



The Celtic Goddess of Sovereignty as Warrior:
Boudicca and the Death of a Druid Prince

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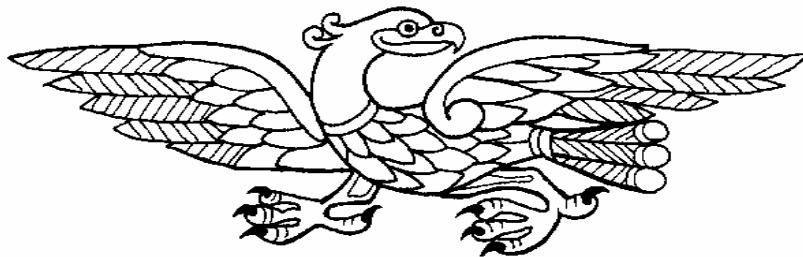
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"When man created language with wisdom,
As if winnowing cornflower through a sieve,
Friends acknowledged the signs of friendship,
And their speech retained its touch." Rg Veda 10.71

"Whatever is happening is happening for good..."
Krsna to Arjuna in the Bhagvad Gita

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INTRODUCTION

The Goddess of Sovereignty must, unavoidably, be a warrior. Where was there ever a kingdom that was never threatened from without or within, by those wishing to acquire power and wealth? A God or Goddess of Sovereignty who could not also be a God or Goddess of War would be powerless and impotent in the face of such crises and the integrity of the realm would be easily compromised. The revival of Goddess religions in our times is frequently ignorant of, and impatient with, historical traditions. We live in times where supreme importance is attached to the “reinvention” of history and traditions so as to make it ‘relevant’ to times, as if former ages had nothing to contribute except for the broad outlines of old fashioned symbolism that we now market with trendy chic. If the Goddess is real, and I am proceeding on that belief, then reinventing her is a preposterous idea, to say the least. She was, and always will be, *here* as well as *there*. Our task is to discover the timeless and to learn from it. This means a deep and serious exploration of history, not solely to collect ‘facts’ and document dates, but to discern the metaphysical truths ancient times embodied. After truly contemplating a vast accumulation of knowledge and insight, then and only then, may we cautiously experiment with the modification of tradition. Impulsive and unthinking “reinvention” is a game for children and the results will be cartoons of the real. They will only have meaning to the immature who are forever infatuated with their own egos and the obsessive need to personalize anything and everything in order to acquire an imagined psychotherapeutic benefit. Our cultural obsession with ritual “reinvention”, only reflects our ignorance and immaturity. It is as if forcing a simplistic, contemporary image on archetypal styles and forms will somehow reveal the most profound of meanings. Furthermore, the fringes of contemporary feminist rhetoric is myopic. It easily mixes social theory with a “politically correct” theology and thereby subverts an accurate perception of what actually existed in the past.



THE HISTORICAL RECORD

“The classical description of the Celtic woman warrior comes from the *Roman History* of the fourth century Byzantine writer, Ammianus Marcellinus, which makes it somewhat suspect. He derives much of his material from Timagenes, a contemporary of Emperor Augustus. In an oft-quoted passage he states:

'Nearly all the Gauls are of lofty stature, fair and of ruddy complexion; terrible from the sternness of their eyes, very quarrelsome, and of great pride and insolence. A whole troop of foreigners would not be able to withstand a single Gaul if he called his wife to his assistance, who is usually very strong, with blue eyes; especially when, swelling her neck, gnashing her enormous teeth, and brandishing her sallow arms of enormous size, she begins to strike blows mingled with kicks, as of they were so many missiles sent from the strong of a catapult.' (*Roman History* XV, 12).

"There (Britain), the existence of powerful queens of the Iceni and Brigantes, namely Boudicca and Cartimandua, testifies to a tradition of British women rulers which may have differed from the situation prevailing in Gaul. Cartimandua, wife of the Brigantian chieftain Venutius, appears to have held power in her own right. Tacitus (c. 55-117 A.D.), in *The Histories* (III, 45), refers to her as *pollens nobilitate* ('powerful by reason of noble birth'), implying that she had inherited the right to rule her tribe, perhaps confirmed through her marriage to Venutius, undoubtedly the ruler of another Brigantian tribal group (Charles-Edwards 1974:45). Her power is further demonstrated by her action of turning the rebel leader Caratacus over to the Romans in chains in 51 A.D., which probably created a rift in the Brigantian federations.

