roman figural format to express an inherent Celtic concept. They also express the interaction between Celtic and Classical goddess types well, for while the Romans may have venerated them primarily as goddesses of prosperity, to the Celts they were responsible for fertility and life-giving aspects.

NOTES

(1) LINDGREN, 1980, p.73.

- (i) Venus Anadyomene: standing, nude. Venus newly risen from the sea, wringing/arranging her hair.
- (ii) Venus Pudica: standing, nude. Venus attempting to cover her breasts and pubic area with her hands.
- (iii) Knidian Aphrodite: standing, nude. Venus about to enter her ritual bath, left hand placing drapery on an urn, right hand concealing part of the pubic area.
- (iv) Crouching Aphrodite (Rhodian): nude Venus in a crouching position, hands to her hair arranging it.
- (v) Nude Venus standing on her right leg, removing her left sandal with her right hand and leaning with her left hand on a pillar for support.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HEALING ASPECT

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALING TO BOTH CULTURES

The importance placed on the aspect of healing was probably equal between the Classical and Celtic cultures. As illness and disease were largely uncontrollable by mortals, it is not surprising that the gods and goddesses of a people were invoked to restore an ailing member of the community to health.

Female deities, with their fundamental role in fertility and regeneration, were very often associated with healing cults. Goddesses, particularly those of the Celts, also had connections with water and thus had the powers of its healing aspect within their spheres of influence.

The sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis at Nemi, where a forest surrounds a lake, illustrates the Classical belief in her healing cult. Although the worship of Diana at Nemi possibly began with the early goddesses Egeria and Virbius, the former a nymph of a nearby spring, also venerated as a birth goddess, the latter associated with the lake there, by the sixth century BC it is thought that the cult at Nemi began associations with that of the temple of Diana on the Aventine, and thus with Rome. (Blagg, 1986, p.211)

The votive offerings found on the site illustrate how the Romans chose to worship the health aspect of Diana rather than her early fertility and birth aspects. The votive terracottas, the earliest dating to the late fourth century BC, are possibly mould made and as such would signify the widespread popularity of the cult, even to the lower classes who could afford mass-produced items. The statuettes of the deities mostly portray Diana, although Minerva, also associated with healing, Apollo and Dionysus also occur. Most of the figurines are of women which indicates a primarily matrifocal healing cult, and although a few of the anatomical votives suggest uteri, or seated couples with children, the majority are of heads, eyes, feet and hands. These models would be of the parts of the body that needed attention, and, in a sense, would be used to pay the goddess Diana in advance for the cure they hoped would be effected. Images of the goddess herself or indeed of the supplicant would have held a similar function.

The Celts also made representations of the body parts that were ailing them. At Sources-de-la-Seine, northwest of Dijon in France, about three hundred wooden 'ex-voto' offerings were found in the pool of the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of the goddess Sequana, probably dating to the first century. However, the carvings, which include human heads, ribcages, viscera and a hernia, show no sign of Classical influence and so are probably older and of purely Celtic origin. Representations of men and women were also found, thought to be travellers or pilgrims because of the cloaks and hoods that they appear to be wearing. (Dillon, 1972, p.289) (Fig.24) However, hooded figures found in Britain appear in contexts that suggest healing or fertility. A relief from Aquae Sulis shows the deities Loucetius and Nemetona, and three small hooded figures below. Loucetius is associated with healing and equated with Mars, and the name Nemetona is thought to mean 'Goddess of the Sacred Grove'. (Ross, 1992, p.57) Groves, particularly of oak, are another important cult site for the Celts. Interestingly, the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi is situated where a forest surrounds a lake. Another hooded figure, from Cirencester, is depicted holding an egg-shaped object and standing beside a seated mother goddess type figure. By association with the fertility and healing aspects of the mother goddess, and holding a symbol of fertility and birth, the hooded god probably has some function in this area.

Another sanctuary in France, at Source-de-la-Roche at Chamalières, revealed several thousand wooden statues and ex-voto carvings of body parts in a thermal spring. The representations show mediterranean influence in the naturalism of the carving, although the female head illustrated wears a torc and has the stylised oval eyes typical of Celtic art. (Fig. 25) The figure, probably dating to the middle of the first century BC, is stamped with the name 'S(CO)UTO', possibly the name of the supplicant.

The position of shrines and deposits of votive offerings at the source of a river is noticeable, and could be connected with beginnings and the purity of new water. However, it is the flowing water, the rivers, with which the goddesses of the Celts are associated. Just as Sequana is the goddess of the Seine, Sinnan is the goddess of the Shannon, Sabrina of the Severn, Icauna of the



24



25

Figure 24 Sculpture, Sources-de-la-Seine, France. Wood.

Figure 25 Female head, Source-de-la-Roche, Chamlières, France. 1st century AD. Wood.



Yonne and Clota of the Clyde. (MacCulloch, 1991, p.43) A similarly named goddess, Clutoissa or Clutoidda, appears on two inscriptions near a spring with a reputation for healing fevers at Mesves-sur-Loire. (Anwyl, 1906, p.41)

Although the Roman cult of water deities, such as Neptune and Poseidon, was to a large extent concerned with male gods, the interpenetration of Roman and the willingness of the Romans to adopt native deities led to the development of the water cult between both cultures. Indeed, as Anne Ross writes, "it provided one sphere in which the two traditions, Roman and native, could most easily become combined". (Ross, 1992, p.59)

The Celtic goddesses Verbeia and Brigantia of North Britain were both concerned with water and healing cults. An inscription at Newtown of Irthington reads 'Deae Nymphae Brig(antia)'. (Anwyl, 1906, p.46) It is probable that representations of Brigantia and other native river goddesses took the form of water nymphs, such as Coventina of Carrawburgh, in Roman times. Perhaps the most obvious example of the combining of the Classical and Celtic traditions can be seen through the conflation of the Roman goddess Minerva with the local goddess Sulis at Bath.

