

JUDITH ANNE PAGE ANGLES

The religions of Roman Britain



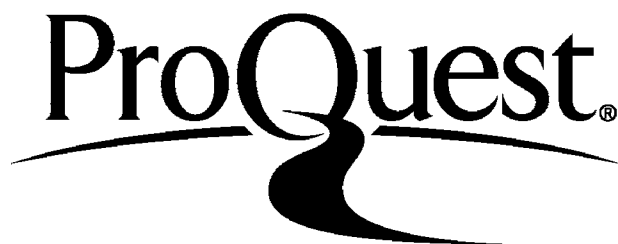
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## ABSTRACT

The evidence for Romano-British religion must be examined in the light of four facts: (1) willingness to worship deities of different natures and origins; (2) confusion of similar deities; (3) similarity of ideas of deity throughout the ancient world; (4) localization of deities. Thus a coherent picture of Romano-British religion will be gained.

The Britons apparently worshipped numerous localized gods; the nature of some of these can be determined. The British Druids probably worshipped the same pantheon as the Britons generally, but their belief in immortality was perhaps peculiar to them. After the conquest the Roman army found out these deities and worshipped them freely. Most of the Continental Celtic and Germanic deities found in Britain were introduced by the Roman army and were not worshipped by the Britons, though a few were perhaps brought by the Belgae when they migrated to Britain in the first century B.C.

Public cults of the emperor and the Roman gods were probably soon established in the chief towns, and there are indications that the country people knew of them, though they did not worship them freely. The army also introduced Oriental cults, but these apparently were hardly adopted by the Britons. Syncretistic worship was also practised mainly by the army, especially the well-educated auxiliary officers;

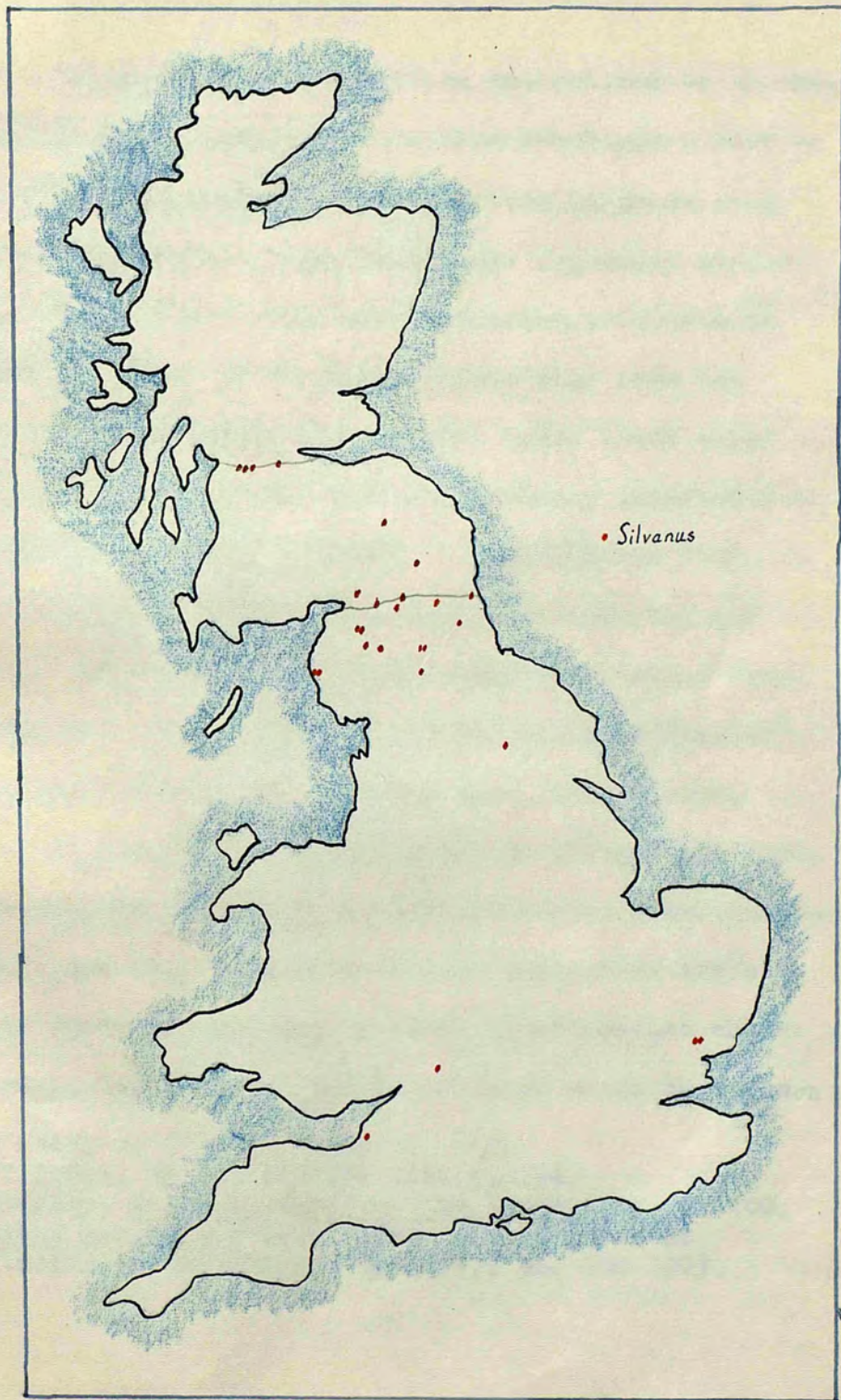
it also appears at Maiden Castle, where there was presumably no military influence.

Celtic gods were worshipped ~~more~~ by Romans more freely than Roman by Celts, but each side influenced the other. The four facts mentioned above were important in the formation of Romano-British religion, as of provincial religion generally, especially the idea of localization. But the latter caused a diversity of religious cults, while Britain's unity under Roman rule called for religious unity; and this was one reason for the success of Christianity.

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#### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Inscriptions occurring in the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum are cited by the (roman) number of the volume (without prefix) and the (arabic) number of the inscription.

Inscriptions occurring in Ephemeris Epigraphica are cited by the (roman) number of the volume with the prefix EE, and the (arabic) number of the inscription.

Inscriptions occurring in Dessau's Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae are cited by their (arabic) numbers with the prefix ILS. *ILS.*

Celtic words which are conjectural forms are preceded by the sign \*.

AA<sup>2</sup> (3,4) = Archaeologia Aeliana, second (third, fourth) series.

AJ = Archaeological Journal.

- BGdSL = Beitrage zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur.
- CW<sup>2</sup> = Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, new series.
- DUJ = Durham University Journal
- JRS = Journal of Roman Studies.
- PSAScot. = Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
- PW = Pauly-Wissowa, Realencyclopädie.
- TAPAssn = Transactions of the American Philological Association.
- ZfdA = Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum.
- ZfdP = Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie.



# THE RELIGIONS OF ROMAN BRITAIN

## Chapter I

### Introductory

#### Factors influencing the development of provincial religion.

In ancient times the word "religion" had not the same meaning as now, for the conceptions of deity and of worship were different. One result of that difference is that religions were not then "mutually exclusive"<sup>1</sup> as Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Mohammedanism are today. Thus in Greece worshippers of Olympian Zeus might also worship deities of a quite different nature, such as Dionysus, Demeter and Kore, and feel no incongruity between the one cult and the other,<sup>2</sup> and the same was true of Roman worship.

At the beginning of the Roman Imperial period, the tendency to identify deities of a similar character was beginning to show itself, though the "pagan syncretism" described by J. Toutain,<sup>3</sup> a religious and philosophical phenomenon produced by the strong influence of Eastern religions, did not fully develop till the third century A.D. The tendency towards syncretism strengthened as the worship of non-Roman deities in Rome, and of Roman deities in the

1 W.K.C. Guthrie, Orpheus and Greek Religion, p. 7.

2 Guthrie, loc. cit.

3 J. Toutain, Les cultes paiens dans l'Empire romain, II, pp. 227 ff.

provinces, became more widespread.

The cults known to have been practised in the Roman Empire fall into three broad categories: (1) the cults of the Greeks and Romans, who by this time had almost identical pantheons, (2) the religions of the Oriental countries in the borders of the Empire, (3) the cults of the Celtic and Germanic peoples of Western Europe. All these three categories are represented in the religious inscriptions of Roman Britain. The assimilation or identification of deities of different categories was easy because there were characteristics common to all three; the most obvious are the recognition of a plurality of deities and the assignment to each of a more or less well-defined sphere of action. The latter characteristic was much more marked in Greco-Roman religion; Celtic deities especially had universal rather than specialized powers, probably because Celtic religion was at a more primitive stage than Greco-Roman.<sup>1</sup>

Romans certainly, Greeks and Celts probably, believed that deities preside over defined areas of territory, whether a country, a city, or merely a district.<sup>2</sup>

1 In pre-classical Greek religion gods had apparently more functions than in the classical period, notably Zeus, who in early times seems to have been Zeus, Poseidon, Pluto and perhaps Ares too; cf. J. Rhys, The Hibbert Lectures 1886, pp. 131-3, Preller, Greichische Mythologie (ed. 3) I, pp. 117, 123 note 5.

2 cf. G. Boissier, La religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins I, pp. 335-6, R. G. Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, pp. 261, 266, 269.

It was believed that, when passing through or taking up residence in a place, one ought to show reverence to the local deity, so as to share his protecting favour.<sup>1</sup> This idea was one cause of the spread of cults beyond their homes; Roman soldiers especially would begin to worship the god of one country and continue to do so after their transference to another.

## 2. Evidence for religion in Roman Britain.

If our evidence for ~~the~~ religion in Roman Britain is examined in the light of these facts, it is seen to give a coherent picture of the religious life of the province, a picture in agreement with what is known of religious life elsewhere in the Empire. The evidence consists principally of Latin inscriptions and the remains of temples. But nearly all the inscriptions come from military stations or towns where romanization had made considerable progress, so that the picture will not be complete; for there is very little information about the religious life of the less romanized Britons, though something may be inferred from structural remains and cult objects.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the inscriptions are unevenly spread over the period, most

<sup>1</sup> cf. G. Boissier, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 336.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. the objects found at the temple sites at Lydney and Maiden Castle.

being of second or early third century date;<sup>1</sup> hence it is unsafe to say, for example, that because there are no inscriptions of late third century date relating to some cult that cult had by that time died out.

Literary evidence is sparse, and sometimes difficult to interpret. Welsh and Irish folk-lore and legends preserve some information about Celtic deities, and Latin and Greek authors also tell us a little, though seldom more than the names of gods or disjointed facts or pieces of hearsay. Tacitus and Seneca mention a temple to Claudius at Camulodunum;<sup>2</sup> and there are passing references to gods and religious practices, mostly Celtic, in Lucan, Caesar, Strabo and several other authors.<sup>3</sup> Caesar names six Roman deities worshipped by the Gauls; presumably he meant that the gods the Gauls worshipped were very like these Roman gods.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that some of the British dedications to Roman gods conceal native gods in this way.<sup>5</sup>

1 R.G.Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, pp. 261-2.

2 Tacitus Annals XIV 31,32, Seneca Apocolocyntosis 8.

3 e.g. Lucan Pharsalia I 445-6 (Teutates, Esus, Taranis), I 450-454, III 399-425, Caesar De Bello Gallico VI 13-14, Pomponius Mela Chorographia III 18 (Druids), Solinus XXII 10 (Sulis), Ptolemy II 3,2 (Belisama as name of the river Mersey).

4 Caesar B.G. VI 17-18.

5 Many authorities say that when deus or dea precedes the Latin name the idea is "the (foreign) god called.... in Latin".

## Chapter II

Celtic religion in Britain

Little is known of the religion of the native Britons at the time of the Claudian conquest. The only Celtic records are the traditions preserved mainly in Welsh and Irish legends. Latin and Greek writers have recorded the names of some deities and a few facts about the Druids and their practices.

Pre-conquest religion and the Druids.

The gods of the Celts appear to have been numerous, varying in rank and with ill-defined powers, chiefly spirits of natural features or forces. "Images" of the gods seem to have existed,<sup>1</sup> but these may not have been anthropomorphic; some believe that the Druids actually opposed anthropomorphic representations because they were characteristic of Roman religion.<sup>2</sup> There is strong evidence that trees were important in Druidic religion; Maximus of Tyre<sup>3</sup> says that Zeus was worshipped in the form of a tall oak, and worship in groves is spoken of by several

1 Caesar B.G. VI 17,1; Lucan III 412.

2 Lucan (III 412-3) and Valerius Flaccus (VI 88-91, cf. A.B.Cook, Zeus II, pp. 108-9) appear to speak of the worship of unformed pillars or tree-trunks. Cf. T.D.Kendrick, The Druids, pp. 143-5, S.Reinach, L'art plastique en Gaule et le Druidisme, Revue celtique 1892 pp. 189 ff., who suggest that native anthropomorphic representations were imitative of Roman sculpture.

3 He meant the Celtic sky-god; Dissertations VIII, 8.

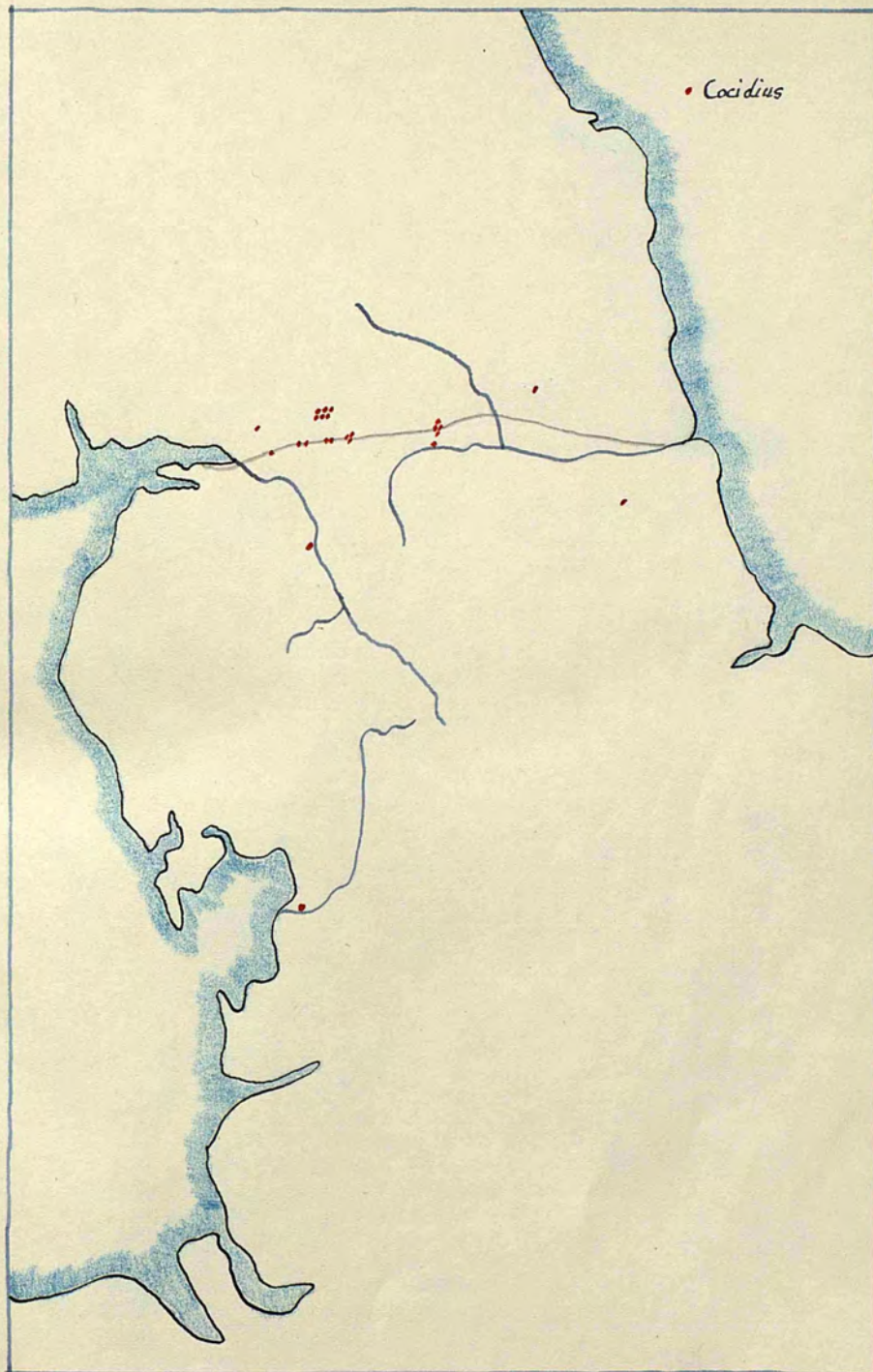
authors.<sup>1</sup> Roman authors affirm that the Druids offered human sacrifices, and Roman abhorrence of the practice was probably a more important cause of their suppression than the political reasons which were alleged.<sup>2</sup> It does not seem likely that the Druidic faith differed from the ordinary Celtic pantheism. Caesar implies that there was nothing extraordinary in the Druids' ideas except their doctrine of immortality.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence for Celtic cults.