"Six years later, Cartimandua separated from Venutius for unknown reasons and attempted to entice his male relatives over to her side. But, as Tacitus states in *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, with considerable Roman anti-feminism, 'her enemies, infuriated and goaded by fears of humiliating feminine rule (*stimulante ignominia, ne feminae imperio subderentur*), invaded her kingdom with a powerful force of picked warriors' (*Roman History* XII, 40). This led the Romans to send their first auxiliaries and finally a legion to reinstate her. As a result, Cartimandua's authority was confirmed and there appears to have been a reconciliation between her and Venutius. The Romans were rewarded for their support four or five years later, during Boudicca's revolt, when the situation was not complicated by a Brigantian attack on the rear of Paulinus's hard pressed armies. Undoubtedly, Cartimandua was as happy with her Roman client-state position as her fellow client ruler, Cogidummus, in Sussex (Richmond 1954:50).

"In 59 A.D. Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, (modern day East Anglia), died but left a will naming the Emperor Nero co-heir with his two daughters, thereby hoping to preserve his kingdom and household from attack. Prasutagus' widow, Boudicca, apparently resisted, and was flogged by the Romans while her two daughters were raped. According to Dio Cassius (c. 150-235 A.D.) who, aside from Tacitus, provides the only full account of the rebellion, Boudicca was 'a British woman of the royal family possessed of greater intelligence than often belongs to women' (*Roman History*, LXII, 2). In 60 A.D., while the Roman governor, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, was intent on the destruction of the druidic stronghold on Anglesey, Boudicca launched her revolt. Dio Cassius describes her as she appeared before her troops:

She was huge of frame, terrifying of aspect, and with a harsh voice. A great mass of bright red hair fell to her knees; she wore a great twisted golden torc, and a tunic of many colors, over which was a thick mantle, fastened by a brooch. Now she grasped a spear, to strike fear into all her watched her (*ibid*; Chadwick 1972: 50).

"In Boudicca's speech, which Dio Cassius probably invented as a standard rhetorical piece, although it undoubtedly reflects the contemporary Roman view of her, she berates the Iceni for having allowed themselves to be enslaved by the Romans. After

she finishes speaking, she releases a hare as a form of divination which runs to the auspicious side. She then invokes the war goddess Andrasta (whose name probably means the "The Invincible One" -- ironically Boudicca's name also seems to mean 'Victory'), and clearly identifies herself with the goddess, saying:

'I thank thee Andraste, and call upon thee as woman speaking to woman ... those over whom I rule are Britons, men that know not how to till the soil or ply a trade, but are thoroughly versed in the art of war and hold all things in common, even children and wives, so that the latter possess the same valour as men' (*Roman History* LXII, 6).¹

"Dio Cassius has Boudicca condemn the Romans for their effeminacy, although this may reflect Dio Cassius' own view of Nero's court. She beseeches Andrasta for 'victory, preservation of life and liberty' from men who bathe in warm water, eat artificial dainties, drink in mixed wine, anoint themselves with myrrh, sleep on soft couches with boys for bedfellows -- boys past their prime at that, -- and are slaves to a lyre player and a poor one too. (*ibid*) Her attack on Nero continues:

'therefore may this Mistress Domitia-Nero reign no longer over me or over you men; let the wench sing and lord it over Romans, for they surely deserve to be the slaves of such a woman after having submitted to her so long. But for us, Mistress (Andrasta), be thou alone ever our leader.' (*ibid*)

"The Iceni were then joined by the Trinovantes of Essex who particularly hated the Roman ex-soldiers who had formed a settlement (*colonia*) at Camulodunum (Colchester), the former Trinovantian capital. ...After two days of of siege, the town fell and the inhabitants were butchered. Suetonius Paulinus hastened from Wales but, when neither his own legions nor the Second Legion summoned from the southwest arrived, he had to abandon both Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St. Albans) to Boudicca's fury.