THE CONFLATION OF THE ROMAN MINERVA WITH THE CELTIC SULIS AT BATH

The healing aspect of Minerva, along with her warrior associations, was particularly appealing to the Celts. The importance they placed on goddesses such as the Irish Brigid and Belisima of France, both invoked for their healing water associations and also for the assimilation of the cult of fire to create hot springs, probably led to their adopting of Minerva as patroness of these aspects at Bath. However, the native goddess Sulis of the springs remains a named deity. It is probable then that her cult was important before Roman times, and that the Romans, having no wish to incur the wrath of the Celtic goddess, decided that a joint deity Sulis-Minerva would allow them access to the powers of both their own Minerva and the native Sulis.

The sanctuary of Sulis-Minerva consisted of hot springs, the great baths and the temple with sculptured pediment. The spring is thought to have been the most fundamental aspect of the cult, where the curative waters bubbled forth from the recesses of the underworld. It was here that supplicants to the goddess came to be close to her power. The objects recovered from the spring consist of coins, vessels and curses. Coins and vessels, with some of the metalwork being inscribed to the effect that it was payment for cures hoped for, are expected finds in such a shrine. However, the curses are testament to the underworld aspect of the powerful goddess. Cunliffe describes the standard formula for curses as " 'May the Goddess Sulis make he who', (statement of misdeed), 'whether he be male or female, boy or girl, freedman or slave, pagan or Christian,' (here the retribution). 'It may have been' (followed by a list of suspects)." (Cunliffe, 1986, p.10) If, as attested to by this formula, the goddess who is asked to punish a wrongdoer is named only as Sulis, it would imply that the Celtic goddess inspired a certain amount of fear as well as awe, whereas Minerva was associated only with the more benevolent aspects of the shrine. Perhaps it was this fear that caused the Romans to keep her as a goddess at Bath alongside the imported Minerva. The fact that both Celts and Romans used the shrine is made clear by the inscriptions. In fact, two offerings with military connotations were also found at the spring, a washer from a model ballista and a harness decoration, probably put there by soldiers in thanks for their safety, or in anticipation of a successful campaign.

What is surprising about the sacred spring is that no votive deposits representing parts of the body were found, apart from an ivory carving thought to represent breasts. (Cunliffe, 1986,p.10) The great baths, however, where the visitor would be immersed in the healing waters, possibly eliminated the need for such ex votos. Interestingly, the numerous small paterae that may have been used for the scooping up and pouring of water, are all inscribed to the joint deity 'Sulis-Minerva'.

The sculptural pediment of the temple provides a rich iconographic statement of the cult of Sulis-Minerva. (Fig. 26) The relief sculptures are described by

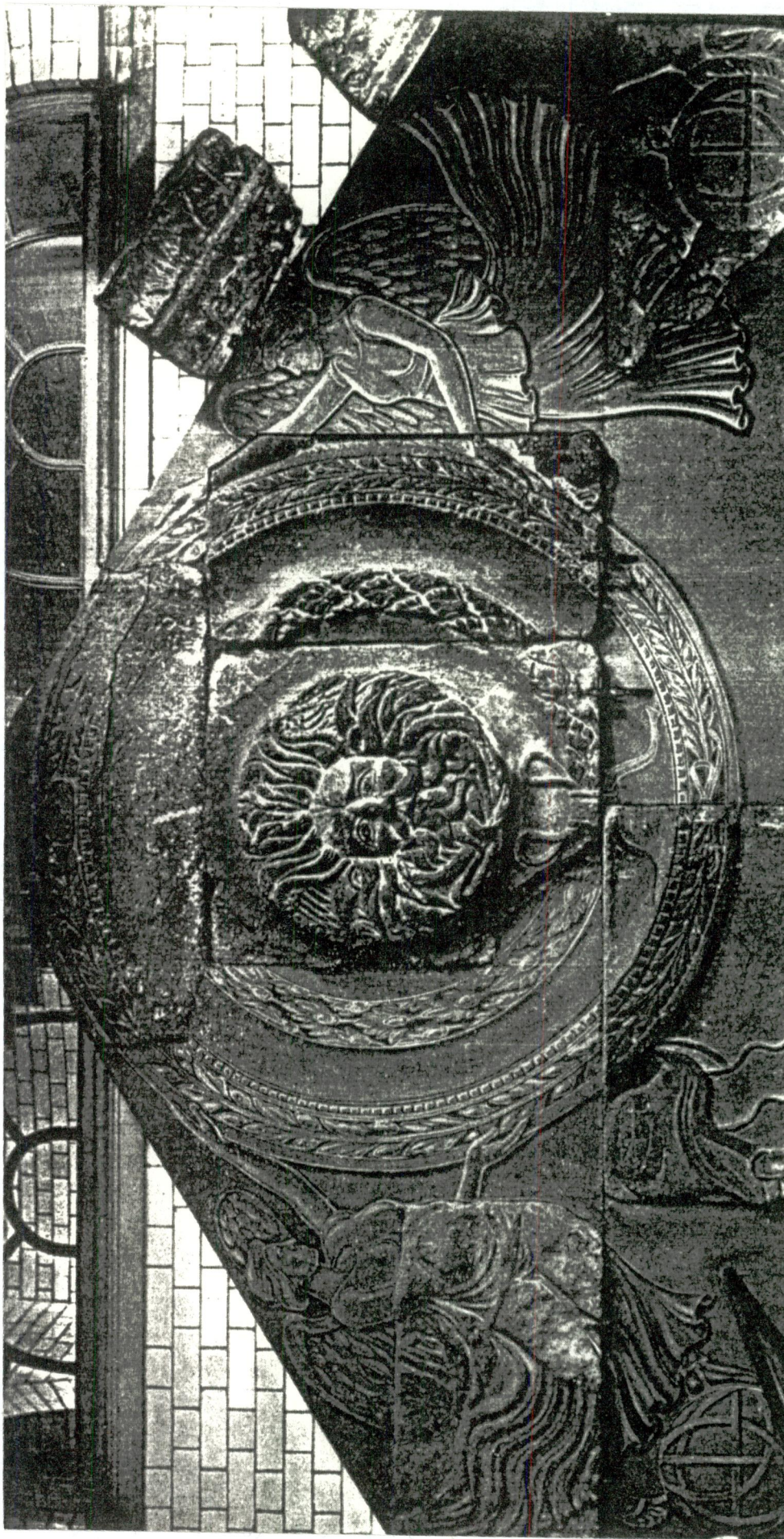


Figure 26 Sculptural pediment of the Temple of Sulis-Minerva, Bath.