When the Romans invaded Britain, they brought with them not only the worship of Roman and Eastern gods but also the Celtic cults of Western Europe. Legionaries and auxiliaries alike adopted these cults, moved by the desire to keep on good terms with the god of the place where they happened to be, and they also continued to worship the deities of their native countries. For the same reason they began to worship the local gods of Britain, and it is from the dedications they set up (and from those of the more romanized Britons living in the civilian south)

- 1 Lucan I 453-4, III 399 ff., Dio Cassius LXII 7, Tacitus Annals XIV 30; cf. Kendrick, op. cit., p. 147.
- 2 Strabo Geography IV, iv, 5, Lucan III 402-5, Dio Cassius LXII 7, Pomponius Mela Chorographia III 18; Pliny I Naturalis Historia XXX 4, Suetonius Vita Claudii 25, Tacitus loc. cit. It is possible that the sacrifices were infrequent and confined to criminals; cf. ~~the~~ MacCulloch, "Druids", in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V 83-84.
- 3 Kendrick op. cit., pp. 113-114, Caesar B.G. VI 14, 5; 17, 2.

Distribution of inscriptions to Cocidius



that most information about British deities can be drawn. Many of these inscriptions cannot be very closely dated, but it would seem that worship of the local deities in the Roman way did not become widespread till the establishment of the frontier at the Tyne-Solway isthmus.

### 3 Some Northern gods.

About twelve of the deities mentioned on the dedications may be assumed to have been native to Britain. None was worshipped in the whole province, and several appear to have been gods of one particular place. Five, however, were worshipped over fairly wide areas in northern England and south-west Scotland; these were Cocidius, Belatucadrus, Maponus, Brigantia, and the god or gods called Vitiris, Veteres or Huites.

Cocidius. Cocidius was worshipped on and near the western half of Hadrian's Wall. His temple, Fanum Cocidi, is mentioned by the Ravenna geographer<sup>1</sup> and is thought by Collingwood to have been in the Irthing valley<sup>2</sup>; this is consistent with the distribution of the inscriptions.<sup>3</sup>

1 Ravennas 5, 31 p. 433, 4. cf. I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, The British section of the Ravenna cosmography, in Archaeologia 93, pp. 1-50.

2 Oxford History of England 11 p. 265.

3 Distribution:- Bewcastle 6, Netherby 1, Housesteads 4, at or near Birdoswald 3, Chesterholm 1, milecastle 52 (Bankshead) 2, milecastle 60 (near Castlesteads) 1, milecastle 65 (Tarraby) 1, milecastle 59 (Old Wall) 1, Old Penrith 1 (of dubious location and reading), Risingham 1, Ebchester 1, Lancaster 1; total 24.

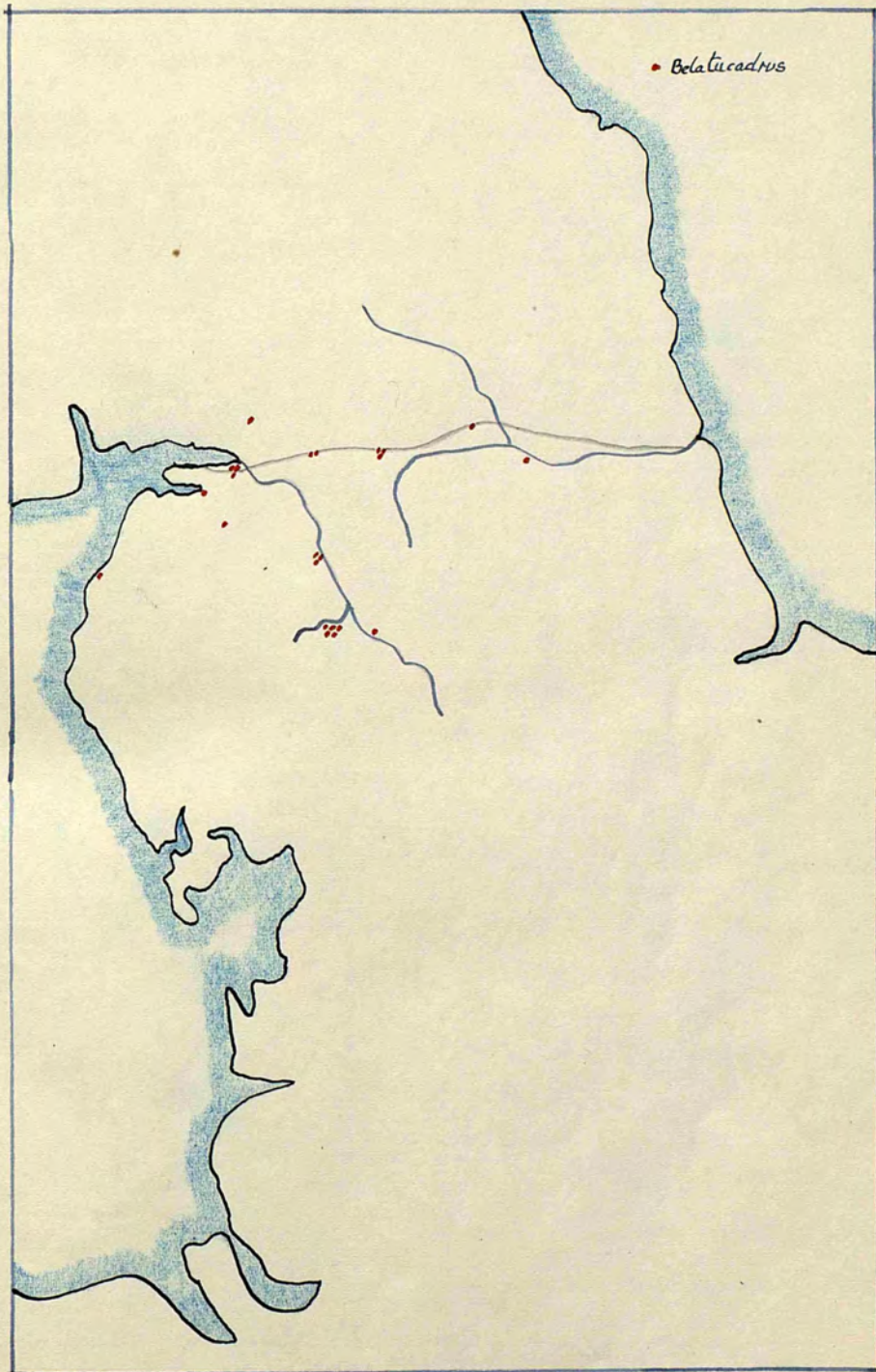


Cocidius seems to have been a war god; seventeen inscriptions were undoubtedly set up by soldiers, and on five he is assimilated to Mars. On two silver plaques from Bewcastle (JRS 1938 p. 203, 15A and B) he is shown in armour with spear and shield. But an inscription from Housesteads (VII 642) identifies him with Silvanus; perhaps he was thought of as presiding over all aspects of the use of weapons. According to I. A. Richmond, the name Cocidius means "the red one"<sup>1</sup>, and this supports the identification as a war god. He must have been a deity of some importance; the legionary soldiers who dedicated altars to him on Hadrian's Wall<sup>2</sup> may have been there for the purpose of building the Wall, and probably only an important local god would have been discovered by them at such an early date.

Belatucadrus. The area of Belatucadrus' worship was rather more restricted; only five dedications to him have been found outside Cumberland and north

- 1 Northumberland County History XV, p. 86 ("The Romans in Redesdale"). The word probably comes from the same root as Welsh coch, red (I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, op. cit. p. 34); cf. Latin coccus, Greek κόκκος, κόκκινος.
- 2 VII 644 Housesteads, VII 800 Bankshead, VII 876 High Strand (milecastle 60), VII 914 Tarraby, VII 801 Birdoswald. The legionary centurion who appears at Bewcastle (EE III 113) may have been in charge of an auxiliary cohort (cf. EE IX 1157 Wallsend, dated by Haverfield (Roman inscriptions in Britain 1892-3, AJ 50, 1894, pp. 279-322) to mid-second century or later).

Distribution of inscriptions to Belatucadrus



Westmorland<sup>1</sup>. His altars are smaller than those of Cocidius, their texts shorter and more clumsily cut, and the god's name appears in various spellings, suggesting that his devotees were poor and humble people of little education. E. Birley believes that these people were mostly civilians and natives of the region, living in settlements outside the forts of the area and having no direct connection with the army.<sup>2</sup> However, some of the altars were dedicated by men who appear to have the tria nomina of Roman citizens, and these must surely have been ~~been~~ soldiers.<sup>3</sup> The etymology of Belatucadrus' name suggests that he was a war-god. J. Rhys derives it from the Celtic roots bel, slaughter or destruction, and cadr, fine, powerful, hence it would mean "handsome in slaughter" or "mighty to kill".<sup>4</sup> On four altars Belatucadrus is ~~is~~ identified with Mars, but this does not necessarily mean that he was a war-god; Mars was often assimilated by

- 1 Distribution:- Burgh-by-Sands 3, Netherby 1, Old Carlisle 1, Maryport 1, Kirkby Thore 1, Brougham 5, Old Penrith 3, Castlesteads 2, Kirkbride 1, and Carvoran 3, Carrawburgh 1, Hexham(?) 1; total 23.
- 2 E. Birley, Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 74-5. Only two altars (and a doubtful third) were dedicated by men connected with the army (VII 318 Old Penrith and EE III 185 Brougham, also (?) VII 369 Maryport).
- 3 VII 935 Burgh-by-Sands, VII 337, EE III 92 Old Carlisle, VII 369 Maryport, VII 318 Old Penrith, VII 874 Castlesteads, VII 957 Netherby (?). cf. E. Birley, op. cit., p. 168.
- 4 J. Rhys, The Hibbert Lectures 1886, pp. 37-8 (with p. 38 note 4), quoted by A. Hölder, Altkeltische Sprachschatz I, column 369.

Gaulish Celts to gods whose sphere was not solely, or even primarily, war. Nor have we any representation of Belatucadrus; therefore his functions cannot be precisely defined.

Maponus.

The sphere of Maponus is easier to determine, though only five altars dedicated to him are known.<sup>1</sup> The name is the same as the old Welsh <sup>mapon</sup>~~mabon~~ (now spelt mabon, cf. mab, son) meaning a boy or male baby. His shrine or sacred place is named by the Ravenna geographer as "Maponi",<sup>2</sup> and is thought to have been in the north of England,<sup>3</sup> and a place "Fons Mabonus" near Lyons is recorded in a deed of about 1090 A.D., belonging to the abbey of Savigny.<sup>4</sup> On four inscriptions Maponus is identified with Apollo; on another, dedicated to Apollo and found at Whitley Castle near Alston, a deity is represented who is not a Roman nor an Oriental god, and is probably Maponus.<sup>5</sup> Apollo was regarded by the Gauls as a healing god, and

1 VII 332 Old Penrith, VII 471(=JRS 1925 p. 248,8), VII 483(=JRS 1943 p. 78), VII 1345 Corbridge, VII 218 Ribchester.

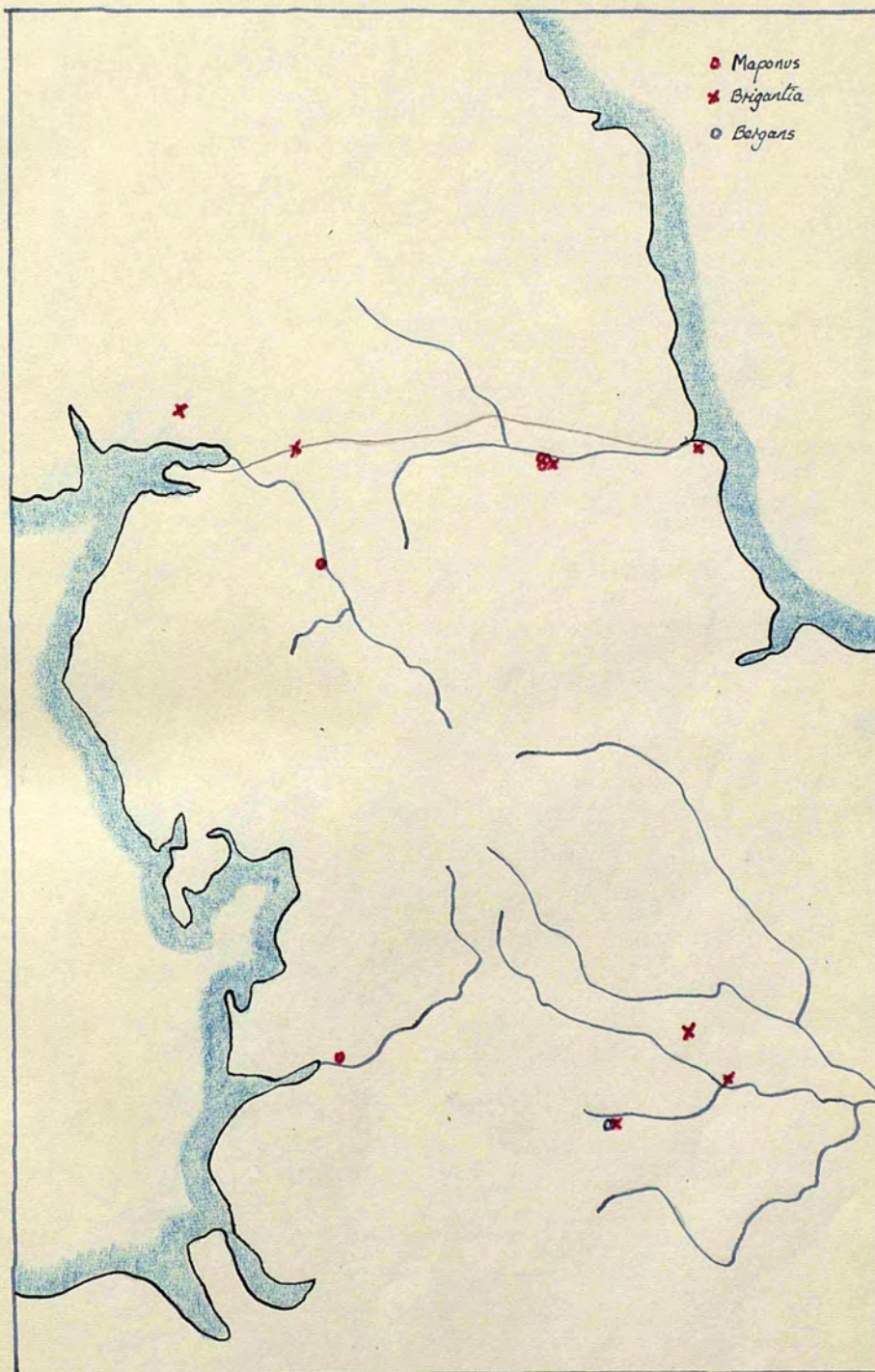
2 Ravennas 5, 31 p. 436, 20.