"...(A)rcheological excavations have corroborated the wholesale destruction of the settlements. ...He (Dio Cassius) focuses on Boudicca's gruesome propriation of the war goddess she had invoked in the groves sacred to her. ... (*Roman History*, LXII 7). This implies that the war goddess would be particularly satisfied by the sacrifice of female victims, in the same way we know from other accounts that male deities were propriated by the sacrifice of male captives." (Doan 1987: 29).

Boudicca ordered an unspeakable mutilation of the women who had become Roman sympathizers and collaborators; I refer you to Doan (1987) for an exact description which I have chosen not to reproduce. The extraordinary circumstance which demands thoughtful comment is that this is the only instance in ancient history that I am aware of where a *female* leader, who is also acting as her own general, and is *also* an epiphany of the Goddess of War, deliberately chose to torture and execute *female* prisoners of war. Obviously, this historical record needs to be reconciled with my remarks above concerning a nurturing war goddess; there is certainly not a trace of that aspect in this situation. Nurturing behavior can be destroyed by vicious abuse and, in certain situations, may be inappropriate if the opponent is unusually savage and cruel.

¹Boudicca was likely a druidess as well as political and military leader of the Iceni, as the releasing of the hare for divination and invocation of the war goddess Andraste indicate. This combination of roles in a woman of extraordinary physical presence and intelligence served to make her one of the foremost British Celtic leaders in history. (cf Ross and Robins. 1989: 101-103.)

Furthermore, unspeakable cruelty to civilian enemies has throughout history been adopted as a deliberate, military strategy to terrify the enemy and bring a war to an immediate close. As an epiphany of the Goddess of War, Boudicca adopted an extreme stratagem. It was a tragic choice in that it resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians and failed the cause of war started by the Iceni.

“The ferocity of Boudicca's revolt suggests considerable hostility to the Roman occupation of Britain. Prior to this, the Iceni, Trinovantes and most of the other tribes had seemed to accept Roman rule. Undoubtedly, the barbarous treatment they received following the death of Prasutagus had done much to aggravate the situation. Following the sack of the three towns, Suetonius Paulinus quickly gathered together nearly 10,000 armed men and, as in [many of] the battles fought in Gaul during the previous century, the Romans utterly routed the less disciplined Celtic tribesmen. The British were so confident of victory that they brought their wives with them, stationing them in carts on the edge of the battlefield. According to both Tacitus and Dio Cassius, Boudicca rode in a chariot before her army ... ‘The Romans attacked in ordered fashion. The British fled with difficulty since the ring of wagons blocked the outlets. ... Tacitus claims that Boudicca poisoned herself, whereas Dio Cassius claims that she fell sick and died ...’ ”(Doan 1987: 27-30).

The spectacular events of 60 A.D. in Britain did not end with the obliteration of the Celtic armies. Boudicca’s rebellion may have had an even wider context than has been previously recognized, a context that interfaced with the heart of druidic power and myth.



THE ROMAN CONFRONTATION WITH DRUIDIC POWER

The Claudian invasion of Britain began in 43 A.D. The legions led by Aulus Plautius landed in Kent unopposed. At the river Medway, a united Celtic army under Caratacus met the legions in battle and was defeated. Caratacus survived to organize a guerrilla war with the Silures and Ordovices, whose kingdoms were in the hills of south and central Wales. Roman reinforcements arrived and the now larger army moved north after securing the defeat of eleven British kings in the southeast. (Ross and Robins 1989: 81-82).