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Toynbee as 'the most significant of all extant works of Romano-British plastic art'. (Toynbee, 1955, p.99) The scheme is extremely Classical, with a circular shield upheld by two Victories, their feet resting on globes. This is thought to signify Sulis-Minerva's universal conquest of illness. Although the sculpture is so Classical, the Victories' arms are adorned with jewelled bracelets, probably of Celtic origin. The patterning created by the folds of the robes shows similar influence. Below the left hand of the Victory on the right of the shield, is an owl and hand. These may have topped a helmet, and as such would refer to Minerva's attributes, the owl signifying wisdom and the helmet her warrior aspect. The two male torsos, one beside each Victory, are thought to have ended in long curling mermaid tails. (Toynbee, 1955, p.101) This would make them triton-like creatures, such as that on the Venus mosaic at Rudston Roman villa, and would certainly fit into the water context.

The central shield, ringed by two concentric oak wreaths, is the area where Classical tradition, so carefully laid out in the symmetrical pediment, seems to become interwoven with Celtic concepts. (Fig. 27) The shield consists of a Medusa-like mask, with snakes and wings forming the hair in a swirling, energetic interweaving that shows the strength of Celtic influence. Although the mustached face identifies this personage as male, it has an undeniable reference to the traditional Medusa mask on Minerva's aegis known from Classical mythology. Just as the gaze of the Medusa turned her enemies to stone, it is possible that the grim, scowling visage of the Bath version held some apotropaic significance. Snakes were known to the Celts for their skin sloughing, regenerative abilities and known to both traditions for their health associations. The wings found entwined with the snakes probably had a meaning other than that of Minerva's owl attribute. The Celts associated water birds with the cult of the sun in its healing aspect, and it is possible that the head in some sense represents the deity, whether male or female, of the hot healing springs. The argument that the deity invoked is probably Celtic is given emphasis by the manner in which the mask is carved. Although the artist has some extensive knowledge of Mediterranean art, the carving is flat and linear in the schematised manner of Celtic tradition.



Figure 27 Central shield from pediment, Temple of Sulis-Minerva, Bath.

THE CULT OF THE WATER NYMPH COVENTINA

The use of Classical iconography in a Celtic context can be seen in a relief carving of the triple water nymphs or goddess Coventina, dating to the second or third century AD. (Fig. 28) The relief is in the form of a triptych, each goddess reclining under a Classical type arch, holding an urn from which water flows. A relief from the frieze of the Forum Nervae, surrounding the temple of Minerva in Rome, illustrates a male spring-deity rising from a mountain side pouring a stream of water from his hand, which feeds a river below. The Carrawburgh relief of Coventina was found in a well, and perhaps had a similar meaning, showing Coventina as having power over the waters of that sacred well. This relief is only one of many found in the well which formed the focal point of a small temple to the water goddess, Coventina, in her healing aspect. Another illustrates the goddess holding a water plant in one hand and reclining with her elbow resting on an urn which emits a stream of water. (Fig. 29) The triple image described above could be an intensification in the potency of a single goddess depiction. The importance of Coventina's cult, where her healing aspect was accompanied by mother goddess type influences, is illustrated by the vast number of votive offerings, including pins, bronze votive heads, a bronze dog and horse, pottery, glass, brooches, a shrine bell, a human skull and more than 14,000 coins.

The shrines and dedications to nymphs of springs and wells show the importance the Celts placed on the water goddesses and their healing associations. However, inscriptions also reveal Roman concern with the nymphs, whether as local goddesses or as a format for worshipping their own water deities. The altar at the second well at Carrawburgh is dedicated to 'Nymphis et Genio Loci'. (Smith, 1962, p.62)² This illustrates Roman terminology and their habit of naming 'the god of the place'. An altar at Chester was erected by the Twentieth Legion 'to the nymphs and the springs' thus venerating both the nymphs and their associated healing waters.

The triplication of the goddess Coventina is evidence of the fact that single goddesses were sometimes represented in this manner. Perhaps she had some



Figure 28 Relief carving of the triple water nymph
Coventina, Carrawburgh. 2nd/3rd century AD.

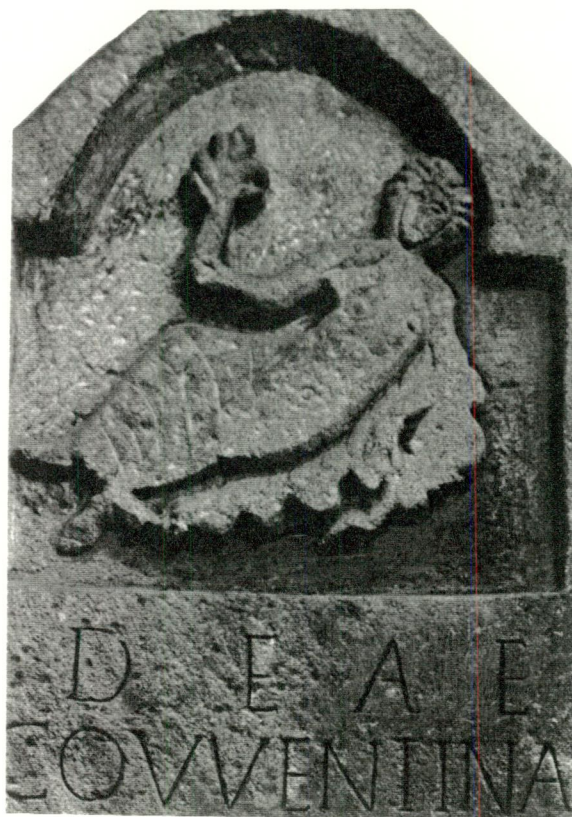


Figure 29 Relief of Coventina, Carrawburgh.