3 I.A.Richmond identifies Maponi with Clochmabonstane on the Solway Firth (Northumberland County History XV p. 97, The British section of the Ravenna Cosmography, p. 39).

4 Cartulary of the abbey of Savigny, Rhone, I, pp. 444-5, "De Mabono Fonte". cf. Holder, (op. cit. I, col. 414.

5 This altar is discussed by R.P.Wright in JRS 1943, pp. 37 ff.

Distribution of inscriptions to Maponus  
and Brigantia



especially as god of healing waters, and the gods they associated with him were generally gods of water or of healing.<sup>1</sup> "Fons Mabonus" suggests association with water, hence Maponus may be another god of healing waters, identified with Apollo also by virtue of his youth. It is difficult to suppose that Maponus was worshipped all over Celtic territory; if that had been so, <sup>more</sup> ~~more~~ altars to him would surely have been found. It seems reasonably certain that he was a local god of north Britain, though the word in its common meaning of "boy" may have been in use in all branches of the Celtic tongue.

Brigantia. The cult of Brigantia, undoubtedly the patron goddess of the Brigantes of northern England, is attested by seven inscriptions, three from the Aire and Calder basin in south Yorkshire, three from the Tyne-Solway isthmus, and one, an inscribed relief, from Birrens in Dumfries-shire.<sup>2</sup> Another dedication from Slack in Yorkshire is to a god Bergans or Bergantis, a word said by Stokes to come from a root bhergh, cognate with bhrgh from which he derived the names Brigantes and Brigantia.<sup>3</sup> Holder derives

- 1 Toutain, Cultes paiens III p. 262, cf. Caesar B.G. VI 17; Jayne, Healing gods of ancient civilizations, pp. 506, 511 ff.
- 2 VII 203 (Adel near Leeds), EE IX 1120 (near Castleford), VII 200 (near Slack), VII 875 (?Castlesteads), EE IX 1141 Corbridge, EE IX 1138 (South Shields), VII 1062 (Birrens).
- 3 EE VII 920; Haverfield in AJ 47, p. 255.

Brigantia from a Celtic form \*Briganti, a participle in the nominative feminine singular, coming from a root brig meaning high, whether lofty, elevated or of high rank.<sup>1</sup> Several similar words are known. Brigindu occurs on a Celtic inscription from Volnay in France; Brigit was a goddess of the ancient Irish, a fire goddess with some of the same functions as Minerva and said to be the same as Brigantia; the Brigantii, living by Lake Constance, are mentioned by Strabo and Ammianus, and perhaps were ancestors of the British Brigantes and of the Irish people who worshipped Brigit.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Yorkshire altars are dated to the early third century A.D., and the Birrens relief is probably to be dated about 210 A.D.,<sup>3</sup> so that perhaps the cult of Brigantia, in a romanized form, began under Severus and was officially encouraged to promote romanization of the area.<sup>4</sup> There can be no doubt that the cult was romanized. The Birrens relief has features of Minerva, Victory, and Caelestis (i.e. Tanit, goddess of Carthage), as well as the mural crown which is the usual

1 Holder, op. cit. I, cols. 534-8, calls the Brigantes "mountain-dwellers, dwellers in high places"; Rhys (Holder loc. cit.) calls them "the free men, or privileged people".

2 Strabo IV, iv,8, Ammianus XV,iv,3; N.Jolliffe, Dea Brigantia, AJ 98, p. 37.

3 S.N.Miller, A note on an inscription from Birrens (Dumfries-shire), JRS 27, 1937, pp. 208-9.

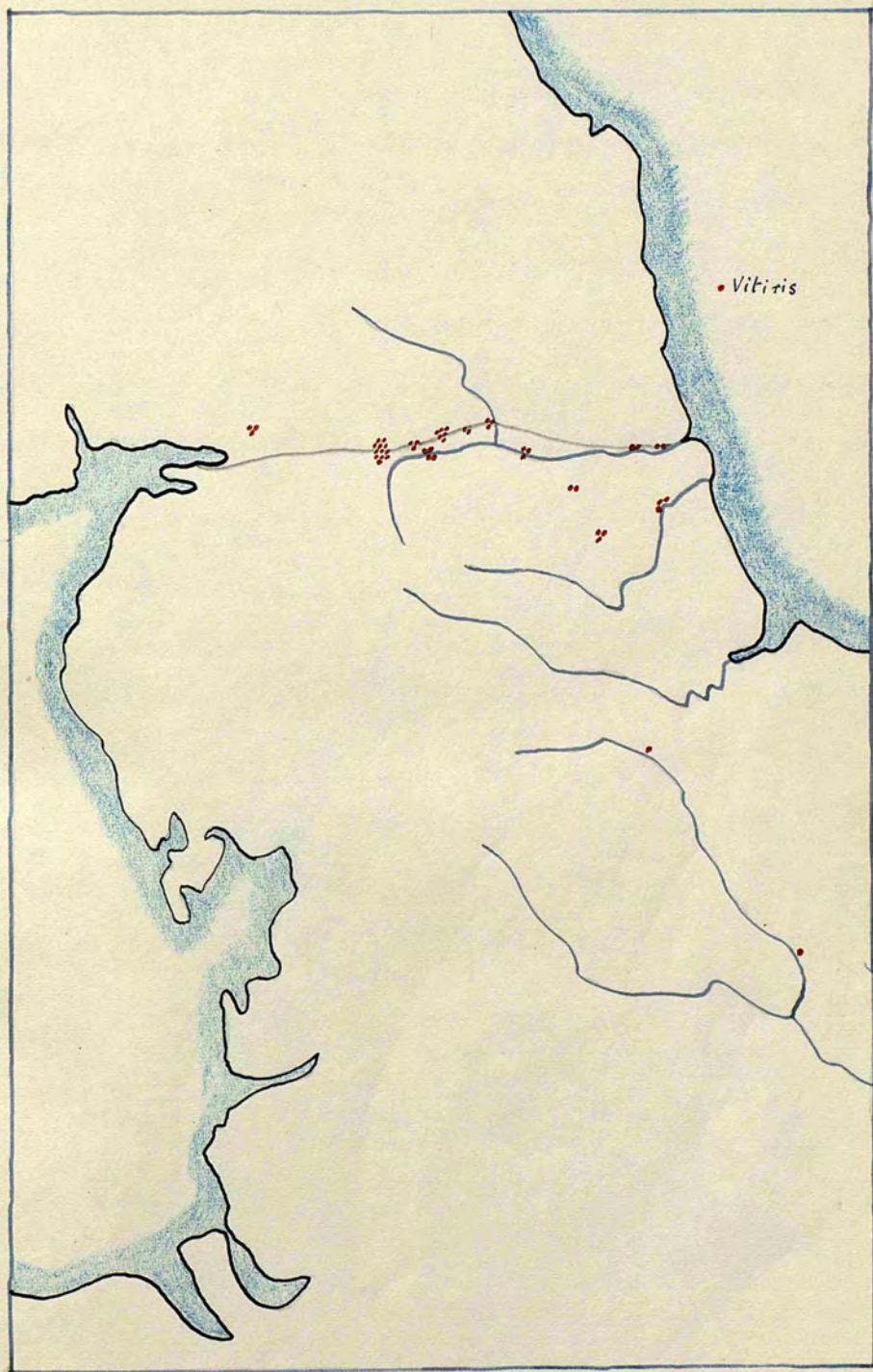
4 So N. Jolliffe, op. cit. pp. 38-41.

attribute of deities who protect towns, peoples or provinces. On the Corbridge altar Brigantia is actually called Caelestis and associated with Jupiter Dolichenus and Salus; the connection between the four deities is perhaps one of healing powers. Salus is commonly worshipped with Aesculapius and is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hygieia; Tanit is known to have had healing powers, and Dolichenus and Brigantia probably had them too.<sup>1</sup> That Brigantia had healing powers is supported by an inscription from the Castlesteads district (VII 875, dated about 213 A.D.) which calls her dea nymp<sup>h</sup>a Brig(antia). A Carrawburgh inscription (EE III 191) calls Coventina dea nim<sup>f</sup>a, and there is no doubt that Coventina was a water goddess and probably a healing goddess <sup>as well</sup> ~~too~~. Further support comes from the identification of Brigantia, Sulis and Coventina with Minerva,<sup>2</sup> which shows that the three British goddesses probably had something, <sup>probably</sup> ~~most likely~~ powers over water and healing, in common.

- 1 The inscription has the words ius(su) de(i); similar formulae are common on Dolichenus' altars, and are said to be equivalent to ex visu and to refer to incubatio, practised especially at shrines of Asclepius. Brigantia would have healing powers because it was for the Celts one manifestation of supernatural power. cf. Jolliffe, op. cit., pp. 46-7.
- 2 VII 1062 Birrens, EE III 196 Carrawburgh, VII 39, 42, 43, Bath. Minerva is said to have been the tutelary deity of physicians (Jayne, Healing Gods, pp. 434-5, cf. Cicero de Divinatione II 59, and the inscriptions XI 1292-1310).



Distribution of inscriptions to Vitiris



Vitiris. In contrast with these four deities, nothing is known and little can be conjectured about the functions of Vitiris. Even his name is uncertain; on some inscriptions it is singular, on others plural, twice it is feminine and plural, and at least seven different spellings are known. Collingwood<sup>1</sup> believed Vitiris, or something like it, to be the original form, the modifications being due to the ignorance of the dedicators. E. Birley and I. A. Richmond support aspirated forms, Huitris or Hvitir, and Richmond follows Haverfield in suggesting a Germanic origin.<sup>2</sup> Haverfield once believed that the altars were a testimony to the survival of pagan gods into a period of general Christianity; but he later withdrew this view,<sup>3</sup> with which Collingwood also disagreed.<sup>4</sup> It is more probable that Vitiris or Huitris was a local British god, whose powers cannot be determined, with a cult-centre somewhere near the middle of Hadrian's Wall,<sup>5</sup> on one

- 1 Oxford History of England I, p. 268. The uncouth style and small size of the altars suggest humble and almost illiterate worshippers.
- 2 Birley, Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 74-5, Richmond, Roman Britain, p. 206-7, Haverfield in EE IX, no. 1182 (Housesteads).
- 3 In AA XV, pp. 22-44, Early Northumbrian Christianity and the altars to the 'Di Veteres'. He thought (on the strength of the spellings Hveteri and Vheteri) that the word must come from a Teutonic root; but these spellings occur less often than the Veter-, Viter- or Vitir- forms.
- 4 loc. cit.
- 5 Distribution:- Netherby 3, Carvoran 12, Greatchesters 3, Housesteads 6, Carrawburgh 2, Chesters 3, Benwell 2, Newcastle 2, Chesterholm 4, Chester-le-Street 3, <sup>Carbridge</sup> 3, Ebchester 2, Lanchester 3, Catterick 1, York 1; total 57. 47. 50.

inscription (VII 958 Netherby) he is identified with Mogons (probably a god of the middle Rhine valley), as if the dedicator wished to identify a god of his native land with a god of the country where he was serving. The altars, small and clumsily inscribed, are very like those of Belatucadrus, and mis-spellings are also found on Belatucadrus' altars. In only two cases did the dedicators record military rank, and only eight other altars bear recognized Roman names.<sup>1</sup> On twenty-six altars the name of the dedicator is not given or is illegible. Probably some, perhaps most, of the altars were dedicated by native Britons living in the vici-outside the forts.

These five deities all belong to the north of England; doubtless similar deities were worshipped in the south, but we have very little trace of them. Of eight other deities who were almost certainly British and were worshipped ~~in~~ within a small area, six are attested in the north and only two in the south, and those two have their homes near the Welsh frontier. Clearly it was mainly the soldiers in Britain who worshipped the local gods in the Roman way; had it not been so, more local deities of the

1 VII 760 Carvoran, VII 502C Newcastle; VII 765 Carvoran, 459 Ebchester, 728 Greatchesters, 958 Netherby, ~~EEIX~~ EE IX 1122 Catterick, 1183 Housesteads, JRS 1932 p. 225, 7 Housesteads, Roman inscriptions and Sculptures belonging to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-on-Tyne (R.G. Collingwood), no. 62 Chester-le-Street.

romanized, non-military region in the south would have been attested. Probably the native Britons generally held to their own modes of worship, which have left few traces.

4. *Two local gods of the south.*

~~Other localized deities.~~

Sulis. Sulis, the goddess of the hot springs at Bath, was the first local deity to be worshipped in the Roman way. Her temple was probably built in the Flavian period, and at least one of the altars known is likely to be of that date.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the virtue of the springs was quickly discovered, and widely known; Dio Cassius and Solinus mention the place, Solinus speaking of a perpetual fire which burned in the temple, a suggestion that Sulis might have been a solar goddess as well as goddess of water and healing.<sup>2</sup> Sulis was identified with Minerva, perhaps because of her healing powers, like Brigantia and Coventina.<sup>3</sup>

The history of Sulis' cult cannot be reconstructed with any certainty. Renewal of worship is recorded on two inscriptions, one a record of restoration and repainting

1 Collingwood, op. cit., p. 264. EE IX 995 was dedicated by a Gaulish stonemason who perhaps worked in the building of the temple (cf. Collingwood, op. cit., p. 255). The style of the altar and the Gaulish name of the man's father suggest an early date.

2 Solinus XXII 10. An altar to Sulis from Alzey (XIII 6266) suggests that people came to Bath from the Continent to be cured. If Sulis was a sun-goddess (cf. Collingwood, op. cit., p. 264, note) she might be comparable with the Gaulish Grannus. The notion of a female sun is not unparalleled; cf. Old Norse sol, Modern Danish and Swedish sol, Anglo-Saxon sunne, Modern German sonne (Rhys, Hibbert Lectures 1886 pp. 571-3). Welsh haul, Breton heol, Old Cornish houl, heuul, are masculine, but haul at least was originally feminine.