Druidism had been banned in Gaul by Claudius in 54 A.D. The motivation for this decree has always been assumed to be Roman revulsion at the bloody sacrifices presided over by the druids at Celtic rituals. However, a radically different motivation for this policy has emerged from recent research. The Gaulish druids likely fled to Britain and then moved ahead of Plautius’ armies after the defeat at Medway into remote and mountainous regions. After the betrayal of Caratacus by Cartamandua discussed above, the Silures and Ordovices continued to fight on. Nero ascended to the Roman throne in 54 A.D. after Claudius’ death and appointed a new British governor, Suetonius Paulinus who was fresh from brilliant military successes against the Moors in Mauritania. The continued resistance of the Silures and Ordovices denied Rome access to the copper and lead in the Welsh mountains. Suetonius correctly identified Anglesey as the granary and

supply base for the Celtic resistance *and the major druidic cult center in all of Britain*. To destroy it he reasoned, would break Celtic resistance permanently for neither food nor spiritual strength would be available to their armies.

In the spring of 60 A.D., the Roman legions with a battle fleet arrived at the narrow Straights of Menai on the northern coast of Wales which separates Anglesey from the mainland. Celtic warriors, men, women and shrieking druids faced them across the narrow channel. The pandemonium momentarily unnerved the Roman army but they recovered their courage and stormed the mystical island. The battle was no contest. Celtic druids and warriors were butchered and the sacred oak groves cut down. However, the time to enjoy victory was short lived. As Seutonius was celebrating, he received news of Boudicca's revolt and he had to quickly move his army south. His strategy to deliberately abandon Londinium (London) in order to link up with the 14th and 20th legions led to appalling civilian casualties but the quick defeat of Boudicca (see above). A Roman reign of terror than followed and serious Celtic resistance was no more (Ross and Robins 1989: 87-91). Southern Britain had been pacified and became a province that would remain part of the Roman Empire for approximately three centuries.

The site that Boudicca chose to confront the Roman legions was Mandvessedum (now the town of Mancetter), a Roman settlement built astride a major Roman highway during Claudius' reign.² As with all military leaders who can chose the site of battle, the question has to be asked, why here? The answer has been laborious to untangle and reveals extraordinary circumstances about druidic economic power and why the Romans, who were well known for religious tolerance in their conquered territories, had an implacable hatred for the Celtic druids. The Romans had no desire for accommodation or compromise with the druids. They simply wanted them dead as their behavior at Anglesey demonstrated.

Stretching northeast from Mandvessedum is the Fosse Way, then both a Roman road and the natural geographic divide between the southeast lowlands and the northwest uplands. Along the road were several Celtic sacred sites of immense importance. Twenty five miles northeast of Mandvessedum was the great Celtic sanctuary of Vernemeton (Vernemetum) of which nothing remains today on the surface of the ground. The large black soil areas which cover the slopes of Vernemeton hill suggest the Romans burned this druidic center and then built their road right through it. Was this done deliberately to draw Boudicca to Mandvessedum? Did she in fact, *not choose* the site of battle? Dane Hills, now a suburb of Leicester, was long associated with the Celtic goddess Ainu, the Goddess of Death as Old Hag who turned into the beautiful Goddess of Regeneration (cf Gimbutas 1989). Southeast of Mandvessedum at Lunt, on the outskirts of Coventry, was a circular stone enclosure 107 feet in diameter. It appears to have been a ceremonial center where rites were performed with horses and/or where ritual horse races were run. Fosse Way was strung with Celtic sacred sites on either side of Mandvessedum; it appears to have been the center of a sacred Celtic web embedded in the landscape. The presence of Seutonius' army in this locality, either by design or accident, would have enraged Boudicca's sympathizers and army (Ross and Robins 1989: 104-106). Yet unbelievably, there is more to the situation.

² The maps in Ross and Robins (1989) are quite poor and many important localities mentioned in the text do not appear on them. I recommend the maps published by the Ordnance Survey of Britain: Ordnance Survey. 1956, 3rd ed. *Map of Roman Britain*. Southhampton: Ordnance Survey; and Ordnance Survey. 1975, rev. ed. *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age*. Southhampton: Ordnance Survey.

