

GENOS DEUOM
("The Origin of the Gods")

A fictional mythology of the Celts of pre-Roman Gaul

Conall Kavanagh
© 2004



Preface

When role-playing or writing fiction about the Celtic tribes of Gaul, depicting their religion is often a stumbling block. Although Classical writers have given us glimpses of some rites and priestly offices, the modern reader is largely in the dark about the Celts' mythology -- how the world was created and how their gods interacted. The following creation story fleshes out this mythology. Here, motivations and feats are given to the Gaulish gods named in inscriptions. This fiction is based on the Irish Mythological Cycle, and draws from the primary pre-Roman Gaulish deities given in: Mac Cana, P. 1970. *Celtic mythology* (Hamlyn; London).

The names of known gods are taken from Mac Cana. The names of gods fabricated by the author are derived from Gaulish and proto-Celtic vocabulary, using the following online sources (all are operational on April 3, 2004; academic references are listed on these sites):

- * Celtic Lexicon (www.aber.ac.uk/%7Eawcwww/s/p5_lexicon.html)
- * Celtic Studies by Christopher Gwinn (mx9.xoom.com/gaulishweb -- very useful site, but has apparently become defunct)
- * Gaulish-English Dictionary (www.angelfire.com/me/ik2/gaAB.html)
- * Gaulish Glossary (www.geocities.com/indoeurop/project/glossary/gaul.html)

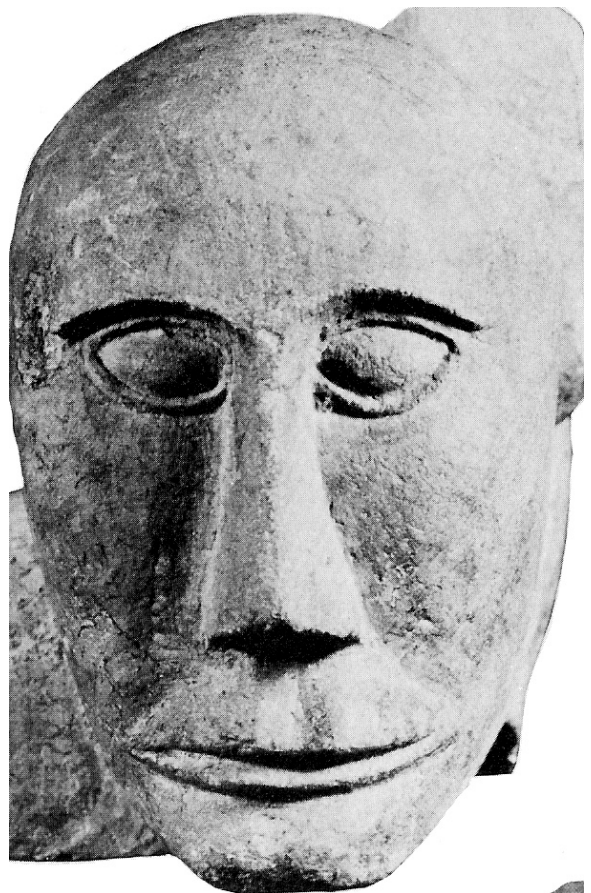
This fiction is written in the style of Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, from the prospective of a pre-Roman Gaulish tribe.

GENOS DEUOM ("The Origin of the Gods")

At the beginning of things, there was **Matrona**¹ the Deep Mother and **Taranis**² the Lord of the Sky. After a short while, they coupled. Matrona's womb swelled, which became the firmament of earth. Taranis sent fertile rains upon the firmament, from which the grass, grains, forests, and other plants grew. The beasts -- the cattle, the boar, the raven, the fish, and all others -- came forth from this creation.

Matrona and Taranis smiled upon their creation, but soon fell into arguing about rightful ownership. Taranis threatened to destroy all living things, while Matrona threatened to hide them from his sight. In time, they arrived at a solution. Taranis would rule the creation during the day, while Matrona would rule it at night. This arrangement did not prevent them from quarreling, however. Their arguments can be seen when Taranis casts bolts of light at night, or when Matrona blocks the sun to bring darkness during the day.