3 VII 42, 43, 49; the pediment of the temple bore the Gorgon's-head shield, and the owl and helmet of Minerva.

of a building which had decayed through lapse of time, the other an altar referring to a "holy place destroyed by insolence"<sup>1</sup>. These probably refer to two different reconstructions of the temple; Hübner dates the first to the second century A.D., while the altar, recording the cleansing and rededicating of the holy place, may belong to the reign of Julian, when so many pagan cults were restored after their overthrow by Christianity. The temple and baths were probably patronized with intermissions from the Flavian period till the rise of Christianity as the official religion of the empire, and again under Julian; after the failure of Roman power in Britain the baths, temple and town seem to have fallen into decay, though people were still living there as late as 577 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

Nodens. The god Nodens, whose temple was at Lydney Park in Gloucestershire, was not worshipped in Roman fashion till 364 A.D., when the temple was first built, and his cult did not have a long life, probably lapsing after the withdrawal of Roman power.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 The altar, VII 45; the other inscription (probably from the wall of the temple), VII 39.
- 2 So Guide to the Roman Baths of Bath (10th edn.), p. 10. The town is recorded to have been taken by the Saxons after the battle of Deorham in 577 A.D.
- 3 The dates are fixed by coins; Sir M. Wheeler, Report on Excavations at Lydney Park (1932), pp. 31-3. Bathurst, who excavated the site in the nineteenth century, found coins of Arcadius and Honorius.

The cult of Nodens was apparently complex and syncretistic; there is evidence that he was regarded as god of the sun, the sea, healing and hunting, and possibly as war-god also. The name is said to be the same as that of the Irish king Nuada of the Silver Hand, whom Rhys believed to be a Celtic Zeus.<sup>1</sup> Rhys suggested that Nodens ~~citing the~~ was a god of prosperity, citing the German geniessen, genossen, Gothic niutan, to enjoy or have the use of, and Lithuanian nauda, possessions, which he supposed to come from the same root as Nodens; Professor Tolkien believes that the name signified "the Catcher", but that its exact sense is uncertain.<sup>2</sup> Mosaics in the temple represented fish and sea-monsters, and Tritons and a fisherman appear on two bronze plaques which, according to Richmond, belonged to crowns used in the temple rites.<sup>3</sup> On one of these a young god with radiate crown and whip is shown driving a four-horse chariot; he is probably a sun-deity. The god's healing powers seem to have been particularly important. Close to the temple were found the remains of a long building consisting of a row of open-fronted rooms; it has been suggested that this was used by pilgrims wishing to be

1 Rhys, op. cit., pp. 120-122.

2 Rhys, loc. cit.; Tolkien in Wheeler op. cit., p. 137.

3 Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 28-42; Rhys, op. cit., pp. 126-7; Richmond, Roman Britain, p. 195.

healed, for the incubatio practised in the temples of healing deities; The number of statuettes of dogs found on the site supports this suggestion.<sup>1</sup>

It seems probable that Nodens was not primarily a sea-god, but that he was worshipped as a god of multiple powers, being originally a local deity, perhaps patron of hunters or fishermen. The pagan revival under Julian brought him into prominence, and other functions were attributed to him under the influence of syncretizing ideas, so that he became sufficiently important to be worshipped with some elaboration by romanized people.<sup>2</sup>

5. "Romano-Celtic" temples; some deities worshipped in them.

The small square or round temples known as "Romano-Celtic" are fairly common in the south of England, and were probably shrines of local deities, but in most cases nothing is known of these gods. A square shrine at Gosbecks near Colchester was apparently dedicated to Mercury,<sup>3</sup> perhaps a Roman interpretation of a British god, and another at Maiden

1 Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 39, 40-41, 43, 51-2; Richmond, op. cit., p. 141. Dogs were kept in Asclepius' sanctuary at Epidaurus, and a dog frequently accompanies that deity in sculptures. Other small objects found at Lydney may be votive objects left by cured pilgrims.

2 Including an officer of the British fleet; PR REL in VII 137 is probably to be expanded as pr(ae)positus rel(iquat-ionis), i.e. officer in charge of the fleet's supply-dept; so Mommsen, in ~~G.II~~ VII s.n. 137.

3 JRS 140 (1950), p. 107, fig. 24, JRS 38 (1948), plate XIV and p. 91.

Castle was the home of a deity who was probably the Tarvos Trigaranus mentioned on an altar found in Paris.<sup>1</sup> This temple was of late date, and the nature of the god worshipped there seems to have been almost as complex as Nodens'. Very few of these temples have been found in the north; air-photography discovered one west of the excavated part of the Roman supply-depot at Corbridge.<sup>2</sup> But temples of a simpler sort are known and the deities who possessed them are known.

Antenociticus. At Benwell on Hadrian's Wall a small rectangular building with an apse was the shrine of the god Anociticus or Antenociticus. Remains of a life-sized stone statue, portraying in Celtic style a youthful, barbaric deity with the Celtic torque, were found there. The temple did not have a long life; it suffered destruction by fire (in the invasion from the north in 197 A.D., perhaps) and was not rebuilt, for there is no evidence of worship later than the second century.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that the god was native to the Vangiones of Upper Germany, a cohort of whom was stationed at Benwell in the second century and

1 XIII 3026B; Sir M. Wheeler, Maiden Castle, Dorset, pp. 72-8, plates XXII and XXXI, B. Tarvos Trigaranus was apparently a Gaulish god; see below, p. 34.

2 Richmond, op. cit., p. 194.

3 Account of the temple in F.G. Simpson and I.A. Richmond, The Roman fort on Hadrian's Wall at Benwell, AA<sup>4</sup> 19(1941), pp. 37-39.



was apparently withdrawn from it about the time of the ~~Several~~ Severan reconstruction and reorganization; but he may equally well be a native deity of Britain, perhaps associated with some natural feature near Benwell fort.

Coventina.

Another small shrine was found near Carrawburgh on Hadrian's Wall, dedicated to a goddess Coventina who was undoubtedly the deity of the spring which rose in the middle of the shrine.<sup>1</sup> <sup>Coventina</sup> ~~Seventian~~ probably had healing powers; like Brigantia and Sulis, she was identified with Minerva, and the objects found in her well are the same kind of small offering as was found on the temple site at Lydney.<sup>2</sup> The small value of the objects and the many mis-spellings of the goddess' name suggest <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ her worshippers were people of a humble station. Half a dozen of the altars were dedicated by soldiers of the fort's garrison; several Germans appear, and men of the first cohort of Batavians and the first cohort of Cugernians, garrison in the second and third

- 1 Bruce, Handbook to the Roman Wall (10th edition), pp. 102-104; J. Clayton, Description of Roman remains discovered near to Procolitia, AA<sup>2</sup> 8 (1880), pp. 1-49. Coventina is addressed as "nymph" on EE III 190, but another altar is dedicated to "the nymphs and Coventina" (EE VII 1037); however, Coventina was probably separated simply because she had a distinguishing name, for on several pieces of sculpture associated with the shrine she is shown as a water-nymph. EE VII 1037 was dedicated by a decurion, and as Carrawburgh had an infantry garrison he must have come from elsewhere, presumably to worship Coventina, <sup>which suggests</sup> suggesting that the shrine was known beyond its immediate vicinity.
- 2 EE III 196 is dedicated to "die Minerve" and was presumably meant for Coventina; it was found in the well.

centuries; and the coins, ranging from Mark Antony to Gratian,<sup>1</sup> also show that the goddess was worshipped throughout the Roman period.

Vinotonus. Two other small shrines were found on the hills south of the fort at Bowes in north Yorkshire. These were dedicated to Vinotonus, who was identified with Silvanus, and was presumably a local deity of wild land, perhaps a patron of huntsmen.<sup>2</sup> Pottery shows these shrines to have been in use in the third and fourth centuries, the period when the discovery and worship of local Celtic gods was rapidly increasing.

6. Other localized cults.

*Other local gods*  
~~Similar cults~~ must have had shrines which have not been discovered. Such were Condatis, god of the meeting of two streams, who had altars at Piercebridge, Bowes and Chester-le-Street;<sup>3</sup> Contrebis, "god of the joint dwellings",<sup>4</sup> with altars at Overborough (Burrow in Lancashire)

1 Bruce, loc. cit.

2 R.P. Wright, The cult of Silvanus in Britain and his equation with Vinotonus, DUJ new series 9, no. 32 (March 1948), pp. 56-58; JRS 1946 p. 146, 1, 1947 p. 179, 4, Bowes.

3 VII 420 Piercebridge, JRS 1937 p. 246, 3 Bowes, EE VII 984 Chester-le-Street.

4 Anwyl, in Cambridge Medieval History, II, p. 474; VII 290 Burrow, 284 Lancaster.

and Lancaster; and Latis or Ratis, perhaps a water-goddess, attested at Burgh-by-Sands, Birdoswald and Chesters.<sup>1</sup>

Worship of Condatis may not have been confined to north-east England. A place called Condate is mentioned by the Ravenna geographer and in the Antonine Itinerary, and appears to have been in Cheshire; several places called Condat, Condes or Condé, in France, may have been cult-centres of the same deity.<sup>2</sup> Contrebis is said to come from the Old Irish same root as Old Irish treb, Welsh treb, tref, a village,<sup>3</sup> in which case Contrebis would be the deity presiding over several groups of people living together. On one altar he has the name or epithet Ialonus; this<sup>4</sup> also occurs on an altar from Nîmes,<sup>4</sup> and it seems possible that the decurion who dedicated the English altar was a Gaul who found that the English Contrebis was very like his own god Ialonus (whose name is said to mean "god of the fertile land"<sup>5</sup>). Latis appears to be the goddess of a pool; whether she is identical with Ratis is uncertain, but interchanging of

- 1 VII 938 Burgh-by-Sands, VII 828 (=EE IX 1213), VII 1348 Birdoswald, VII 580 Chesters.
- 2 Ant. Itin. 367, 3(2nd and 10th Itinera); cf. Hölder, op. cit., I, cols. 1092-5, who says that the English Condate is Northwich (so also Richmond and Crawford, The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography, p. 29). Wooler, The Roman Fort at Piercebridge, pp. 126-32, thinks it may be Congleton. Hölder (op. cit. I, col. 1092) derives Condatis from con-, together, and dā-ti, from a root dhē, put.
- 3 Hölder, op. cit. I, cols. 1009-1111.
- 4 XII 3057.
- 5 Anwyl, loc. cit.; discussed by E. Birley in The Roman Site at Burrow in Lonsdale, CW<sup>2</sup> 46(1946), pp. 135-7.

L and R is not unparalleled in the Indo-European languages, and both forms appear at Birdoswald.<sup>1</sup> A similar word occurs on a Celtic inscription on a pillar found on the bank of the river Clain near Vienne.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the cults of the native Britons were numerous, and more localized than the cults of Gaul, where there is evidence that some deities had considerable powers and importance and were worshipped over wide areas.<sup>3</sup> As Richmond says,<sup>4</sup> this may reflect the lack of political cohesion in Britain before the Roman conquest.

- 1 Keune (in *FW* XII. I, 939) thinks the two are the same, and notes interchange of L and R. *Latis* occurs as a river-name in the *Peutinger Table*, and is compared by Hölder (op. cit. II col. 50) with Old Irish *lathach* (fem.), mud, Welsh *laid* (root \**latjo-*), mud, Latin *latex*, liquid, Old High German *letto*, clay, Old Norse *ledja*, mud, puddle, pool.
- 2 *Rat/n Brivatiom Frontu Tarbelsonios ieuru*, *Revue archéologique* 1867, p. 393, discussed by Toutain, *Cultes païens* III p. 305, and Hölder, op. cit. s.vv. It seems to mean "Frontu son of Tarbelsonos made an object of worship (or a divine protection) for the Brivates".
- 3 Lambrechts, *Contributions à l'étude des divinités celtiques*, (chs. I, IV, V, VI) shows that the cross-legged god, the hammer-god (Silvanus-Sucellus), the wheel-god (Taranis) and the god of the "giant-columns" were representative of widespread beliefs common to large sections of the population of Gaul. (Three of these deities are attested in Britain also.)
- 4 Richmond, *Roman Britain*, p. 214.

## Chapter III

Continental Celtic and Germanic deities

With the advent of the Roman army many other gods came into Britain: Roman, Oriental and gods of the Continental Celts and Germans. Of the last class, some are attested both in Britain and on the Continent, while others occur only in Britain but are almost certainly of Germanic-Continental origin.

1. The Matres and similar groups.

The Matres, a triad of mother-goddesses, are certainly native to the Continent but are widely attested in Britain. Their wide distribution suggests that they may have been deities common to all the Celtic peoples including the British, but it is also possible that their worship was spread by the Roman troops over the Continent and into Britain from a fairly small area of origin, perhaps Cisalpine or Narbonese Gaul, where the cult was popular.<sup>1</sup> The datable monuments range from Caligula to Gordian,<sup>2</sup> which suggests that the cult may not have become widely diffused till the Imperial period and therefore that it

- 1 Haverfield, The Mother Goddesses, AA<sup>2</sup> 15, pp. 314 ff. He suggested that Lower Germany was their home, as it has the most dedications and more characteristic sculpture. Ihm (in Bonner Jahrbücher 1887, pp. 1-200) thinks the home of the cult was in Cisalpine and Narbonese Gaul.
- 2 Haverfield, loc. cit. The monuments are from Lake Maggiore and Benwell respectively.

might have been the Roman army, rather than the Belgae who migrated from north Gaul to Britain in the first century B.C., who brought the cult to Britain. <sup>The fact that</sup> Further, the majority of the British monuments come from military stations, especially those of the north, *supports this.*

The name appears in four forms on Latin inscriptions, Matribus (nominative Matres), Matronis (nominative Matrones<sup>ae</sup>), Matris and Matrabus (nominative Matrae). The last two appear to be from a Celtic rather than a Latin root.<sup>1</sup> Only the Matres form is attested in Britain, and more examples of this form have been found there than on the Continent. The Matronae are best attested in Cisalpine Gaul and Lower Germany, and the Matrae in Narbonese Gaul.<sup>2</sup> The different forms perhaps represented different groups of deities, but if so the difference had been forgotten, for the sculptures <sup>are</sup> almost always conform to the same general type.

From their representations it seems that the Matres were benignant goddesses of maternity, fertility and the creative forces of nature. They are generally

1 So Holder, op. cit. II, col. 463. According to d'Arbois de Jubainville the Matrabus and Matrebo forms are Italic, not Celtic (Holder, loc. cit.). The latter form occurs in a Celtic inscription from Nîmes.

2 According to Haverfield's map (AA<sup>2</sup> 15, loc. cit.).

represented as three draped women sitting, with baskets of fruit in their laps; standing types are found in Britain and Gaul, and occasionally they are shown with babies or children.<sup>1</sup> Other deities who occur in triads, the Suleviae, Campestres and Parcae, are often confused with the Matres, though they seem to have been originally different deities; but they must have had a certain similarity of character. The Sulaviae occur alone on four British inscriptions<sup>2</sup> and are associated with the Matres on an inscription from Colchester (EE VII 844). They were worshipped also on the Continent, in the same regions as the Mothers.<sup>3</sup> Their reliefs are said to be identical with those of the Mothers, and their worshippers of a similar class.<sup>4</sup> The name is of dubious meaning; according to Gluck it is from the root \*suli, to which is likened the Irish suil, an eye.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the sense is "one who watches over or protects"; hence the Suleviae seem to have been benignant goddesses like the Mothers.

1 A relief from Cirencester (reproduced in Archaeologia 69, p. 181) shows them with young children. Haverfield (Archaeologia loc. cit.) believes that the sculptor was influenced by the Terra Mater relief on the Ara Pacis at Rome; Rostovtzeff (Archaeologia 69 pp. 204 ff.) thinks the relief is of the Nutrices, an offshoot of the Matres cult, attested in the Danube provinces.