link with the triple matres, for while these deities of a particularly Romano-Celtic type were worshipped by the Celts primarily for their fecundity associations and by the Romans for their prosperity associations, both cultures venerated their healing aspect.

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE MOTHER GODDESSES WITH HEALING

The matres were associated with healing springs at Aix-les-Bains and Gréoulx, a shrine of hot springs in the Durance Valley. There they were known as the matres 'Griselicae'. At Nimes the local god of the spring was called Nemausus, and the matres of that area were termed Nemausicae. The matres Suleviae are known from inscriptions in Gaul and Britain, including those made by the sculptor Sulinus at Bath and Cirencester. Inscriptions and dedications reveal that the matres associated with healing were worshipped by Celts and Romans alike, including soldiers, and that they were of particular importance in London, a most Romanised city.

The triple mother goddesses were all associated with healing to some extent, due to their main concern with fecundity and well-being generally. This is expressed through their attributes such as the cornucopiae, interpreted as a symbol of plenty, whether of fertility, prosperity or increasing health, perhaps depending on the suppliant. Dogs appear with the matres at Cirencester and Ancaster, and were thought to have had healing power in their curative lick. Dogs also appear to have had an independent association with thermal waters. Numerous ex-votos of human figures holding dogs were found at the shrine of the goddess Sequana, and a bronze representation of a terrier was recovered from Coventina's well at Carrawburgh. Single mother goddess representations with dogs have been found at Trier, where the goddess is depicted offering fruit to the dog, or holding corn or baskets of fruit in addition to the animal itself. (Green, 1989, p.28) Images from Aquitaine, Amiens and Cirencester, (Fig. 17) show children as well as dogs with the goddess. This would seem to imply that a fertility aspect accompanied that of the dog's healing role, and emphasises the mother goddess's general spheres of influence as fertility, abundance, health and well-being.

APOLLO AND SIRONA - THE CONSORT GODDESS IN A HEALING CONTEXT

The Classical god Apollo and his Celtic consort goddess Sirona present a particularly interesting aspect in the investigation of the importance of healing.

The fact that evidence of them appears in Romanised areas of Gaul indicates that they were probably worshipped by both Celts and Romans. However, although the Classical Apollo already had connotations as a healer and protector, the Celts found it necessary to give him a consort goddess, established as a deity in her own right, when they venerated his healing abilities.

The name Sirona possibly originated as that of the earth or 'the long-loved one'. (Anwyl, 1906, p.40) Others associate her name with stars. (Green, 1989, p.40) However, either interpretation suggests a goddess connected with regenerative forces. When linked with Sirona, Apollo is given a Celtic surname, 'Grannus', binding him more firmly to the Celts. The couple appear to have been worshipped in connection with healing springs, dedications to them appear at the thermal sanctuary of Hochscheid in the Moselle Valley and at the spring-shrine of Ste-Fontaine. A bronze statue of Sirona and Apollo Grannus from Malain shows Apollo with a lyre, a Classical attribute of the god, and Sirona with a snake, symbol of healing and renewal, around her wrist. (Fig. 30) A stone statue of a goddess from Hochscheid is thought to represent the goddess Sirona. (Green, 1989, p.44). It shows her holding eggs in her left hand while a snake winds around her right arm. The presence of the eggs and the snake, powerful symbols of fertility and regeneration, with the goddess Sirona alone, indicate the spheres of influence with which she was connected. The Celts must have considered these aspects particularly female, and have placed importance on the pairing of an associated native goddess with an imported god, in order to give him influence in these areas.

Thus we have seen that the concerns both cultures had with healing led to the conflation between an associated goddess of each culture being manifested as 'Sulis-Minerva'. The impressive shrine and baths at her cult site, as well as



Figure 30 Statue of Sirona and Apollo, Malain. Bronze.



the numerous dedications, reveal her to have been an important goddess to both the Romans and the Celts. The strong associations of water with the healing cult are revealed again at the sacred well of the nymph Coventina. Probably a native goddess, she was termed and expressed figuratively as a nymph by the Romans, which would have allowed them to identify her with their own water deities. The healing association of the mother goddesses is an aspect of their general concern with well-being. Worshipped by both cultures, they illustrate the combining of two traditions. While other aspects of their influence were more favoured by one culture than another, their healing association appears to have been venerated by both. The pairing of the Celtic goddess Sirona with the Classical Apollo illustrates the emphasis that the Celts placed on healing as a female attribute. It also recalls the Celtic mythological tradition of the mating of the territorial goddess with the mortal sovereign, or the "prototypal coupling of the protecting god of the tribe or nation with the mother-goddess". (MacCana, 1983, pp.146-8)

NOTES

(2) Smith, 1962, p.62

The text of the inscription reads as follows;

NYMPHIS ET GENIO
LOCI . M . HISPANIUS

MODESTINVS . PRAEF
COH . T. BAT . PRO . SE
ET SVIS . L . M

Translated as, 'To the Nymphs and the Genius Loci, Marcus Hispanius Modestinus, Prefect of the First Cohort of Batavians, willingly and deservedly (dedicated this altar) on behalf of himself and his family.'