At High Cross, the Fosse Way and Watling Street intersect, the latter marks a string of British settlements stretching off to the northwest. To the northeast of Mandvessedum eight miles distant was the Roman walled town and fort of Letocetum (now the town of Wall). Ten miles further along the Watling Street was the settlement with two small forts of Pennocrucium (now the town of Penkridge). These two localities also mark the site of two Celtic sacred groves. Pennocrucium is also the Latin rendering of 'chief mound' or 'head of the mound'. Was there a sacred assembly place on a grave mound in the grove? (Ritual sites on the top of large grave mounds were well known throughout Iron Age Europe.) Pennocrucium is also equivalent to the Gaelic Cenn Croich, or Cromm Dubh, the god of harvest in Ireland. Cenn Croich was known as 'the dark one' and was a sinister, destructive god. Watling Street is another Roman road built over a Celtic route marked by holy places. It hugs the northwest Welsh coast, crosses the Menai Straights, passes across Anglesey's main island to end on a second small island known as Holyhead (Holy Island). Beyond is Ireland. (The present day ferry service to Dublin, which is only 65 miles away, leaves from Holyhead.)

Just beyond Dublin, lie the Wicklow Hills, the prime source of Irish gold. The ultimate achievement of Celtic craftsmanship and art was their gold work. Irish druidism, slaves and gold work were exported through Britain to mainland Europe. Celtic gold jewelry had long been known and prized throughout Europe, both within and outside the Roman empire. *Watling Street marks not only a sacred Celtic road, but the premier trading route in all of Britain!* This trade route moved across Britain, eastward from Mandvessedum, through the territory of the Ratae and Corieltavi, and then across the Midlands to East Anglia, the region of Boudicca's tribe - the Iceni. The route passes just south of Vernemeton and is marked by a series of Celtic temples within trading centers: Thistleton (Leicestershire), Collyweston and Brigstock (Northamptonshire), Water Newton (Cambridgeshire) and Thetford (Norfolk). *Through Watling Street, the druids controlled the most important gold trade in all of Europe! From the Roman point of view, Anglesey and its core of elite druids had to be destroyed so that the enormous economic power of the druids would be broken, central as it was to Celtic wealth in general.*

Celtic gold was worked for religious reasons. Even the display of extraordinary gold jewelry by the wealthy aristocracy also carried with it an important gesture of recognition towards, and acknowledgement of, the gods whose symbolism adorned every piece. The most costly and beautiful creations were often votive objects, to be deposited in lakes, rivers and streams as offerings to the gods and goddesses. The Romans, who only saw gold in secular, economic terms no doubt greatly offended the Celtic relationship between gold and the sacred. Catus, the Imperial Procurator under Nero, deliberately brutalized Boudicca and her daughters in a desperate gamble to not only obtain the submission of her tribe but also to acquire the enormous wealth, particularly the gold, in her husband's estate (Ordinance Survey 1956; Ross and Robins 1989: 107-117).

We return to Anglesey once more for yet a third feature serves to distinguish it, not only in our minds but likely in the Roman view as well. Anglesey was not only the granary supplying the guerrilla resistance conducted by the Ordovices and Silures and the premier druidic center in all of Britain, but it was also a major depot and trading center. Near the Menai Straights is the site of Llyn Cerrig Bach where an excavation had to be conducted hurriedly during World War II. The remains of 40 chariots, bronze cauldrons and enormous quantities of weapons were uncovered along with heavy iron slave chains. Llyn Cerrig Bach was originally on a lakeside. It appears that travelers arriving from Ireland stopped here and deposited valuable objects, weapons and slaves into the lake as offerings to the gods and goddesses. A folk tradition derives the name of the Llyn

peninsula, which abuts Anglesey to the south, from Leinster in Ireland (Ross and Robins 1989: 121-123).



Sacrifice of the High Druid

After the massacre and destruction of the druidic sanctuary on Mona (Anglesey) and Boudicca's defeat by Seutonius' legions, was there anything left that the Celts might do? Would the Romans now invade Ireland? One thing was left, a recourse to *the* greatest ritual power, perhaps that of *the* chief druid of Ireland. If the gods had deserted the Celts, perhaps they could be persuaded at this late hour to reconsider and once again bestow their favors. In this darkest of times, the surviving druids of Britain, augmented by several from Ireland, apparently regrouped in a secret hideaway and decided their holiest sacrifice must be made in one last attempt to retrieve a powerful relationship with their gods. One of their own must die in a sacred ritual. How can we know this? There are no written records that mention such an event, which would, of course, be completely hidden from Roman view. There was almost no Celtic writing for any reason at this time. Incredibly archeologists have found the remains of the sacrificed druid!