2 VII 37 Bath, 1344B Binchester(?), EE IX 998, 999 Cirencester.

3 Two Dacian inscriptions were perhaps dedicated by West Europeans.

4 Haverfield, AA2 15, loc. cit.

5 Holder op. cit., II, col. 1663. Probably Sulis<sup>is</sup> is from this root also; see above, p. note. R. Much, Germanische Gotternamen, Zfdda 35, pp. 315-24, says it means "good mediators", from \*su-lēwjan, \*su-læyiana.

The Parcae and Campestris are not so closely connected with the Matres. The former appear to have been Celtic deities under a Latin name, not the classical Fates. They also were perhaps protecting spirits; on one of the three British dedications to them, an altar from Carlisle, they are assimilated to the Matres, and the altar was dedicated "for the welfare of Sanctia Gemina", a phrase which suggests that they were benignant and guardian goddesses.<sup>1</sup> The Campestris seem to have been of Gaulish origin. The name is connected with the Latin campus, field, and is generally thought to mean "spirits of the parade-ground". Their altars are generally found where cavalry were stationed; this supports the idea that they are Gaulish, for most of the Roman cavalry came from Gaul.<sup>2</sup> On two of six British inscriptions to them, one from Benwell and one from Cramond near Edinburgh, they are assimilated to the Matres; on the Cramond inscription the Matres Alatervae also appear. These were perhaps deities of the

1 VII 927 Carlisle; VII 928 Carlisle and EE VII 916 Lincoln.

2 The British inscriptions all occur on or near the Antonine Wall, except one at Benwell (VII 510) dedicated by an ala of Asturian Spaniards. The others were dedicated by Tungrians from Upper Germany (VII 1084 Cramond), Gauls (VII 1129 Castle Hill, 1080 Newstead, ? 1029 High Rochester), and a legionary centurion (VII 1114 Auchendavy), for whose motive see below, pp. , and cf. E. Birley, Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 87-103.



lower Rhine; an inscription from Iuliacum (Lower Germany) is perhaps dedicated to them, and the "Alateivia dea" named on an inscription from Xanten (Castra Vetera, Lower Germany) may have some connection with the Alatervae.<sup>1</sup> The name has been said to mean "they who strengthen all".<sup>2</sup>

The Matres Ollototae occur on inscriptions from Binchester and Heronbridge near Chester.<sup>3</sup> They are said by Holder<sup>4</sup> to be the "mothers of the Ollotouti or great people"; but the linking of Ollototae and transmarinae by sive on one altar<sup>5</sup> makes it probable that Ollototae, like transmarinae, meant "from overseas",<sup>6</sup> Stokes connects it with the Welsh alltud, foreign, from all, another, and tud, country.<sup>7</sup> Alltud would be \*allototos in Old Celtic. This etymology would link these altars with the others on which the Matres are called transmarinae, a title which may indicate either that they were native to the Continent or that the dedicators had first worshipped the Matres there.

- 1 Richmond, Roman Britain, p. 205; Hübner in C.I.L. VII s.n. 1084.
- 2 R. Much, Germanische Gotternamen, ZfdA 25 pp. 315-324.
- 3 EE IX 1133 Binchester, JRS 1932 p. 224 Heronbridge, perhaps also VII 424, 425 Binchester.
- 4 op. cit. II, col. 847; cf. Toutates, "god of the people" from the same root \*teuta (whence Welsh tud, Old Irish tuath, Old High German diot); see below, p.
- 5 EE IX 1133; cf. Haverfield in AJ 49, p. 197, AA<sup>2</sup> 15, pp. 225 ff.
- 6 Quoted by Haverfield, AA<sup>2</sup> 15, pp. 225 ff.

## 2. Other important Celtic deities.

### Teutates, Esus, Taranis.

Several deities are named occasionally on British inscriptions who seem to have been important or widely worshipped on the Continent. The three gods named by Lucan in Pharsalia I, 445-6, appear to have been important gods of the Celts;<sup>1</sup> according to Reinach and Holder<sup>2</sup> Teutates (or Teutates or Teutatis) was the "god of the people", his name coming from a root \*teuta, of the community or state, like Old Irish tuath, Welsh tud, Old High German diot, diota, all meaning "people". Taranis was apparently the god of thunder, the name being cognate with Welsh taren, Anglo-Saxon thunor, Old Norse thirr, German Donar (the name of a god often identified with Hercules), donner, all meaning thunder. The Berne scholiasts<sup>3</sup> on Lucan I, 445-6, identify the three deities with Roman gods mentioned by Caesar<sup>4</sup> as worshipped by the Gauls; one identifies Teutates with Mercury, Esus with Mars and Taranis with <sup>Dis Pater</sup> Jupiter, the other identifies Teutates with <sup>Mary</sup> Mars, Esus with Mercury and Taranis with Jupiter. Probably both are to some extent right; the Gauls often equated their own gods

1 S. Reinach (Cultes, mythes et religions I, pp. 204-216) thinks they were unimportant local gods, but without support from other authorities.

2 Reinach, loc. cit.; Hölder, op. cit. II cols. 1716 and 1896.

3 Cited by Lambrechts, Contributions à l'étude des divinités celtiques, pp. 17-19.

4 B.G. VI, 17-18.

with both Mars and Mercury, since the functions of their own gods were usually wider than those of Roman gods. Taranis may well have been both a sky- and thunder-god, like Jupiter, and a chthonic god, like Dis Pater; the Gaulish horseman-and-giant columns seem to represent the same god in two aspects, chthonic (the serpent-tailed giant) and perhaps solar (the horseman, who usually wears military dress and sometimes has a wheel, a solar symbol)<sup>1</sup>. His name occurs on four Continental inscriptions, in the forms Taranucus and Taranoou, and on one British inscription, as Jupiter Tanarus<sup>2</sup>. Taranucus is said by Rhys to be a Gaulish patronymic form, which would mean son of Taranos, i.e. son of thunder.<sup>3</sup>

Taranis may have been god of the sun as well as of thunder. The wheel symbol occasionally found on the giant-columns occurs also on <sup>Gaulish</sup>reliefs as the attribute of a male god who sometimes appears in military dress, and is generally thought to be Taranis. A few such reliefs are known in Britain, and two British altars, dedicated to

- 1 Lambrachts, op. cit., pp. 81 ff., esp. 94-8.
- 2 III 2804 Scardona (Dalmatia), XIII 6478 Bockingen (near Rhine), XIII Godramstein (near Rhine), and a Celtic inscription from Orgon (near Arles), given in PW s.v. Taranis; VII 168 Chester.
- 3 cf. Oppianicnos, son of Oppianos; Rhys, op. cit., p. 57.

Jupiter Optimus Maximus by the second cohort of Tungrians at Castlesteads, bear wheel and thunderbolt symbols.<sup>1</sup>

Though these altars were set up by the cohort as a body, and one of them was dedicated to the numen of the emperor also, suggesting that they were part of the cohort's official worship, the wheel suggests that there was some confusion with Taranis, for the Roman Jupiter was not a solar divinity and the wheel was never his attribute.<sup>2</sup>

Toutates occurs on four British inscriptions<sup>3</sup> but only on <sup>one</sup> two Continental inscriptions, one from Solva (Seckau) in Noricum and one from Rome.<sup>3</sup> The British inscriptions and the Solva inscription assimilate him to Mars, but the Berne scholiasts equate him with both Mars and Mercury; perhaps he was regarded as giving the people prosperity and wealth (hence comparable with Mercury) and as protecting them against enemies and generally promoting their welfare.

Sucellus.

The Gaulish god Sucellus is also attested in England. A silver ring from York bears the inscription "deo Sucelo"<sup>4</sup>; it was found with a ring dedicated to Toutates and another bearing a stork or crane, perhaps

1 e.g. the "Harry Lauder" mould of a man in military dress with a twisted club and a wheel, from Corbridge; VII 879, 882 Castlesteads.

2 So Lambrechts, op. cit., p. 66.

3 VII 84 Barkway, Herts., EE III 181B York (Tot...), VII 335 Old Penrith (reading doubtful, but perhaps Tutati), VII 79 "Chasterton", according to Hubner, perhaps Castor, Huntingdonshire (MARTO, possibly Mar(ti).To(tati)). II 5320 Seckau, VI 31182 Rome.

EE-III-181A.

4 EE III 181A.

a set dedicated by a Gaul to the great gods of his nation. The name Sucellus appears to mean "with the good hammer", or "the god who strikes well", from the root \*kel found in Latin (per)cello and Greek κελ<sup>1</sup>. Sucellus was equated with Silvanus, especially in South Gaul, and must have had some characteristic in common with the Roman god; but many scholars maintain that he is the same god as Caesar's Dis Pater,<sup>2</sup> considering his hammer, his most important attribute, to be a chthonic emblem. It is probable that his functions were of sufficient number for him to be correctly equated with both Silvanus and Dis Pater. He was also assimilated occasionally to Jupiter, which shows that he was both sky-god and chthonic god; Lambrechts believes that he was simply Taranis in another aspect and under another name.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Lesser Celtic deities.

Grannus. Besides these great gods, Continental deities of lesser importance were also worshipped in Britain. Grannus, a Gaulish god of healing and perhaps of light,

1 cf. also Welsh clddyf, Old Breton clezeff, sword, Latin clades, disaster, slaughter; Anglo-Saxon cwellan, kill, Shakespeare's "quell" = murder. Hölder, op. cit. II, col. 1653, Reinach, Cultes, mythes et religions I, ch. xviii.

2 e.g. H. Hubert, Une nouvelle figure du dieu au maillet, Revue archeologique 1915, I, pp. 28 ff.

3 Sucellus' nature and functions are discussed by Lambrechts, op. cit., pp. 100-116, by Toutain, Cultes paiens III, pp. 224-238, by Reinach, loc. cit. (who suggests that art-types of Sucellus were inspired by those of Serapis), by Hubert, loc. cit., who suggests that Sucellus was a chthonic deity who presided over grain and the making of beer.

occurs equated with Apollo on an inscription from Musselburgh.<sup>1</sup> The etymology of Grannus' name is doubtful; according to Hölder<sup>2</sup> it is from the Old Celtic \*grennā, hair, and is cognate with Old Irish grend, whiskers, and Gaelic greann, rough uncombed hair; but Rhys believes that it comes from the same root as the Sanskrit verb ghar, to glow or shine.<sup>3</sup> But Grannus was certainly a healing god. According to Dio Cassius,<sup>4</sup> Caracalla sent an appeal to Grannus and the two great gods Aesculapius and Serapis in 213 A.D., when he was suffering from severe illness. Grannus was associated with mineral springs; several modern French place-names are derived from his name.<sup>5</sup> Inscriptions to Grannus on the Continent come mostly from Gaul and Lower Germany, but seven from Raetia and one each from Noricum, Rome and Sweden are known. On most of them Grannus is equated with Apollo, probably because they had healing powers in common; on one inscription Apollo-Grannus and Hygia are invoked together.<sup>6</sup> Apollo-Grannus is often

1 VII 1082.

2 op. cit., I, col. 2037.

3 The Hibbert Lectures 1886, p. 22.

4 LXXVIII 5-6.

5 Rhys, op. cit., p. 24; Eaux Graunnes and Graux in the Vosges, also Granheim in Wurtemberg (where an inscription to Grannus was found, III 5861). Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) was called Aquae Granni in the Roman times, and must have been an important centre of Grannus' worship.

6 II 5873; Faimingen (Raetia).

associated with Sirona or Birona, said to be a goddess of springs and fountains; but it is possible that Grannus and Sirona represent an ever-young sun-god and an old goddess, and are comparable with Apollo and Leto.<sup>1</sup> That Grannus was a sun-god is supported by the survival of his name in an Auvergne festival, where a torch called Granno-mio is lighted and carried round the orchards, a ceremony which is said to ensure fertility and the sun's heat for the ripening of the fruit.<sup>2</sup>

Mogons-Mogounus. On an altar found at Horburg in Alsace<sup>3</sup> Apollo-Grannus is equated with Mogounus, apparently a deity of the Lower Rhine. This god's name appears to mean "the great", from a root mog or mogh.<sup>4</sup> Two other deities with similar names, Mogontia and Mogetius, occur on inscriptions from Sablon and Bourges,<sup>5</sup> and Mogontiacum (Mainz) seems to come from the same root. This town was later called vicus Apollinesis, which again suggests a possible connection ~~with~~ between Mogounus and Apollo. This

1 e.g. II 5588 near Seeon (Noricum). Apollo-Grannus is invoked with the Nymphs on an inscription found near Hipfelsberg (Raetia), III 5861. Barns in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics IV, p. 747, Jayne, Healing Gods, p. 515.

2 Barns, loc. cit., Jayne, loc. cit. ③ XIII 5215.

4 Hölder, op. cit., II, col. 616.

5 XIII 4313, 1193; Mogetis (perhaps from a tribal name Mogetes) occurs on XIII 11280 Orleans.

deity appears on six British inscriptions, in the dative forms Mogonti, Mounti, Mogti, Mouno, and Mountibus.<sup>1</sup> The Mogont- form is, according to Hölder, a present participle (like Nodens), from the verb \*mogu, be great.<sup>2</sup> There can be little doubt that the god was brought into Britain by auxiliary troops, and those stationed at Risingham, High Rochester, Netherby and Old Penrith were mostly Gauls and Germans, including Vangiones from the Lower and Middle Rhine, which were perhaps the central areas of Mogons-Mogounus' worship.

#### Camulus.

Camulus occurs on an inscription from Bar Hill on the Antonine Wall.<sup>3</sup> Inscriptions to this deity are fairly widespread on the Continent, and names compounded with Camulus occur frequently; the most obvious example is Camulodunum, the stronghold of Camulus. According to Gluck the name means "strong, mighty"; but Stokes compares the Irish cumal, cumaile, a woman slave, a root perhaps to be found in the Greek κῆμος, κυμῶ-κῆμος, and the old Indian cam, to work.<sup>4</sup> Rhys thinks Camulus was probably the most

1 VII 958 Netherby, 996 Risingham, 321, 320 Old Penrith, 997 Risingham, 1036 High Rochester.

2 Hölder, op. cit., II, cols. 611, 618, cf. col. 754.

3 VII 1103.

4 Cited by Hölder, op. cit. I, col. 727. Hölder gives eleven names compounded with Camulus.



important Celtic deity, and compares his name with the Old Saxon himil, German himmel, heaven, referable to the stem hem or kam, curving over.<sup>1</sup> Camulus is equated with Mars on the Bar Hill inscription, as on an inscription from Rome and another from Arlon in north-east Gaul.<sup>2</sup> This combination is comparable with Taranis' double aspect of war-god and sky-god, which may be seen in the giant-columns and the "wheel-god" reliefs.

Epona. The goddess Epona is one of the few Celtic deities mentioned by classical authors.<sup>3</sup> She was the protectress of horses, mules and donkeys, and reliefs usually show her standing by a horse or between two horses, or riding, sometimes with a foal following her. Most reliefs are found in Gaul, though more inscriptions come from Rome, Italy and the Danube provinces than Gaul, which leads some scholars to suppose that she is not a Celtic deity.<sup>4</sup> But her name seems to come from the Celtic epos, a horse, which is from the same root as Latin equus and Greek ἵππος, horse.<sup>5</sup> Only two inscriptions mentioning Epona have been found in

1 Rhys, op. cit., pp. 38-42. Cf. also Greek καμάρα, anything vaulted or arched over, e.g. a hooded carriage, Latin camera, a vault, Zend kamara, a vault, a girdle.