CHAPTER FOUR

PROSPERITY

ROSMERTA - CONSORT GODDESS OF SUCCESS

The economic prosperity of the Celts relied on their success as animal herders and cereal farmers. Since this success was dependant on such intangible factors as climatic changes, the health of crops and animals and the quality of the land itself, it is not surprising that the Celts turned to deities particularly concerned with prosperity as well as those concerned with the land and the seasons. The Classical god Mercury was introduced to the Celts by the Romans, and his role as patron of prosperity and commercial success was particularly attractive to them. However, although the Celts made numerous representations of Mercury alone, the number of instances that he appears with the goddess Rosmerta must have a special significance.

Although the couple appear throughout Gaul and Britain, the main concentration of inscriptions and dedications to them seems to be around Langres and the Rhine area. (Anwyl, 1906, pp 38,9) The root of Rosmerta's name implies that she may have been called 'the exceedingly brilliant one'. (Anwyl, 1986, p.39) Her usual attributes of cornucopiae and patera establish her as a mother goddess type associated with abundance and fertility. It is possible that her association with Mercury in the area mentioned is indicative of the importance of farming there and the need for an earth goddess. By pairing the Celtic goddess with the Classical god his influence over prosperity and success would transfer to her by association and thus become areas of female concern. It would also serve to put a Celtic stamp on the imported god of prosperity.

A depiction of the couple from Baden in Germany, where there was a temple to the two deities, illustrates the fact that the prosperity role became interchangeable between the two. (Green, 1989, p.38) Both Mercury and Rosmerta hold identical attributes of the purse, symbol of wealth and prosperity, and the caduceus, Mercury's emblem in his Classical role as

messenger of the gods. At Metz the couple share one purse and at Wiesbaden Rosmerta sits on a throne accepting the purse offered to her by Mercury. This would seem to establish her in a role of some importance in relation to the Classical god. This theme appears in a relief from Daglingworth, near Cirencester, although with different deities, where one of three standing hooded gods gives or takes something from a seated goddess. (Ross, 1992, p.272) A monument at Mannheim museum shows Rosmerta alone holding the purse. (Green, 1989, pp.56,7) This emphasises her control over that prosperity emblem.

The couple's general association with well-being, success and prosperity is illustrated by depictions such as that of a relief from Glanum. (Fig. 19) Rosmerta appears holding a cornucopiae and a rudder on a globe, and is probably conflated with Fortuna through this attribute. Her fertility attributes are added to by the association of Mercury's goat. Mercury holds his caduceus in his left hand and a large purse in his right hand, beside Rosmerta's cornucopiae, emphasising the commercial success of the couple. His tortoise sits between them. A relief from Gloucester shows Mercury, who is very Classical in appearance, standing to the right of a native goddess. (Fig. 31) He carries his cloak slung over his left shoulder and his caduceus in his right hand. The goddess holds a patera over a tub, and she grasps a double-headed axe with her left hand. Anne Ross suggests that this symbolism may have something to do with a healing cult. (Ross, 1992, p.272) It does, however, emphasise the general success and well-being aspects of the couple, and more particularly of the goddess Rosmerta, who brings these qualities to the union.

EPONA - GODDESS TO CELTS AND ROMANS

As the Celts were so concerned with the land, animals and prosperity, it is not surprising that a goddess with control over these aspects should have been so important. In Gaul she is called 'Epona', the horse goddess, but her influence extended further in Celtic belief. Epona is thought to have been imported into Britain in Roman times. (Ross, 1992, p.286) However, goddesses with similar horse associations pre-existed her introduction into Britain and Ireland.



Figure 31 Relief of Mercury and a native goddess, Gloucestershire

Mythology tells of the Irish Macha, wife of Crunnchu, who was challenged to race against the fastest horses of the land when her husband boasted of her prowess. Although heavily pregnant at the time, she ran the race and won, giving birth to twins at the finish. However, she died in childbirth, and the site 'Emain Macha' was named after her twins. The goddess Medb was also able to outrun the swiftest of horses, and the Welsh Riannon appears as a horse which no other can overtake. Her links with Epona also include her mythological associations with birds, which Epona appears with in Gaul. (Ross, 1992, p.288)

The widespread worship of Epona as a goddess of fertility and prosperity with healing associations, as well as goddess of animals, is attested to by the attributes she is depicted with. A relief of Epona originating between Puligny and Meursault, shows her mounted on a mare, holding a cornucopiae, symbol of plenty. (Fig. 32) The fertility symbolism is added to by the presence of a foal beneath the mare. Another relief from Kastel shows the goddess riding sidesaddle on the horse, holding a fruit in her right hand. (Fig. 33) Epona becomes linked with the symbolism of the mother-goddesses through these emblems, and in fact appears with the matres in several contexts in Gaul. At Jabreilles (Haute-Marne) the images of the matres and Epona appear on the same stone and at Hagondange Epona is depicted as a triple image. (Green, 1989, p.22) Inscriptions also refer to her in the plural as 'Eponabus'. (Ross, 1992, p.406)

This strong association with maternal aspects points to the possibility that Epona may have originated as an earth-mother type goddess. Excavations at the summit of Mont Dardon, France, at a site of a Roman fort and an earlier citadel, revealed fragments of figurines related to goddesses, and also equestrian motifs. (Oaks, 1986, p.77) The context in which these equestrian motifs were found, in an area associated with maternal deities, suggests a link in the two cults, or that the equestrian aspect may have been a concern of the latter. Epona's association with healing spring sites at Ste-Fontaine de Freyming on the Moselle and at Allerey indicates another aspect pertaining to well-being and prosperity.



Figure 32 Relief of Epona, Puligny, Meursault.





Figure 33 Relief of Epona, Kastel.