The first race of humans was the Dumnones³. They settled in this land, where they encountered the cruel Dubones⁴. The Dubones had arrived from the sea. They were great in stature, and terrified the Dumnones. Their leader was the mighty Marogaisos⁵, a warrior who could slay three hundred men with one stroke. Marogaisos greatly oppressed the Dumnones, demanding two-thirds of their annual meat and grain. This burden became too great. When their number grew to many thousands, the Dumnones rose up in violent revolt. They marched on the fort of Marogaisos, who met them in a great battle. There was much slaughter on both sides. After three days, the Dumnones trapped Marogaisos in his fort, and set the walls



ablaze. **Marogaisos** perished, which stopped the fighting. Although liberated from heavy taxation, the Dumnonnes were reduced greatly in number. Fearing reprisals by the kin of Marogaisos, the Dumnonnes scattered into small groups across this land.

The Leucones⁶ tribe then alighted from the east, being lead by Teutates mapos Leuci mapos Deui⁷. Teutates guided them to this land, and planted his staff to mark rest. **Cernunnos**⁸ mapos Leuci set off to bring back game for the tribe. He encountered the giant boar Torconos⁹ in the forest. Cernunnos gave pursuit, and cornered the fierce beast. Cernunnos stabbed the boar in the heart, but the beast fought its way up the spear shaft, shredding it to splinters. Steadfast, Cernunnos grabbed the jaws of the beast Torconos. As he struggled to snap the beast's neck, it gored him horribly in the middlings. With a dreadful yell, Cernunnos killed the savage boar. Hearing this death cry, the skilled Suleva enigena Derui¹⁰ rushed to her kinsman's aid. Finding him next to the dead boar, she cradled him. He said with his last breath,

"Dear cousin, my life flows from me.
Take this meat back to our people,
So that they may eat through my death."

Suleva intoned over the dead Cernunnos,
"Through blood and pain do the woods
yield their fruit.
Keep the unready from the dark forest,
Keep the unknowing from the lurking
beasts."

Suleva bore her cousin back to the Leucones. They wept over his body, and arranged for his funeral. The poet Ogmios¹¹ mapos Derui recited:

"A blood-price from our kinsman,
A blood-price from the Leucones,
A blood-price for this green land.
"We commit his body to this green land,
We commit his life to this green land,



A blood-price for this green land."

Teutates then ordered the tribe to **make camp**. The youths of Esus mapos Leuci¹² went about thusly: Damona¹³ stood watch over the herds and flocks, Dunatis¹⁴ constructed sturdy walls around the people, and Ialonos¹⁵ cleared fields for grain. Once satisfied, Teutates decided to take a wife. He spied a beautiful woman of the nearby hills¹⁶. Returning home, he dressed in a crimson tunic with a green fringed cloak secured with a gold pin. His sister Epona enigena Leuci¹⁷ combed his hair, and gave him four handsome horses for his chariot. With his silver spear and three coursing hounds, he brought half of his herd to the woman's father. He presented this bride-price, and her father agreed to the marriage.



The people of the Leucones invited all nearby tribes to the **wedding of Teutates**. At that time, the uncouth trio of Maruvacos¹⁸, Moranctos¹⁹, and Voranviros²⁰ ruled the Dubones. Maruvacos arrived after the wedding, and stayed in the house of the wealthy Esus. Maruvacos had a large mouth and stomach, and ate all of the food that belonged to Esus. Bloated, Maruvacos returned home.



Sometime later, Esus was traveling and stopped to rest for the night. He called on the house of Maruvacos. Maruvacos greeted him with a sneer instead of an embrace, offered him rainwater instead of mead, and served him vermin instead of meat. Esus returned to the Leucones, and told of his treatment. This did incite the tribe's anger.