2 VI 46, dedicated to Arduinna (a figure of Diana with bow and quiver), Camulus (a figure of Mars with spear and shield), Jupiter, Mercury and Hercules (with figures of usual classical types); XIII 3980.

3 E.g. Juvenal (VIII 155-7) satirizes a consul who swore by Epona; Tertullian (Apologeticus 16, Ad nationes I, 11) rebukes the pagans for worshipping beasts of burden in Epona's person.

4 Toutain, Cultes païens, III, pp. 238-242.

5 Hölder, op. cit. I, cols. 1447-50, Toutain, op. cit., p. 242.

Britain. One is from Carvoran (VII 747) and is probably of late date; the late garrison of Carvoran was a cohort of Dalmatians which may ~~have~~<sup>have</sup> contained some cavalry. The other, from Auchendavy (VII 1114), was dedicated by Marcus Cocceius Firmus, a centurion of the second legion. E. Birley has shown<sup>1</sup> that the equites singulares of Rome worshipped deities of many countries, including Epona, and that Cocceius Firmus probably came from the lower Danube (where Epona's worship is attested) to serve with the equites singulares and later to become a centurion of the second legion.

Magusanus. Little is known of the god Magusanus, who is attested by three inscriptions from Holland, ten from Lower Germany, one from Rome and one from Mumrills on the Antonine Wall<sup>2</sup> on which he is equated with Hercules, as he is on some of the Continental inscriptions. Magusanus also appears on coins of Postumus found in north Gaul; these coins bear a figure of Hercules of classical type<sup>3</sup>. He is supposed by some to be a Germanic deity,<sup>4</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> Roman Britain and the Roman army, pp. 97-103.

<sup>2</sup> VII 1090.

<sup>3</sup> Hölder, *op. cit.*, II, col. 386.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Lambrechts, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

the etymology of his name is uncertain and his nature unknown.

Tarvos Trigaranus. The deity worshipped in the late Roman temple at Maiden Castle is apparently identical with the Tarvos Trigaranus pictured and named on an altar from Paris (XIII 3026B) and represented also on an altar from Trier (XIII 3656). These altars portray the god as a bull with three cranes perched on his head and back or closely associated with him. The name Trigaranus (meaning "with three cranes"<sup>1</sup>) agrees with this representation. Toutain<sup>2</sup> suggests that there might have been confusion between words like *τρεῖς κεφαλῆς*, *τρεῖς κέρατα* (with three heads) and *τρεῖς κέρατα* (with three horns), hence that the god might originally have been a three-headed bull, reduced to a three-horned bull, and in the Roman period portrayed as a bull with three cranes through false assimilation of the second element of Trigaranus to the Greek *γέρανος*, a crane. A small figure of a bull with three horns found upon the Maiden Castle site suggests that the deity to whom the temple belonged was Tarvos Trigaranus. The god appears to have belonged to north-east Gaul, and may have been introduced

1 According to Hölder, op. cit. II, col. 1953.

2 Cultes païens, III, p. 284.

by the Belgae, before the Roman conquest.<sup>1</sup> The Gaulish cult seems to have been connected with water,<sup>2</sup> but whether this association was important at Maiden Castle is unknown.

Lenus, Ocelus, Vellaunus.

Several other Continental deities of more localized worship have left traces in England. The god Lenus had a temple at Trier in north-east Gaul, and inscriptions to him have been found in all the surrounding region. On one of them he is addressed as a healing deity. An inscription to him from Caerwent (EE IX 1009) was dedicated by M. Nonius Romanus, who gives no military rank, and Lenus is here equated with Mars and with Ocelus and Vellaunus, two other Celtic deities.

Nonius may have been a Trever, addressing to his native god a prayer for the safety of the "fellowship", perhaps a body of Mars-worshippers.<sup>3</sup> Lenus is perhaps the deity named on a relief from Chedworth of a god with spear and axe.<sup>4</sup>

Ocelus occurs on two other British inscriptions besides EE IX 1009 Caerwent, one from Carlisle (EE IX 1219) and

- 1 Sir M. Wheeler, Maiden Castle, Dorset, pp. 72-8; see also below, p. .
- 2 cf. the Greek representation of rivers as bulls or horned men; S. Czarnowski, L'arbre d'Esus, le taureau à trois grues, etc., in Revue celtique XLII (1925), pp. 49-52.
- 3 Haverfield (EE IX s. no. 1009) suggests this, but implies that Ocelus and Vellaunus were British deities.
- 4 JRS 1949 p. 114; of the inscription only ENM remains; it may have read originally LENO MARTI.

another from Caerwent (EE IX 1010); there were places of the same name in Lusitania, Hispania Tarraconensis and Gallia Narbonensis.<sup>1</sup> The word sive used on EE IX 1009 Caerwent to join Ocelus to Lenus suggests that the two names have the same or a similar meaning; according to I. A. Richmond,<sup>2</sup> Ocelus means "lofty" or "holy". Vellaunus occurs on no other British inscription, but a dedication to him is known from Gaul (XII 2373 Hières near Vienne in Narbonese Gaul); on this he is equated with Mercury Victor and called Magniacus, apparently a title meaning "of Magniacum". According to Rhys,<sup>3</sup> the name Vellaunus means "king" or "chief". He may have been worshipped elsewhere in Gaul; Caesar<sup>4</sup> speaks of a town called Vellaunodunum ("stronghold of Vellaunus") in the country of the Senones in Central Gaul.

Loucetius and Nemetona.

A dedication to Mars

Loucetius and Nemetona by a Trever occurs at Bath (VII 36).

Loucetius (or Leucetius) is said to mean the "shining" or "brilliant" god; perhaps he was the god of lightning.<sup>5</sup>

1 Hölder, op. cit. II, col. 827.

2 Roman Britain, p. 192.

3 The Hibbert Lectures, 1886, pp. 6-7.

4 B.G. VII 11, i, 4; xiv, 1; a similar name, which may be that of a goddess, appears on XIII 4296 Sablon.

5 Both Lou- and Leu- forms occur in Gaul; a similar variation of diphthong is found in Toutates-Teutates, Toutones-Teutones, and is perhaps due to the difficulty of representing a non-Latin sound in Latin letters. Cf. Tolkien in Report of Excavations at Lydney Park (1932), p. 132.

The cult was apparently centred in the country of the Treveri, but inscriptions are found in other parts of Gaul. The god's associate Nemetona, whose name probably means "she of the sacred grove", was perhaps the tutelary deity of the Nemetes, the "people of the grove", whose territory was close to that of the Treveri.

Segomo. Mars Segomo appears on inscriptions from the country of the Ambarri and Sequani in Gaul. The name is said to mean "the victorious", the root being the same as that of German sieg, victory,<sup>1</sup> A similar name seems to occur on a damaged inscription from Silchester, which (according to Hübner<sup>2</sup>) is dedicated to "deo Herculi Saegonti". Ward and Rhys<sup>3</sup> think that this deity is "Hercules of Segontium or the Segontiaci"; but Haverfield<sup>4</sup> doubts this explanation on the ground that the substitution of ae for e is rare before the Christian period and not common then. Several authorities believe that the deity is identical with the Gaulish Segomo,<sup>5</sup> and this is the more possible as Silchester is within Belgic territory.

Other Continental deities.

Other names of

Continental deities occur; Olludius, perhaps "the powerful",

- 1 Haverfield in Victoria County History (Hampshire, I), p. 280.
- 2 VII, s. n. 6.
- 3 Ward in VII loc. cit., Rhys op. cit., pp. 272-3.
- 4 loc. cit.
- 5 e.g. Richmond, op. cit., pp. 78, 190.

equated with Mars, at Painswick, Anextiomarus or Anextlomarus, "the great protector", equated with Apollo, at South Shields, and Rigisamus, "the most royal", an epithet of Mars, at West Coker in Somerset.<sup>1</sup> Olludius occurs on two inscriptions from Antibes in the south of France, Rigisamus on an inscription from Bourges. Anextiomarus does not appear in Gaul, but parallel forms Anextlos and or Anextios, "protector", and Anextlatus are known.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Celtic deities of uncertain origin.

Nothing is known about a number of deities attested in Britain by single inscriptions. Some are probably of British origin, like Verbeia of Ilkley, said by Camden to be the goddess of the river Wharfe,<sup>3</sup> or Medocius Campesium equated with Mars on an inscription from Colchester.<sup>4</sup> These two deities and several others have Celtic names, but nothing can be deduced about them. Saitada and Setlocenia, perhaps native goddesses of Cumberland, are described by K. Jackson as the goddesses of grief and long life respectively.<sup>5</sup>

1 VII 73, EE VII 1162, VII 61.

2 Hölder op. cit. I, col. 154, Haverfield, Roman inscriptions in Britain, AJ 50 (1894), p. 296. The pronunciation was probably Anechtiomarus, the x representing Gaulish ch, a guttural like Greek chi.

3 VII 208 = ILS 4731.

4 ILS 4576, discussed by Haverfield in AJ 49(1892), pp. 188, 216. He thought that<sup>4</sup> the dedicator was a Caledonian Medocius might be a Caledonian god. Campesium is perhaps the name of a clan, the Campeses (i.e. Campenses).

5 VII 712 Chesterholm, 393 Maryport. Jackson, Language and History in Early Britain, pp. 324-5. Saitada shows the stem found in Welsh hoed, grief; Setlocenia shows the stem \*saitlo-, life, found in Welsh hoedl, age, and Latin saeculum. Cf. also Hölder, op.cit., II col.1528.

Matunus, of Elsdon near Risingham, is thought by Collingwood to be a local god, "the kindly one"; the name may come from the Celtic matris, good.<sup>1</sup> Barrex, attested at Carlisle, is said to mean "supreme";<sup>2</sup> Riga, on an inscription from Aldborough, may be connected with the stem rig-, king, royal.<sup>3</sup> Braciaca, occurring at Bakewell, is said to be associated with the stem braci-, \*mraci-, cereal, and hence to be the god of malt or beer.<sup>4</sup> These three deities were all assimilated to Mars, in the first two cases perhaps in his function of war-god. Of <sup>eight</sup> ~~nine~~ other gods and goddesses known from single inscriptions nothing is known save that they are almost certainly Celtic.<sup>5</sup>

#### 5. Germanic deities.

Thingsus and the Alaisiagae. German auxiliary troops introduced some of their own deities. Such are Thingsus and the Alaisiagae, of Housesteads, Garmangabis of Lanchester, Viradecthis, Ricagambada and probably Harimalla, all at Birrens, the Unseni Fersomari at Old

1. VII 995 Risingham; Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, p. 266.
2. VII 925, Hölder op. cit. I col. 353.
3. VII 263A, Hölder op. cit. II col. 1184.
4. VII 176, Hölder op. cit. I, col. 510.
5. Ancasta (VII 4 Bitterne), (Mercury) Andescocis (VII 87 Colchester), Arciaconus (VII 231 York), Arcurius (JRS 1937 p. 245 Corbridge), (Silvanus) Callirius (JRS 1947 p. 178 Colchester), (Mars) Corotiacus (VII 93A Martlesham, Suffolk), Cuda (?; JRS 1951 p. 140 Daglingworth), Vanauns (VII 888 Castlesteads).



Penrith, and possibly Vernostonus at Ebchester.<sup>1</sup> Thingsus is generally regarded as a German war-god or sky-god, perhaps the same god as Tius, Tiw or Tyr under a different name.<sup>2</sup> Scherer<sup>3</sup> and others believed that the name was connected with thing or ding, a people's assembly, and that Thingsus was the presiding god of such an assembly. But the Alaisiagae appear to have been storm- or battle-goddesses; and Thingsus' name is preserved in Old Dutch dialect in Dingsdag, Dinxendach, Tuesday, the day of Tiw the war-god,<sup>4</sup> so that even if Thingsus was the god of the popular assembly he was undoubtedly a war-god as well. The Alaisiagae were worshipped in pairs, though there may have been more than two, for we have four different names for them, Bede, Fimmilene, Baudihillie and Friagabi. The first two names were formerly said to be derived from the same roots as bodthing and fimmelthing, the names of two different judicial assemblies,<sup>5</sup> but Baudihillie is probably a modified form of Baudihildi, which would mean "battle-commanding",

1 EE VII 1040, 1041, JRS 1921 p. 236 (Housesteads), ILS 4742 Lanchester, VII 1073, 1072, 1065 Birrens, EE IX 1124 Old Penrith, JRS 1940 p. 140 Ebchester.

2 So T. Siebs, in AA<sup>3</sup> XIX, pp. 194-7.

3 AA<sup>2</sup> X, p. 157; cf. K. Weinhold, Tius Things, ZfdP 21(1889), pp. 1-16.

4 T. Siebs, loc. cit.

5 So Scherer, loc. cit.

and Friagabi may mean "freedom-giving"<sup>1</sup>; names more appropriate to war-deities than to deities of a judicial court. Further, the name Alaisiagae has no connection with courts of justice; it may mean "spirits of the rushing storm", from an earlier form \*alaisjagjon,<sup>2</sup> or it may mean "helpful" or "bestowing skill or cleverness in war".<sup>3</sup>

Garmangabis. The dedication to Garmangabis at Lanchester was made for the welfare of a detachment of Suebi (presumably the Suevi of Upper Germany), and is probably native to them. The etymology of the name is uncertain, though gab has been likened to the German geben, give.<sup>4</sup>

Unseni Fersomari. The Unseni Fersomari also are probably German; the names of the dedicators, Burcanius, Arcavius and Iagdaarcustus, are almost certainly Germanic, and German troops were at one period stationed at Old Penrith.<sup>5</sup> The etymology of the name and nature of the gods are unknown.

1. Siebs, loc. cit.
2. Siebs, Things und die Alaisiagen, ZfdP 24 (1892), pp. 433-457.
3. F. Kauffmann, Mars Thingsus et duae Alaisiagae, BGdSL 16 (1892); W. van Helten, Über Marti Thingso, etc., BGdSL 27 (1902), who likens the Alaisiagae to Deimis and Phobos, Pavor and Pallor, attendants of Ares and Mars.
4. gab appears also in Gabiae and Alagabiae, "the givers" and the "givers of all" (R. Much, Germanische Matronennamen, ZfdA 35, p. 316-7).
5. cf. VII 303, 332. Iagdaarcustus is perhaps derived from Vagdavercustis, a German goddess (XIII 8702-3, 8805); cf. Haverfield, EE IX, s.n. 1124.)

Viradecthis, Ricagambeda, Harimella, Vernostonus, The three goddesses of Birrens were worshipped by members of the second cohort of Tungrians, a tribe who lived on the borders of Gaul and Lower Germany.<sup>1</sup> Deities with names like Viradecthis occur on German inscriptions<sup>2</sup>; otherwise these goddesses are unknown. Vernostonus is equated with Coc<sup>i</sup>dius on an inscription ~~from~~<sup>from</sup> Ebchester, which was probably dedicated by a German; Vernostonus is perhaps a German god equated with the British Cocidius as Mogons was equated with Vitiris.

Most of the dedications to the Continental Celtic and Germanic deities were made by auxiliary soldiers who were presumably continuing to worship their native gods. Three are dedicated by legionary soldiers, and one by an imperial procurator.<sup>3</sup> The legionary soldiers who dedicated an altar to Mars Camulus at Bar Hill, and the centurion who dedicated an altar to Jupiter Tanarus at Chester, may have been natives of Gaul, while Cocceius ~~Firmis~~<sup>Firmus</sup> of Auchendavy probably adopted Epona's worship while in Rome; the procurator had perhaps met the cult of Grannus in Gaul.