Although Epona originated as a Celtic goddess of wide-ranging influence, her association with horses became most attractive to the Romans. The Aeduan cavalry in Gaul were respected by Caesar's conquering forces, and they retained their reputation for excellence when they became part of the Roman army. The importance of the horse to a mounted regiment was absolute and Epona was invoked as their patroness, who would also have provided comfort as a native goddess to those far from home. Thus the Romans were probably introduced to this important Celtic goddess, with influence over the fertility and breeding of horses, their success as cavalry animals, and by extension over the prosperity of the whole equestrian economy.

Epona was the only Celtic goddess to be officially honoured by Rome, and she was even given her own feast day on the eighteenth of December. However, this Roman adoption of Epona as a goddess associated with the prosperity of their horses and cavalry, led to her sphere of influence becoming narrowed from its initial Celtic conception.

Even the Celtic iconography of the horse was to change as a result. Although horses were generally not found in burial contexts, a well from Droitwich Bays Meadow in Worcestershire was found to contain the bones of a horse along with those of cattle, a deer and a cat, in a twenty foot deep shaft. This find is noteworthy for the horse was not known to have been used in ritual sacrifice. Although horse bones were seldom found in La Tene graves, horse harnesses and horse figurines and brooches have often been found in this context. Whether they were used as token burials or as status symbols attesting to the wealth of the owner is uncertain, however, they do indicate Celtic concern with the horse both in this world and the next.

As the Celtic lands became increasingly Romanised, depictions of the horse became confined to coins. This is significant considering that other important animals such as bulls, bears, dogs and boars continued to play a part in Celtic iconography. (Megaw, 1989, p.160) Similarly, depictions of Epona were treated differently from those mentioned earlier. (Figs. 32, 33) Examples from the Rhine area show her between horses which are facing away from her,

and examples from Italy, North Africa and England show her seated, with horses facing inward. (Oaks, 1986, p.78) A relief from near Oehringen, shows the goddess, now headless, seated and wearing long draperies. (Fig. 34) She holds a basket on her lap and four horses are in motion behind her, all facing inward. (Hodgkin, p.107) Oaks suggests that this new type of Epona depiction may be intended to emphasise her dignity and power rather than her fertility. (Oaks, 1986, p.73) A marble stele from Dacia shows the goddess seated in a Classical manner with a horse facing her on either side. (Fig. 35) This formal and regal Epona is far removed from the Euffineix stone statue dating to the first century BC. (Fig. 36) The Celtic torc-wearing deity with a boar carved on its front is associated with Epona for her early influence over wild animals, boars and horses.

The Roman association of Epona with the military cavalry is illustrated clearly when she appears on helmets of Roman manufacture. A depiction of Epona on the cheek-piece of a helmet from South Collingham, Nottinghamshire, shows her standing beside her horse, holding its bridle in her left hand and a rope-like object in her right. (Ross, 1992, p.255)

Thus the Romans adopted the goddess Epona as protectress of their cavalry and patroness of their horses and equestrian prosperity. In the process, however, she appears to have lost much of her maternal and fertility associations. For the Celts the early aspects of Epona as a goddess connected with the earth, fecundity, animals and horses particularly, in Romanised depictions remain only in the evidence of the attributes of the goddess, e.g. Figs. 32, 33, and in the context of equestrian finds, such as at Mont Dardon.

The interaction between the Celtic and Classical societies led to the alteration of Epona's sphere of influence just as it led to Rosmerta's associations as the consort of Mercury. Through her pairing with the Classical god she allowed the Celts access to the aspects of economic success and prosperity of people and animals that Mercury presided over. Similarly, the Romans chose the aspect of the Epona cult that most appealed to them and developed the goddess into a deity they needed and could identify with.



Figure 34 Relief of Epona, Oehringen.





Figure 35 Marble stele depicting Epona, Dacia. Second half 2nd century BC.



Figure 36 Statue, Effigneix. 1st century BC. Stone.



CHAPTER FIVE

MINERVA - CLASSICAL GODDESS OF CELTIC CONCERNS

Examination of the interplay between Celtic and Classical goddess types has revealed how the enduring priorities of the Celtic peoples, fertility of people, land and animals, healing and prosperity, led them to worship these aspects of female deities in whatever manner that allowed them to survive under Roman rule. It has also revealed how this interplay between the two cultures led to goddess types such as the triple matres and the consort goddesses Rosmerta and Sirona being evolved in answer to the needs of the people. The introduction of the Classical goddess Minerva to the Celts was to become one of the most successful aspects of Roman policy towards native religion.

Minerva was a member of the Capitoline triad which included Jupiter and Juno, and she became one of the Celt's most favoured Classical deities. She had wide and varied spheres of influence, which must have been immensely attractive to the Celtic people, whose own goddesses had powers that ranged over several spheres. Even more importantly, a number of Celtic religious concerns, including one which posed a threat to Roman domination, could be worshipped in the guise of Minerva.

The Roman goddess Minerva was the counterpart of the Greek Athena, said to have sprung fully armed from the head of Zeus, her father. She is thought to have been developed as a protectress of their chief's castle by invading Greeks in Mycenaean times. (Lindgren, 1980, p.87) As a Classical goddess her warrior aspect was generally confined to protectress of civilised society, but the Celts interpreted this aspect differently according to the less benevolent character of their own warrior goddesses. Minerva's other aspects included bestower of health, personification of wisdom, patroness of arts and crafts and of the skills of government and statecraft.

In this she would seem to share similar concerns with the Irish Brigid, also concerned with healing and with industry and the arts. J.A. MacCulloch describes these functions as in keeping with the position of woman as the first

civiliser, discovering agriculture, spinning and pottery. (MacCulloch, 1991,p.41) Although the Celts had long passed this stage in the development of their society, he believes that the importance of the culture goddess was retained.