Lindow Man is a peat bog burial of a man discovered in 1984 in Lindow Moss which abuts Manchester's international airport. A skull of Lindow Woman has also been found in the same peat. 'Lindow' means 'Black Lake'; Lindow Man was drowned at the southern boundary of what remains of Lindow Moss in this hamlet suburb. Although the Moss has shrunk because of development over the past two centuries from 1500 to 150 acres, the Common still contains a small lake (Ross and Robins 1989: 63). Lindow Moss lies in the northern portion of the territory of the Cornovii. The Mersey formed the northern border of their territory beyond which was the Brigantes. To the east were the Corieltavi, to the south the Silures and Dobunni and to the West, the Decangli. This was deep Celtic territory which could only be conquered with great difficulty by the Romans (Ross and Robins 1989: 74-75).

Analysis of Lindow Man has produced an extraordinary reconstruction of a ritual death and a very probable identification of the individual as well. Overall, Lindow man was in prime physical condition with smooth unwrinkled skin, full and manicured fingernails. He was 5'6" in height and weighed about 154 lbs. His blood group was type O; he was clearly an insular Celt. The lack of any skin or muscle blemishes, or other injury, points distinctly to a Celtic aristocrat. The only elite male Celts who would have such an unblemished and carefully tended body are the druids; there are simply no other candidates (Ross and Robins 1989: 41-45)!

His burial has been radiocarbon dated to 50 - 100 A.D. Three blows to the skull from behind stunned him. He was then garroted to death by a knotted cord of animal sinew in the form of a triple bound gold torque. The garroting dislocated his neck vertebrae. Before the garroting was finished, a sharp knife pierced his jugular vein and his body was rapidly emptied of blood. Although dead, he was then dropped face first into a four foot pool of water. Shortly before he died, Lindow Man ate a ritual meal, an

unleavened pancake composed of rye, wheat and barley which was baked briefly at 200 degrees Celsius. After baking, the pancake was deliberately scorched at 400 degrees Celsius which resulted in a partially burnt surface. The resulting blackness might commemorate the event in some way or single out Lindow Man for ritual death.

Likely the ritual death occurred at Beltain (May 1) under the aegis of the god Belenas. Beltain was a time of potential danger; the winter and early spring were past, now a good growing season was essential to prevent famine the following winter. Massive bonfires were kindled on hilltops to ward off evil and sickness. Livestock were driven between the fires for purification and protection and sacrificial offerings of both humans and livestock were made. When Caesar was in Gaul, he described huge wickerworks filled with living sacrificial victims which were then set ablaze. If these reports are not fabrications designed to denigrate the enemy, they may have been Beltain sacrifices.

Folk festival fragments of Beltain ritual survived in Britain into the 17th and 18th centuries. One such folk ritual in Perthshire included eating an oatmeal cake which was first divided into pieces, one of which was blackened with charcoal. The pieces were put in a hat and everyone was blindfolded. Whoever drew the black piece was the *devoted* person and symbolically sacrificed to Baal by leaping through the fire three times. In 18th century Scotland, the *devoted one* was symbolically thrown on the flames. A woman in Perthshire, who witnessed Beltain rites before 1914, is quoted as saying the *devoted one* in years past was sacrificed. Pollen analysis also revealed the pancake eaten by Lindow Man contained a few grains of mistletoe. Was mistletoe deliberately included because of its sacred healing significance (Ross and Robins 1989: 17-38)? Alderly Edge, a whaleback ridge hanging over Lindow Moss, is the location of several legends that refer to a 'king in the ground', a tale that echo themes of a scapegoat king, the involvement of a horse sacrifice and rebirth of a divine victim (Ross and Robins 1989: 73-74).