- 1 One calls himself "pagus Condrustis", another "pagus" Vellaus"; the Condrusi (Caesar B.G. II.iv.10) and Vellai or Vellavi may have been subdivisions of the Tungri.
- 2 Viroddi XIII 6486 Kalbertshausen, Virodacti XIII 6761 Mainz, Viradecdis XIII 8815 near Utrecht.
- 3 VII 1103 Bar Hill, 168 Chester, 1114 Auchendavy, 1082 Musselburgh.

Of the dedications from the south of England, one or two were certainly set up by immigrant Gauls, but in some cases it is possible that the deity was imported before the Roman period; the dedications to Mars and Toutates from Barkway suggest the presence of a shrine, which may well have been set up before the Roman invasion, by the Belgic Catuvellauni who crossed from Gaul in the first century B.C. Similarly, although the actual building at Maiden Castle is late Roman, the shrine may have been first established before the conquest, and the cult may have lingered on after the capture of the settlement<sup>1</sup> and gained a new lease of life, albeit a short one, in the fourth century A.D. But there is no actual proof that any Continental deity was brought over before the Roman period; certainly none (except the Matres) was widely worshipped. It seems most probable that the Britons were conservative in their religion, at any rate in the country, and preferred to continue worshipping their own gods rather than turn to new ones.

1 Suggested by Sir M. Wheeler in Maiden Castle, Dorset, pp. 72-8.

## Chapter IV

Greco-Roman cults1. Emperor-worship.

One feature of the organization of Britain as a province after its occupation would certainly have been the establishment of a cult of the imperial house. It seems clear, from the references to this cult made by Tacitus and Seneca,<sup>1</sup> that in Britain it took the form of worship of the emperor during his lifetime, a practice which began in the eastern provinces but had not yet become general in the west. The chief temple of the cult was at Colchester. The building was large, and no doubt costly, as is shown by excavation<sup>2</sup> and suggested by Tacitus, who says that the Britons who were appointed priests of the new cult "poured out whole fortunes under the guise of religious duty".<sup>3</sup> These heavy expenses would cause the priesthood to be regarded as a burden. Probably taxes would be levied also for the upkeep of the building and ~~its~~ <sup>the</sup> worship; this was apparently one of the causes of the Boudiccan rebellion.

1 Tacitus, Annals XIV 31,6; "templum divo Claudio constitutum"; Seneca<sup>1</sup>, Apocolocyntosis 8; "parum est quod templum in Britannia habet, quod hunc barbari colent...."

2 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), Essex (North-East), pp. 24-6.

3 Tacitus, Annals, loc. cit.

There would be similar temples in the other coloniae, Gloucester, Lincoln and York.<sup>1</sup> In other provinces the temples of the imperial cult were saved by a colleges of six priests, the seviri Augustales; seviri are known to have existed at Lincoln and York.<sup>2</sup>

Dedications to the numen Augustalis, the divine power or will of the emperor, attest the imperial cult all over Britain. Only four come from places which were not military stations; a few others mention no military title, and may be by civilians. The native Britons outside the large towns seem to have practised the cult very little, no doubt because it was organized for political rather than religious reasons, in an endeavour to give the people some common object of cult and so unify them under Roman power, and probably also to bring them into close touch with Roman habits of life.

The army also worshipped the emperor, often together with the Capitoline deities, especially Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Traces of this worship are found in the legionary fortresses, but are more numerous in the stations of the auxiliary troops; the cult was probably a demonstration

1 VII 239 York mentions a temple, which may <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ been that of the imperial cult.

2 VII 248 York; JRS XI(1921), pp. 101 ff., Bordeaux, dedicated by a man who was a sevir of both Lincoln and York, to the goddess Boudig.

of their loyalty, as soldiers, to the person and power of the emperor. At an auxiliary fort vows were renewed every year for the welfare of the empire and the emperor, and an altar was erected in the name of the whole unit, usually to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and often to the emperor's numen as well.<sup>1</sup> The numen appears also on dedications set up by individuals, but much less frequently.

## 2. Public and civilian worship of Roman gods.

The emperor's numen was often worshipped along with a deity, usually Roman but often Celtic. This combination occurs constantly on the altars of the auxiliary units troops, as units, and less commonly on private dedications, where it indicates<sup>a</sup> a combination of religious feeling and devotion to the empire. About<sup>6</sup> eighteen dedications from the south of England appear to be by civilians to Roman gods,<sup>2</sup> and a few more such dedications occur in the north. Jupiter,<sup>3</sup> Mars<sup>4</sup> and the genius loci<sup>5</sup> are the most frequently attested deities. "Dea Regina", perhaps Diana,

- 1 L.P. Wenham, Notes on the garrisoning of Maryport, CW<sup>2</sup> 39 (1939), pp. 19-30, discusses a series of these altars found at Maryport. Examples have been found at other sites also. (*Dedications to the numen appear to be manifestations of the cult of the living emperor; cf. Toutain, Cultes païens, 81, ch. 4.*)
- 2 Many dedications to Roman gods bear Celtic names also, and must therefore be considered proofs of worship of Celtic gods, not Roman.
- 3 EE IV 673 Littleborough, IX EE IX 997 Cirencester, JRS 1936 p. 263 Chichester, VII 260 Aldborough.
- 4 VII 1 Bosence, 1262 Marketstreet (Bedfordshire), 219 Ribchester (dedicated by a woman to Mars "the peace-bringer"; perhaps she wished Mars to grant peace and bring her husband safely home); VII 81 Stony Stratford.
- 5 VII 265 Norton near York, EE VII 833, 839 Cirencester, VII 1351, JRS 1924 p. 243 Bath.

occurs at Lemington, Mercury at Leicester, Romulus at Painswick, Silvanus at Cirencester, Aesculapius at Greenwich Park, and Jupiter and Vulcan together at Stony Stratford, where they seem to have had a shrine.<sup>1</sup> An inscription to Neptune and Minerva erected "for the Safety of the divine house" and authorized by the client-king Cogidubnus, found at Chichester,<sup>2</sup> suggests that Cogidubnus began to worship Roman gods (and took the name of the emperor) to demonstrate his loyalty to the rule of Rom<sup>o</sup>.

Some of these dedications may be traces of a public cult of Roman gods, for example the columns to Jupiter at Cirencester and Chichester. These columns appear to have resembled the giant-columns of north-east Gaul; there was perhaps some confusion between the Roman and Gaulish gods. Though public cults of Roman gods are only slightly indicated in Britain, such cults must have existed in the coloniae at least. Worship of Mercury, and perhaps of Apollo, <sup>by a statue at west of Lincoln,</sup> are attested by inscriptions,<sup>3</sup> and statues of tutelary goddesses have been found, in fragmentary condition, at Lincoln and Silchester.<sup>4</sup>

1 JRS 1949 p. 114, EE IX 1109, VII 74, EE III 54, EE IX 992, VII 80.

2 VII 11.

3 EE III 179 Lincoln; ? VII 179 Lincoln.

4 Richmond, Roman Britain, pp. 189-190.



### 3. Worship of Roman gods by the army.

Jupiter. Roman gods were worshipped much more freely by the army of occupation than by the Britons. Jupiter and Mars are the most frequently attested, Jupiter mainly by the altars of the official army cult, Mars by a few official altars but by many more small altars set up by individual soldiers. Jupiter was not much worshipped by individuals, nor was he equated with Celtic deities (except on one altar from Chester, on which he is equated with Taranis); this was probably because, as one of the great protecting gods of Rome, he was clearly a god to be worshipped in an official and elaborate cult, and so remained remote from the common man. It was the less important, and so probably less awe-inspiring, gods who were the most worshipped by the common soldiers. Of the series of altars of the official cult found at Maryport, which may be assumed to be a good sample of the series no doubt existing at every auxiliary fort, most<sup>1</sup> are dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, with or without the numen of the emperor. But two are dedicated to Mars militaris, two to Imperial Victory and one to Vulcan.<sup>2</sup>

1 VII 372-4, 377-9 by the first cohort of Spaniards; VII 386 by the first cohort of Baetasii; VII 387 by the first cohort of Dalmatians; VII 375-6, 380-385, 388, EE III 93, EE VII 970 by prefects or tribunes of these cohorts on behalf of their units.

2 VII ~~340~~<sup>390</sup>, 391; VII 394, 395 (perhaps commemorating the victory of Commodus in 184 (Wenham, op. cit., p. 25); VII 398, by Helstrius Novellus, prefect of the Spaniards. The others are by the Baetasii.

Mars. Mars seems to have had no great importance in the official religion of the army, at any rate in the first and second centuries,<sup>1</sup> but the lower ranks dedicated many private altars to him, often equating him with Celtic deities, some of whom were not closely connected with war. Forty-two inscriptions to Mars unequated with Celtic deities come from legionary or auxiliary stations; of these only seven or eight belong to the official religion. On six of the others, Victory accompanies Mars; perhaps some of these commemorate actual victories in battle.<sup>2</sup> Mars is twice called alator, which may be a Celtic term. He is also occasionally called victor, ultor, conſervator, paciferus, militaris.<sup>3</sup>

Silvanus. The army worshipped many other Roman deities, of whom the most popular was Silvanus. Twenty-two inscriptions to him come from the military zone. On two cases he is equated with Celtic deities,<sup>4</sup> on all but four of the remaining inscriptions he is called "deus

- 1 According to E. Birley (Roman Britain and the Roman Army, p. 71) Mars became part of the official religion in the third century. Cf. Domaszewski, Religion des römischen Heeres, p. 34. Collingwood (op. cit., p. 262) disagrees with Birley and Domaszewski.
- 2 Perhaps this is the reason for Mars' occasional title victor (VII 992, 993 Risingham, 509 Benwell, 706 Chesterholm).
- 3 The giving of the title ultor is said to be connected with the recapture of the standards from the Parthians (Oxford Classical Dictionary, s.v. Mars). Alator, EE VII 999 South Shields, VII 85 Barkway (probably Toutates rather than Mars); Ultor EE IX 1383 Corbridge, an official dedication; conservator, EE VII 876 Chester (reading uncertain). Paciferus, militaris, see above, p. 51, note 4, p. 53 note 2. (u) EE VII 1102 Haverhill, with Victoria; TRS 1946 p. 46 Boker, with Vinciferus.

Silvanus"; which may suggest that the god meant was a Celtic deity called by the Roman name. Domaszewski<sup>1</sup> thought that this deity was Illyrian, introduced into the army by the equites singulares, who were influenced by the Illyrian emperors. But Toutain<sup>2</sup> opposes this view, on the grounds that the Illyrian emperors came into power in the third century A.D., but the cult of Silvanus is attested in Lambaesis in Africa (a legionary station) considerably earlier; furthermore, at that time the African legion, III Augusta, was recruited mostly from Africans. Toutain adds that two inscriptions from Britain, one from Lower Germany and one from Gaul, show that sometimes ~~at least~~ Silvanus was invoked as a hunting deity. The Gaulish and German inscriptions<sup>3</sup> were dedicated by "ursarii", presumably bear-hunters; on the one a man is shown with a bear at his feet, on the other Diana, the hunting goddess, is associated with Silvanus. An inscription from Stanhope in Weardale thanks Silvanus for the capture of a "magnificent bear", and one from Birdoswald is dedicated by the "venatores Bannie(n)s(es)", the huntsmen of Banna.<sup>4</sup> In these cases Silvanus was clearly regarded as

1 Religion des römischen Heeres, pp. 52-3.

2 Cultes païens, I, pp. 263-6.

3 Année épigraphique 1901, n. 72, near Castra Vetera (Xanten), XIII 5243 near Zurich.

4 VII 451 Stanhope, 830 Birdoswald.

the Roman forest-god, invoked when one went to hunt in the woods.

Examination of the British dedications to Silvanus supports Toutain's arguments. British worshippers show no sign of Illyrian influence; they include Lingones from Cisalpine Gaul, Hamians from Syria, and legionary soldiers, who were drawn from all the more civilized provinces <sup>during the</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>Imperial period.</sup> Most of the inscriptions come from the northern auxiliary posts; the country round these would in Roman times have been very wild and probably infested with wolves and other savage animals. Inscriptions from Colchester<sup>1</sup> probably come from a shrine of a Celtic god Callirius; the three <sup>other</sup> inscriptions from the lowland area come from York, Cirencester, and Somerdale near Bristol,<sup>2</sup> all three places near the wild and less settled zone.

Against these arguments may be alleged the facts that the equites singulares were first formed under Domitian or Trajan,<sup>3</sup> and that among the British dedicators are a legionary centurion and two consular beneficiaries who were perhaps centurions;<sup>4</sup> but the evidence seems to be, in con

1 JRS 1947, p. 178, JRS 1948, p. 100.

2 EE VII 928, EE III 54, JRS 1932 p. 224.

3 E. Birley, Roman Britain and the Roman Army, p. 100.

4 Equites singulares were often promoted to the centurionate (E. Birley, op. cit., pp. 100-102).

the whole, in favour of the view that the Silvanus worshipped in Britain was the Roman deity.

Hercules, Mercury, Minerva. Hercules, Mercury and Minerva were also popular. Hercules is said <sup>to</sup> have guarded the sanctity of the oath<sup>1</sup>, which may have been an additional reason for the worship<sup>by soldiers this</sup> of a god of strength and great deeds; Mercury was the bringer of good luck and prosperity; Minerva, patroness of learning, was much worshipped by army clerks.

Dedications to Hercules from the military zone come mainly from the auxiliary forts. Fourteen are known; on one of them Hercules is equated with a Celtic god.<sup>2</sup> Some were probably prompted by Commodus' identification of himself with Hercules<sup>3</sup>, and this may be so also where Hercules is addressed as invictus,<sup>4</sup> for Commodus also identified himself with the Invincible Sun, and there may have been confusion or combination of the two ideas in order to render the dedication as pleasing as possible. An inscription from

- 1 Jayne, Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations, pp. 428-9. Melqart, the Hercules of Tyre, was identified with the Sun, the all-seeing eye of Heaven (Nonnos, Dionysiaca, XL, 369-71); cf. Mithras, below, p.
- 2 VII 1090 Mumrills, with Magusanus.
- 3 Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, pp. 152-3; Rostovtzeff in JRS 1923, p. 91.
- 4 VII 924 Carlisle, 986 Risingham; VII 635 Housesteads was dedicated by a whole cohort, perhaps as a compliment to Commodus; that cohort was stationed there in the latter part of the second century A.D.

Kirkhaugh near Whitley Castle is<sup>5</sup> dedicated to Minerva and Hercules, a curious combination which is perhaps a pair of Celtic deities under Roman names.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that some dedications may be meant for the Tyrian Hercules, the Bael Melqart of Tyre.<sup>2</sup>

Mercury's worship is attested all over the country, from Colchester and Caerleon to Castlecary. Most dedications come from auxiliary forts. Half are small reliefs of Mercury with the name of the god, and sometimes of the dedicatory, below.<sup>3</sup> One, from Lincoln, is painted on a vase of first-century date, another, from Leicester, is carved on a short column-shaft; the remainder are altars.<sup>4</sup> Two altars from Birrens record the erection of Statues and wooden pillars; perhaps both expressions mean herms carved in wood. A Castlecary inscription also mentions a statue. There were apparently fellowships of Mercury-worshippers; they are called cultores on the Birrens altars. The soldiers of the sixth legion who set up the Castlecary inscription were perhaps another fellowship; and a Lincoln

I VII 313. Perhaps the same is the case with EE VII 968 Hale near Moresby, dedicated to Hercules and Silvanus.