Brigid was a Celtic goddess of much influence, being a daughter of the great god Dagda and enduring in Irish tradition into Christian times as Saint Brigid. Her importance is attested to by the fact that she is sometimes referred to as the triple Brigid, a native concept that implies intense potency in her powers. However, any maternal aspects that Brigid may have had as a goddess of the land were not invoked through Minerva. It appears that although Minerva was important to the Celts in that she brought together the healing, warrior and artistic qualities which their own goddesses were concerned with, she does not appear to have been used as a fertility or maternal goddess, despite the fact the Celtic female deities tended to have this as an intrinsic concern. Evidence of Minerva connected with the mother goddess cult seems to be confined to the context in which material remains were discovered. Isabelle Faudet suggests that model weapons found at Argentomagus, France, may have had some connection with Minerva, who is typically depicted armed. (Faudet, 1986, p.26) If this can be true it is noteworthy that many images of Venus and the mother goddess were found at the same site.

The name 'Brigid', along with that of Belisama of France and of the British Brigantia are thought to have stemmed from the same root. Minerva's association with healing thermal springs, for example at Bath, an association shared by Brigid and Brigantia, has been discussed in chapter three. However, her similarity with Brigantia led to that native goddess being equated with Minerva, although under the different role of a warrior goddess. A relief from Birrens shows Brigantia, wearing a crown, equated with Minerva and Victory. (Ross, 1992, p.27) The inscription reveals that it is the native rather than the Classical deity that is invoked.

Brigantia has her own connection with water, one inscription testifying to this reads 'deae Nymphae Brig(antiae)' (Anwyl, 1906, p.47) This connection,

together with her other influences as a war-goddess developed from a tribal deity, link her to Minerva. The Brigantes tribe of the north of England was composed of several groups united under the goddess Brigantia, her name meaning 'queen' or 'High One'. (Ross, 1992, p.252) The fact that control of the tribe was given to a female goddess illustrates not only the position of female deities but also of women. The historical queen Cartimandua is thought to have invoked Brigantia's powers as ruler and warrior of her people.

Although the relief from Birrens names Brigantia no other representation of a warrior goddess has an accompanying inscription that identifies it definitely.

However, the popularity of Minerva and the Celtic influences apparent in her figural representations strongly suggest that tribal war goddesses such as Brigantia would have been invoked under Minerva's name.

One reason for the assimilation of native war goddesses into the cult of Minerva, was that their ancient associations with magic and prophecy of war linked them too closely with the druids, whose influence over the Celtic people was feared by the conquering Romans. The suppression of druidism would mean that these influential goddesses could no longer be worshipped openly.

The triple war goddesses of Irish tradition partook in battle through magical means rather than physical intervention. They were closely associated with ravens or crows, into which form they could manifest themselves at will. Although named variously as Badb, Nemain, Macha and Mórrigan, the latter two names appear most frequently. 'Mórrigan' is thought to mean 'great queen' or 'queen of demons', which clearly illustrates the malevolent attitude of the raven-war goddesses. Thus although it is probable that such a powerful Celtic concept was in some instances upheld under the Classical war goddess, little visual proof can be offered.

Another goddess associated with the raven is Nantosuelta, who appears with the god Sucellus, known as 'the good striker' and usually depicted with his hammer attribute. Nantosuelta has water associations through her name, as well as warrior associations, and an inscription to a similarly named goddess, Nemetona, appears on a relief at the temple in Bath. This points to a healing-warrior aspect of the goddess, and indeed the triple war goddesses were

capable of healing those they injured. The two qualities of healing and war-making were probably those influences of Minerva most favoured by the Celts.

Celtic representations of Minerva illustrate how the native interpretation of Classical art forms shows concern with those aspects most important to the Celts. A bronze bust from Buckinghamshire is identified as Minerva by the aegis and uncrested Corinthian helmet. (Lindgren, 1980, p.97) (Fig. 37) It originally formed part of another object and is dated to the late third or early fourth century. The stylisation of the aegis gives the work vigour and movement, and snakes appear to be suggested by the twisting lines. The use of snakes in this manner could have an apotropaic significance, and Minerva's stylised Celtic features have an unwavering stare that adds to the effect. The overall impression is of a powerful warrior goddess, clearly to be worshipped for this aspect among her many spheres of influence.

A bronze representation of Minerva from Wiltshire, (Fig. 38), departs completely from Classical naturalism in the treatment of the figure. Although the right shoulder is higher than the left, indicating some knowledge of Classical contraposto, this has not been carried through and the effect is one of a simplified, basic torso and limbs. The facial features are likewise abstracted with lentoid eyes and an impassive countenance. Lindgren identifies this work as a depiction of Minerva due to the helmet worn and the spear and shield carried. (Lindgren, 1980, p.91) However, it is so obviously of local manufacture that it could have been used in the private worship of any warrior goddess associated with Minerva.

A depiction of Minerva on a bronze plaque from Wiltshire, dating to the third or fourth century, shows the merging of Classical and Celtic traditions. (Fig. 39) Decorative, patterned folds of cloth, abstracted facial features and bodily proportions departing from the Classical norm are used to describe clearly the typology of the Classical Minerva outlined by Lindgren. (Lindgren, 1980, p.89)³ The goddess can be identified by her attributes of the aegis, worn unusually over her right hip, the shield which she holds out from herself, and the owl on which she rests her foot.



Figure 37 Minerva, Buckinghamshire. Late 3rd or early
4th century. Bronze.





Figure 38 Minerva, Wiltshire. Late 3rd or early 4th century.
Bronze.





Figure 39 Minerva, Lavington, Wiltshire. Second half 3rd or 4th century. Bronze.