Indicative of their Indo-European origins, the Celts had a threefold organization of their society and much ritual activity was imbued with tripartite symbolism. Three Celtic gods accepted human sacrifice. Taranis, the Thunder God required his victims to be burned alive in giant wicker cages. Lindow Man was not burned in any way but perhaps the three stunning blows to his head were in honor of Taranis. Esus, Lord and Master received his victims after they were hanged and/or stabbed to death. Lindow man was garroted and then bled after his jugular was cut. Teutates, a supreme overarching god, required his victims to be drowned in sacred wells and pools. Lindow Man was thrown face down into a pool of water in Lindow Moss (Ross and Robins 1989: 45-47).

Lindow Man had gone naked to his death except for a band of fox fur around his right arm so he has been named Lovernios ('Red Fox') by Ross and Robins. In British his name would be Lovern, in Gaulish it would be Lovernios or Lovernos and in Latin Lovernius. His hair was clearly reddish - 'fox-like' - and so this choice of name might conceivably be accurate! Several members of the Celtic aristocracy were recorded by Classical writers as named Lovernios (Ross and Robins 1989: 53-54).

We can reconstruct a probable scenario for Lovernios' sacred death. Shortly after the massacre at Mona and Boudicca's overwhelming defeat, a very important druid arrives from Ireland at Holy Island. Lovernios' arrival may have had no connection with the war raging between the Celts and Romans in Britain, then again very likely it did. It seems improbable that such momentous news would not travel swiftly between Wales and Ireland, particularly in view of the fact that the water passage of less than 70 miles was frequently traveled for the reasons discussed above. We may surmise that Lovernios

intended to add the weight of his spiritual strength to that of the embattled druids of Britain. It is highly unlikely that he arrived having planned to die. He no doubt stopped at Llyn Cerrig Bach and made offerings into the sacred lake, not only to announce his arrival and intentions but also to plead for favorable assistance from the gods. Perhaps a gold torque that was worn around his neck lies still undiscovered in the sacred lake.

He must have been met by important druids in disguise, or their disciples, because the Romans had just taken command of Mona and their military presence would be instantly visible. His colleagues would quickly spirit him away from Watling Street, which was no longer a sacred Celtic road as it had just been transformed into a Roman military highway. Moving rapidly into the wild country just south of the Mersey, the druids would finally feel safe and halt to counsel and consider their course of action. The gravity of the situation would be overwhelming once the details of Boudicca's defeat became known. All hope of raising yet another Celtic army to confront the Roman legions had vanished. The final recourse would be a direct petition to the gods, a supplication of the most powerful sort, a sacrifice of immense significance. The druids decided to give up one of their own, a master druid whose spiritual potency was fully developed. The sacred pancake was baked, then scorched and each drew a piece, perhaps while blindfolded. Lovernios drew the blackened slice and he solemnly with great reverence, pride and spiritual transcendence prepared to die. After his ritual sacrifice, the druids would have dispersed and many would have looked upon Ireland and Scotland as safe havens. The decision of the druids and Lovernios' supreme gesture did not cause the collapse of Roman power in Britain; only a multifront onslaught by tribal peoples from the 'outside' centuries later could do that.³ But at the very least, the druids would have been at peace knowing that no action had been left untaken and that their faith in their gods, although deeply shaken, remained paramount and pure.⁴



Epilog

Amazingly, the Lovernios' ritual death in Lindow Moss may not be an isolated phenomenon. Lindow Woman may have died in similar circumstances, although for very different reasons. The Roman occupation of northern Britain was forever tumultuous. Northern tribes from Scotland harassed the Roman legions 139-142 A.D. and again in the very last years of the 2nd century A.D. when their activities turned into an actual invasion of Britain. Picts, Scotti and other tribes breached Hadrian's Wall and continued as far south as York and Chester. Did they stop at Lindow Moss, which was now a legendary cult center because of Lovernios' ritual death over a century before? Did they offer a sacrifice of their own beside the 'Black Lake' as gratitude to the gods for their apparent success? Was this sacrifice a druidess, a princess or cherished female slave? Lindow Woman is 30 years old and is dated to the 2nd century A.D. (Ross and Robins 1989: 127).

³ After Ross and Robins 1989: 124-125 with modifications.