Hearing of this incident, the haughty Moranctos traveled to the house of Teutates, expecting to be fed by the elderly king himself. Before the assembly, the satirist Cerbos²¹ mapos Ogmii reproached Moranctos:

"The Dubones do raise charming birds.
At morning, they leave the nest,
To return full with another's seed."

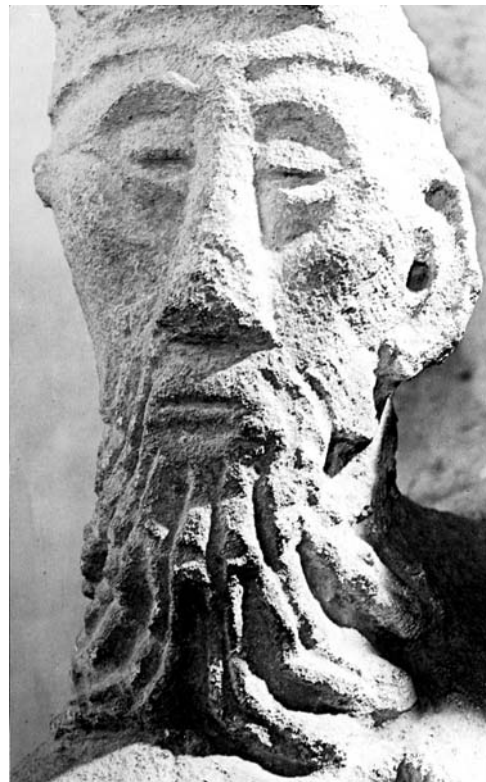
Angered, Morancos issued a challenge to combat. The gray Teutates began to rise, but his youngest brother Lugos²² mapos Leuci leapt to his feet quicker. Morancos laughed at the youth, but accepted his challenge. Lugos was very beautiful, and was much beloved by the women of the tribe. They implored Suleva to foretell the fight. She responded:

"Morancos is thrice-protected:
No enemy seen by him can harm him,
No weapon crafted from these woods
can harm him,
No man of flesh can harm him."

Hearing these words, the smith Gobannos²³ mapos Derui fashioned a helmet to hide Lugos's face, affixed an iron head to Lugos's wooden spear, and wrought a coat of metal to cover his flesh. On the appointed day, Lugos rose early to **suit up**. As he dressed, his sister Bodua²⁴ enigena Leuci found him and exhorted him to victory. On his way to the duel area, Bodua continued to harangue him with battle advice. Finally, the young Lugos scolded his sister to stay away. Offended, she retorted,

"Shame on your rudeness, brother!
I come to advise, but am brushed away
like a pest.
Shame on warriors -- they scorn the
wise.
From this day, I give warriors no peace:
I will not depart from the battlefield;
My calls will not leave their ears."

Lugos then faced Morancos. Morancos swung savagely, but Lugos dodged his blows. With one swift, masterful stroke, Lugos **beheaded** his enemy, sending the body back to the Dubones. This act struck



fear into the last of the trio, Voranviros. He sent messengers to the house of Teutates to sue for peace. Teutates accepted the truce, and sent the **druid Deruos**²⁵ mapos Deui to seal the treaty. Once Deruos was his guest, Voranviros had his warriors attack him. Deruos cursed the host, invoking, "By the sky above us, by the earth under us, by the sea below us, destruction to Voranviros and the Dubones." At that instant, lightning struck, the earth quaked, and the sea rose to sweep away the Dubones. They still live in the sea to this day, bringing vicious storms to their lost lands.

With the defeat of the Dubones, the Leucones established their rulership of this land. Teutates reigned as king, and sired a son Maponos²⁶. Teutates died soon thereafter. Seeing that Maponos was too young to rule, the druid Deruos decreed that



Lugos would act as regent. Lugos did then assume the kingship.

All of the Leucones instructed the bright youth Maponos. Bodua trained him in duels, Lugos trained him in horsed combat, Ogmios trained him in poetry, and Suleva trained him in the healing arts. During one of his hunts, Maponos acquired great wisdom. He caught the ancient salmon Dubnividos²⁷, and gained the power of foresight when he ate it. Maponos saw into the future, and decided that he would wait to assume kingship until the appropriate time.