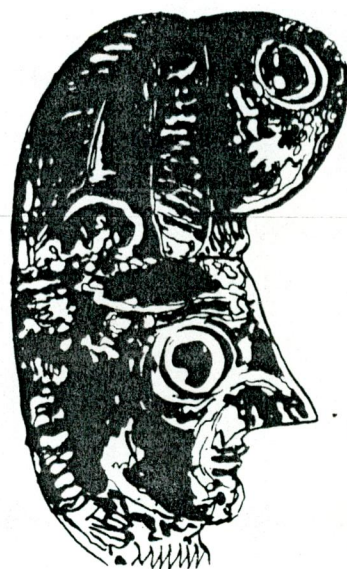


Figure 40 Owl head surmounting female head from terminal of torc, Reinheim, Germany. 4th century BC.

However, it is her helmet which is of particular interest, for it is topped by an animal or bird head. Although the ear and protruding beak-like shape might indicate that it is an abstracted owl head, the presence of that attribute elsewhere on the relief makes such conjecture uncertain. However, the idea has a definite similarity with the female heads surmounted by owl heads which decorate the terminals of a torc and penannular bracelet found in Germany. (Fig. 40) They were part of an impressive hoard of treasure, including ornaments, gold rings, a bracelet and flagon, from a female burial in Reinheim near Saarbrücken, dating to the early fourth century B.C. (Ross, 1986, p.135) The wealth of the grave indicates the social position of the deceased, probably a local princess or queen. The presence of the owl heads in this context suggests a certain significance in Celtic religious belief concerning the owl.

It cannot be claimed that the Reinheim heads have any connection with the Wiltshire relief, but it does indicate Celtic concern with powerful females, both mortal and divine. Thus the introduction of the goddess Minerva offered an opportunity for the Celts to continue to express female aspects that were important to them. These included female sovereignty, healing, elements of the arts and probably most importantly the role of the warrior goddess. Although Minerva meant all these things to the Celts, to the Romans, as part of the Capitoline triad, she was "especially charged with care for the health and security of the Roman state". (Henig, 1984, p.84) The success of the Romans in introducing Minerva to their conquered lands lay as much in her reflection of Celtic goddess concerns as in their adaptation of her Classical connotations.

NOTES

(3) Lindgren, 1980, p.89.

Mineva, fully clothed, a standing, mature female figure, helmeted with spear and shield wearing aegis.

CONCLUSION

The interaction between the Celtic and Classical goddess types that have been discussed, began in earnest when the Romans conquered the Celtic lands and allowed the Interpretatio Romano, Interpretatio Gallica to develop between the two religion's belief systems. However, it was the intrinsic concerns of the peoples themselves that caused the popular veneration of some goddesses rather than others. These concerns became manifested in various ways, through the use of a Classical goddess to express Celtic preoccupations, through the pairing of Celtic goddesses with Classical gods, through the Roman development of a figurative format for a Celtic concept, and through Roman identification with and subsequent alteration of the spheres of influence of a particular Celtic goddess.

The Classical Venus was the foreign goddess whose figurative format was adopted most wholeheartedly by the Celts. Their depictions of her reveal more than the attempts of a Celtic sculptor to recreate Classical proportional schemes, they also reveal the huge importance of fertility and life-giving aspects to the Celts, expressed through the shift in emphasis from ideal beauty to natural female bodily functions. The occasional association of Venus with the mother goddess is indicative of this shared influence common to almost all Celtic female deities.

The mother goddesses appear not only with Celtic gods and goddesses or the adopted Venus, they are also depicted with male Classical deities such as Mercury. This is an element of the pairing of deities in order to assimilate the associated powers of a Classical god into the more readily accessible influences of the Celtic goddess. It also reveals the Celtic need for female intervention in the areas of fertility, prosperity and healing as expressed through the consort goddesses of Mercury and Apollo, Rosmerta and Sirona. In the Classical pantheon of deities it was the male gods who were invoked for these aspects. This is illustrative of the important difference between the religious concerns of the two cultures.

When such differences are considered it is noteworthy that a goddess type, the Triple Matres, was to evolve from a deep rooted Celtic concept and become expressed figuratively through Roman intervention. To the Celts the triple mother goddesses retained their ancient associations with life and seasonal changes through their powers as fertility and fecundity goddesses. To the Romans they became popular primarily as deities of prosperity and well-being.

Roman concern with prosperity led them to adopt the Celtic goddess Epona as patroness of their horses and cavalry. In doing so they altered her general influences and even changed the manner in which she was visually represented. This was in order to present her as a controlled and therefore controllable goddess who might more readily be assimilated into their ordered pantheon of deities.

The Classical Minerva was used by the Celts to express those aspects of their ancient war goddesses that were so closely associated with magic and the druids and therefore not to be flaunted before the Roman conquerors. Yet Minerva's influence over healing was worshipped by both cultures, and at Bath she became conflated with the local goddess Sulis and venerated as the joint deity Sulis-Minerva.

However, even in this coming together of similar concerns the differences in the conception of Celtic and Classical goddesses remain apparent. Only the name Sulis is invoked when curses or retribution against wrongdoers is sought, and the Medusa-like mask on the central shield of the pediment seems to suggest a Celtic force despite its Classical format.

Although the interaction between the imagery associated with the goddess types of the two cultures led to an interflow in the interpretation and use of various goddesses by each people, neither the Celts nor the Romans departed far from their own conception of the female deities. The Classical goddesses were seen as pure, righteous and as examples for men to follow. The Celtic goddesses they adopted or made use of were always regarded favourably for their aspects of success and prosperity. The Celts used Classical types in the

the first of the series of lectures
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from 1894 to 1900.

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on the history of the English language
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Cambridge in 1895. It was the second
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on the history of the English language
from 1894 to 1900.

The third of the series of lectures
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which I gave at the University of
Cambridge in 1896. It was the third
of a series of lectures which I gave
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continuing expression of the need for the goddess to preside over wide and varied spheres of influences. Fertility, wellbeing and prosperity, the importance of land and success in war as well as powers of healing were their main concerns.

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