⁴ In 1987, fragments of a second man, aged 25, were discovered in Lindow Moss. Preliminary analysis indicates that he also died in a ritual sacrifice (Ross and Robins 1989: 128-129).

An Iron Age bog burial discovered in 1821 at Gallagher, Castleblakeney, County Gallway in Ireland has been subjected to much abuse and reburial. The corpse was never properly preserved but early records describe a young man with long, black hair and a beard. He was clothed in a deerskin, knee length cape. At each side of the body was a pointed stake almost 2 meters in length. The cape was laced at the front and tied at the neck with band of sally rods which may have been used as a garrote. This young man may, however, have been garrotted and ritually buried (Raftery 1994: 188, pl. 77) in the manner attributed to Lovernios which again suggests the voluntary ritual death of druid during a time of crisis.

Borremose is a Danish fen near the village of Beuderup. In the first century B.C., a village stood on an island at the southern end of the fen. It was built on 3rd century B.C. foundations with inner ramparts, and deep defensive ditches. A paved causeway was sunk below the flooded surface of the fen and flanked by deep ditches. Apparently, only those initiated passing scrutiny could gain entrance to this village. Overall, this is very atypical village architecture for the period and geographic locality in Denmark. Three bodies were discovered in the bog in 1946-1948, an intensive search since then has failed to uncover any more.

Borremose Man was buried six feet deep in the bog resting on a bed of solid peat strewn with birch. He was an aristocrat because, like Lovernios, he did not work with his hands. Also like Lovernios, he suffered a triple ritual death after eating a vegetarian meal. The back of his skull was crushed, then he was hanged to be followed by drowning. He also went to his death naked, although two sheepskin capes were rolled up at his feet (Ross and Robins 1989: 165-167).

Indeed the palisade village may be a defended druidic sanctuary. What further stamps Borremose as a possible druidic sacred site, is that the famous Gundestrop Cauldron was found here at the northern end of the fen near the fortified village. It was deposited on dry ground in high grass sometime between 150 and 50 B.C. and while this is Celtic territory, the cauldron is of *Thracian not Celtic* workmanship (Taylor 1992). The mythological scenes portrayed on the cauldron are those of ritual bathing by the Indian goddess Lakshmi, the celebration of the Great Goddess as the Eternal Giver of Life. Other images are those of an antlered deity in a yogic pose, who might be the Celtic god Cernunnos, a wheel god (?Vishnu), Hariti with braided hair and paired birds (Taylor 1992), and figure identified by some scholars as Teutates plunging a human sacrificial victim into a vat (Ross and Robins 1989: 48). Overall, it seems that this masterpiece made its way from Thrace through European trading networks to this hidden, possible druidic, village. Alternatively, Taylor (1992) has identified networks of silversmiths that extended over 4,000 miles from India to the Balkans that transcended ethnic and political boundaries. Images and iconography would travel over these vast distances in a context and manner dictated by patrons, artistic needs and tradition and so would become modified, stylized and distorted as they moved further and further from the living ritual traditions that originally gave them birth. Perhaps, a Thracian silversmith or two actually made their way to Borremose and undertook a druidic commission for the cauldron. Alternatively, Thracian silversmiths working in the Balkans may have seen and appreciated an occasional piece of Celtic ritual art. Such a circumstance would explain the juxtaposition of imagery from both Indian and Celtic mythology on the same object. In the first scenario, the druids would not have had total control of all the imagery employed by the silversmiths. In the second hypothesis, the cauldron made its way to Borremose *after* having been made. Indeed after manufacture, it had been disassembled and repaired more than once (Taylor 1992). Recognition that both sets of mytho-poetics

are represented on the Gundestrop Cauldron might solve the dilemma of scholars who continue to try to see either Indian *or* Celtic symbolism, but never admit the possibility that both sets of myths, however widely separated in time and space are juxtaposed. In either instance, the presence of the Gundestrop Cauldron at Borremose serves to further highlight the fen, its palisade village, and the ritual death accorded Borremose Man as pointing to an unusual hidden ritual sanctuary likely presided over by druids.



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