Late in the reign of Lugos, he wedded a maiden of a local band of Dumnonos. Upon her, he sired the second race of humans -- our tribe. His first born son was the **progenitor of our tribe**²⁸. Lugos had many other children, who became a multitude of tribes.



Statuette of a Saint.

¹ Matrona ("great mother") is presented here as an amalgam of the Gaulish mother goddesses Matres and Matronae (see Mac Cana 1970:49).

² Taranis ("thunderer"), although commonly identified with Jupiter (Mac Cana 1970:31), is given a more aloof role here.

³ Dumnonos ("those of the land").

⁴ Dubones ("dark ones").

⁵ Marogaisos ("big spear").

⁶ Leucones ("light ones").

⁷ Teutates mapos Leuci mapos Deui ("Teutates ['he of the tribe'] son of Leucos ['light'] son of Deuos ['god']").

Teutates is considered to be a paternal protector of the tribe (Mac Cana 1970:31). Here, he assumes a role similar to the Irish Dagda.

⁸ Cernunnos ("horned one") was the Gaulish beastmaster, the lord of the hunt/animals (Mac Cana 1970:44-47).

⁹ Torconos ("great boar").

¹⁰ Suleva enigena Derui ("Suleva ['sun-like'] daughter of Deruos ['oak']"). Sulevia is depicted as a Gaulish Minerva, patroness of arts, crafts, and healing (Mac Cana 1970:34). Here, she assumes prophetic functions as well.

¹¹ Ogmios was apparently the Gaulish god of eloquence, but was also equated with Hercules (Mac Cana 1970:37).

¹² Esus was an enigmatic god of the Gauls, possibly connected with woodcutting or harvesting (Mac Cana 1970:31-32).

¹³ Damona ("great cow") was the companion of a Gaulish god of thermal waters (Mac Cana 1970:32).

¹⁴ Dunatis ("he of the fort") was a Gaulish god of the fort (Mac Cana 1970:50).

¹⁵ Ialonos ("great field") was a Gaulish god of the cleared or cultivated field (Mac Cana 1970:50).

¹⁶ This can be any goddess of the local landscape, such as rivers, mountains, etc. Examples include: Sequana (R. Seine), Matrona (R. Marne), Souconna (R. Saône), etc. (Mac Cana 1970:50). Through this marriage, the tribe of Teutates "marries" the land.

¹⁷ Epona ("great horse") was a horse goddess of the Gauls (Mac Cana 1970:55).

¹⁸ Maruvacos ("great hunger [lit. 'empty']").

¹⁹ Morancos ("great pain").

²⁰ Voranviro ("great falsehood [lit. 'untruth']").

²¹ Cerbos ("cutter").

²² Lugos, or Lugus, was a widespread Celtic god of arts and crafts. His likely Irish counterpart, Lugh, points to battlefield mastery as well (Mac Cana 1970:27-28).

²³ Gobannos ("smith"). The Gauls presumably had a blacksmith god, given their mastery of ironworking. Such a deity is strongly suggested by the later Irish Goibhniu and the Welsh Gofannon (Mac Cana 1970:35).

²⁴ Bodua ("raven") recalls the ancient Celtic goddesses of war, such as Gaulish Cathubodua ("raven of battle") and the British Andraste (Mac Cana 1970:86). The Irish literature has Bodb ("raven") as one of Morrigan's female war-spirits.

²⁵ Deruos ("oak").

²⁶ Maponos ("great youth") was a youthful Apollo-like god among the Gauls and Britons (Mac Cana 1970:32-33).

²⁷ Dubnividos ("deep wisdom").

²⁸ This could be a fictional eponymous ancestor of a Gaulish tribe (eg. Arvernus of the Arverni) or a titular name of an ancestor whose tribe's name is descriptive (eg. Cinturix ["first king"] of the Bituriges ["kings of the world"]).