2 E.g. VII 751 Carvoran, where Syrian troops were stationed.

3 VII 707 Chesterholm, EE IX 1016 Caerleon, 1159, 1160 Wallsend, JRS 1937 p. 246 Tarraby, JRS 1941 p. 140 Corbridge, JRS 1942 p. 115 York. Some of these are imperfectly legible, but Mercury is recognizable by his caduceus, wings, goat, cock or purse.

4 VII 181 Lincoln, EE IX 1109 Leicester, VII 1095 Castlecary, 1069, 1070 Birrens. An altar from Thornborough (VII 271), dedicated "deo qui vias et semitas commentus est," is probably addressed to Mercury.

inscription (EE III 179), <sup>perhaps</sup> apparently a dedication to Victory, was <sup>probably</sup> perhaps set up by a body of Mercury-worshippers.<sup>1</sup> Other deities sometimes had such fellowships, but they are mentioned much less frequently. Perhaps Mercury was worshipped especially by men too poor to afford statues or altars unless they clubbed together to pay for them. Such men would naturally favour the god of good luck and prosperity.

Fifteen dedications to Minerva are known; on three she is equated with Sulis, and two from Carrawburgh may be meant for Coventina. Of the remaining ten one is civilian, the others are from military posts. Minerva was occasionally worshipped as a member of the triad of Capitoline deities, and three inscriptions may be addressed to her in this capacity.<sup>2</sup> The dedicators of the other six include one librarius, two actarii and a singularis consularis, all clerks of various types.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that apart from Minerva's worship as one of the "official" deities, she was little worshipped except by clerks.

#### Apollo.

Apollo appears as frequently as Hercules;

- 1 But see above, p. 52. The inscription reads "VIC. HRUPO (or Thrupe) MERCURESIUM". VIC may be an abbreviation of vicus (as Richmond thought, Roman Britain, p. 189), or of Victory, as Hübner believed (EE III, s.n. 179). The former is ~~perhaps~~ more likely, as there seems no reason why Mercury-worshippers should trouble to describe themselves as such on a dedication to Victory.
- 2 VII 1071 Birrens, VII 1034, 1035 High Rochester.
- 3 EE IX 1142 Corbridge, VII 458 Ebchester, JRS 1921 p.234 Carnarvon, VII 1033 High Rochester.

\*

on inscriptions, but is very freely assimilated to non-Roman deities, so that worship of the Greco-Roman Apollo was not so widespread as at first appears. Apollo is found assimilated to Anextiomarus, Maponus and Grannus<sup>1</sup>; a Rudchester altar calls him Sol Apollo<sup>2</sup>, and the Whitley Castle altar<sup>3</sup> must be regarded as a product of syncretism. Diana and Apollo appear on an altar from Auchendavy dedicated by a legionary centurion; this man probably came from Lower Moesia, between Thrace and the Danube, and these two names *will therefore be likely to* probably represent two deities of Thrace and its neighbourhood<sup>4</sup>.

Diana. Except for the Auchendavy inscription, dedications to Diana in Britain were probably meant for the Roman goddess. There are only four, from Caerleon, Risingham, Corbridge and Newstead<sup>5</sup>. The Caerleon inscription records the restoration of a temple of Diana, showing that she must have had a considerable cult there. The others are perhaps thanksgivings for success in hunting.

1 EE VII 1162 South Shields; VII 218 Ribchester, 471, 483, 1345 Corbridge.

2 VII 543, probably from the Mithraeum.

3 VII 309; discussed by R.P.Wright in JRS 1943, pp. 36-8.

4 E. Birley, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-103; see above, p. 38 and below, p. 43; cf. Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

VII

5 VII 95, 981, JRS 1941 p. 140, EE IX 1234.



Other deities. The gods associated with healing were also favoured. Aesculapius had seven dedications (besides one from Greenwich Park which is presumably a civilian dedication<sup>1</sup>), from Chester, Overborough and auxiliary forts of the north.<sup>2</sup> On the inscriptions from Chester he is worshipped with Salus and Fortuna Redux; perhaps the dedicator wished to return home on account of poor health. Salus also occurs with Aesculapius on a Binchester inscription, and Hygia (the Greek Hygieia, of whom Salus was the Roman counterpart) accompanies Aesculapius on the Overborough altar. Salus appears alone, as Salus Regina, on a Caerleon inscription, and with Jupiter Dolichenus<sup>3</sup>, Caelestis and Brigantia, deities associated with healing, on an altar from Corbridge.<sup>3</sup>

Water deities were occasionally worshipped. The Nymphs appear at Croy Hill, Risingham and Carvoran, and, associated with the Springs which they ruled, at Chester.<sup>4</sup> A dedication to a single Nymph occurs at Rokeby, and an inscription from Watercrock is perhaps another example.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 EE IX 992.
- 2 VII 164 Chester, EE IX 1377 Overborough<sup>g</sup>, VII p. 85 Maryport (Greek), VII 431 Binchester (Greek and Latin), EE VII 979 Binchester, 998 South Shields; ? EE IX 1226 Netherby.
- 3 VII 100 Caerleon; EE IX 1141 Corbridge, discussed above, p. 13.
- 4 VII 1104, 998, 757, 171.
- 5 VII 278 Rokeby; 291 Watercrock, "dee N. Aelit. v.v."; Horsley thought a nymph was meant (VII s.n. 291), but N. may be equally well stand for Nemesis.

Dedications to the sea-gods generally commemorate a safe sea voyage, and this was probably the purpose of the sixth legion's altars to Neptune and Ocean, from Newcastle<sup>1</sup>. These were dredged from the river Tyne, and may have belonged to a shrine on the bridge; but they are hardly weathered, and it is possible that they were deposited actually in the river. An altar from Lympne was dedicated to Neptune by Aufidius Pantera, prefect of the British fleet;<sup>2</sup> it may commemorate a successful action at sea. But Neptune was also regarded as the god of fresh water, and dedications from Birrens, Castlecary and Chesterholm<sup>3</sup> may be addressed to him as a river-god. Oceanus also appears with Tethys on one of an interesting pair of Greek inscriptions from York. These bronze plates with punctured lettering were dedicated by Demetrius, a scribe, to Ocean and Tethys and to the gods of the general's praetorium<sup>4</sup>. A.R. Burn has suggested<sup>5</sup> that their dedicator was the Demetrius of Tarsus, teacher of literature, just returned from Britain, whom Plutarch met at Delphi in 83 A.D.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the commander of the Ninth Legion, Caristanius Fronto of Pisidian Antioch, knew

1 EE III 99, EE IX 1162.

2 VII 18.

3 JRS 1938 p. 199, VII 1096, 708.

4 VII p. 62, EE III p. 312.

5 Agricola and Roman Britain, pp. 113-115.

6 De defectu oraculorum.

Demetrius and employed him as a civilian secretary, which would account for the dedication to the gods of the general's headquarters.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes lesser deities were associated with the official worship of the army. Roma, the tutelary goddess of the city, occurs twice at Maryport and once at High Rochester;<sup>2</sup> one of the Maryport altars is a personal dedication, but the other may belong to the official cult. Some of the dedications to Disciplina, Concordia, Virtus Augusta and the Genii of army units may also fall into this category.<sup>3</sup> Victory and Fortune were worshipped by individuals rather than units; of twenty-four inscriptions to Victory and only thirty-one to Fortune, only six and four respectively belong without doubt to the official worship.

A few other deities received occasional worship. Nemesis occurs at Housesteads, on an altar dedicated by a Greek priest, and at Caerleon, on an inscription by a man who apparently wanted Nemesis to arrange the death of

- 1 The date of the inscriptions is disputed; some date them as late as the third century, on the ground of the poverty of the lettering (G. Home, Roman York, p. 31-2).
- 2 VII 370, with Fortuna Redux, 392, with Genius loci, Fatum Bonum and Fortuna Redux; the dedicator of the latter is careful to mention his place of birth. Perhaps he wished for promotion and posting home (Birley, op. cit. p. 99, see below, p. ).
- 3 Disciplina, VII 896 Castlesteads, EE IV 682 Chesterholm, EE IX 1228 Birrens, 1380 Corbridge, JRS 1938 p. 203 Bewcastle; Concordia, EE IX 1155 Hexham; Virtus, VII 397 Maryport. Genius legionis, VII 103 Caerleon, EE IX 1040 Chester; cohortis, VII 440 Lanchester;? EE IV 665 Gloucester; praesidi, VII 644 Housesteads; alae, VII 510 Benwell; centuriae, VII 166, EE IX 1041 Chester.

a man who had stolen property from him.<sup>1</sup> N.A. and N.Aug. on two inscriptions from Bath have been said to stand for Nemesis Augusta, but, in the latter case at least, Numen Augusti is equally probable.<sup>2</sup> Inscriptions to Vulcan have been found at Stony Stratford and Barkway,<sup>3</sup> the latter is probably from the shrine of Toutates and may represent another aspect of that deity. The only military dedication to Vulcan comes from Maryport; altars from Chesterholm and Old Carlisle were dedicated by the vicani of those forts.<sup>4</sup> It is surprising that the god of smiths was so little worshipped by the army, to which the skilled work of blacksmiths was so essential. The Genii of people, places and things were worshipped, especially the Genius loci, who occurs on some sixteen inscriptions. The genius of the British land or the province of Britain also occurs, as does Britainia herself personified as a goddess.<sup>5</sup> Rhys appears to think that some of the inscriptions to the genius

1 VII 654 Housesteads, JRS 1927 p. 216 Caerleon; the explanation of the latter inscription is given by Collingwood in JRS 1927 loc. cit., and 1931, p. 248. An illegible inscription from Netherby of supposed by Hübner (EE III 110, p. 137) to be a dedication to Nemesis.

2 VII 45, 46.

3 VII 80, 86.

4 VII 398 Maryport; 346 Old Carlisle (reading uncertain), AA<sup>3</sup> XII p. 201 = AA<sup>4</sup> VIII p. 194 *Chesterholm*.

5 VII 1113 Auchendavy; VII 22 London; VII 232 York, ? VII 1129 Castle Hill.

loci may be evidence for romanization of a Celtic practice;<sup>1</sup>

<sup>Some</sup> Celtic towns in Gaul are known to have had eponymous deities.

But all the British inscriptions come from military posts, and it seems far more likely that they<sup>are</sup> evidence of the deep-rooted Roman idea.<sup>2</sup>

It seems, then, that the worship of Roman gods by the Britons of the south was practised mainly for political reasons. The public cults of Roman gods and of the emperor were in some cases imposed on the people, in others freely adopted by them;<sup>3</sup> but it is probable that in no ca<sup>s</sup>es were they real expressions of religious feeling. The same was probably true of the imperial cult practised by the army, and perhaps of the army's official religion in general. The more romanized Britons certainly knew of the Roman gods, but did not worship them often in their pure Roman state, preferring to assimilate them to their own native deities.

1 Hibbert Lectures 1886, pp. 99-100, 105-6.

2 For the importance of the idea of localization of deities, which was prevalent throughout the ancient world, see above, pp. 2-3, and below, pp. 118-20.

3 The earliest establishment of the imperial cult at Colchester is an example of imposition, the Chichester inscription to Minerva and Neptune (VII 11) an example of free adoption.

## Chapter V

Oriental Cults1. Oriental deities in the western provinces.

The worship of deities of Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor began to come into Italy and the western provinces during the first century B.C., and continued to spread during the Imperial period. But the extent of this worship and the means by which it spread are disputed. Toutain<sup>1</sup> believes that only Cybele and Attis of Phrygia, Ma-Bellona of Cappadocia and Sabazios of Thrace were at all popular in the western empire; Mithraism, he says, is attested only on trade-routes and at military stations. He believes that the worship of the Oriental deities remained a strange and exotic thing in these provinces, that it was confined almost entirely to the army and imperial administrative staff and to orientals who had found their way to the west, and that it was adopted very rarely by the natives of the western provinces. On the other hand, Cumont<sup>2</sup> believes that these religions made numerous converts in every province, and that they were spread especially by traders, notably those of Syria.

1 Cultes païens II, pp. 30, 66-72, 117-118, 144-50, 176, and elsewhere.

2 Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain (4th edition), pp. 19, 54, 97 ff. and elsewhere.

The evidence for worship of the eastern deities in Britain (consisting of a few inscriptions and the remains of temples) does not wholly support either of these views. The deities named by Toutain are infrequently or never found in Britain, where the most popular eastern gods were Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus, both gods whose nature gave them a particular appeal to soldiers. There is scarcely a trace in Britain of native worship of these deities, and they appear to have been imported more by the army than by traders, though we know that there were orientals, probably traders, in the north as well as the south.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Mithras.

The worship of Mithras, originally the Persian god of light, was not practised exclusively by the soldiers and imperial administrative staff.<sup>2</sup> There is evidence that in the western provinces he was worshipped by merchants and traders also, perhaps because he was the god of truth, the contract, the plighted word, as well as god of light.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 46 inscriptions mentioning Oriental deities are known ; Astarte 1, Ma-Bellona 1, Cybele 2, Isis 1, Jupiter Dolichenus 15 (2 doubtful), Jupiter Heliopolitanus 2 (1 uncertain), Mithras 13 (3 uncertain), Serapis 2, Sol (probably often meaning Mithras) 9, dea Syria (Atargatis) 3, dea Hammia (Atargatis?) 1, Tyrian Heracles 1. For the presence of Orientals in the north see E. Birley, Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 81 ff.
- 2 Toutain (op. cit. pp. 144-68) appears to believe that it was. Haverfield was of the same opinion (Roman Occupation of Britain, p. 253).
- 3 I.A. Richmond, Mithraism in Roman Britain, DUJ new series 5 no. 1, p. 1; Jayne, op. cit. p. 192; Cumont, op. cit., p. 144.

However, evidence for his worship in Britain is found only at military stations, except for an inscribed relief and the remains of a large temple, found in London. The inscription (EE III 816) was dedicated by a retired legionary, and the temple may have been founded by retired soldiers, but the remains of costly statues found in it show that some at least of its patrons were wealthy men who were probably merchants. Other temples of smaller size have been found at Housesteads, Carrawburgh and Rudchester on Hadrian's Wall, and there is slight evidence for the presence of the cult at Caerleon, Castlesteads, High Rochester, and Corbridge.<sup>1</sup>

The cult had undergone alteration in its passage to the west and had gained several Chaldaean and Hellenic accretions, which is probably the reason for its appearance in a slightly different character at different places. Originally Mithras was a secondary god in the Persian pantheon, the oldest and most important god being Aeon, Chronos or Saeculum, god of everlasting time, associated with the power of good and opposed to the evil deity Ahriman or Arimanius.<sup>2</sup> Mithras' greatest feat was the capture and

1 VII 99 Caerleon, VII 889 and 890 Castlesteads; VII 831 Birdoswald or Castlesteads, VII 1039 High Rochester and EE IX 1381 Corbridge are dedicated to Sol Invictus and may not belong to the cult of Mithras; see below, p. 81. A sculpture of the bull-killing and a statue which may represent Arimanius suggest the presence of the cult at York also.

2 Richmond, op. cit., pp. 2-3.



slaughter of the bull, first created of living things, so that every useful herb and animal could be born of its carcass. The bull was slain in a cave, and for this reason the temples of Mithras were, where possible, built wholly or partly underground.<sup>1</sup> In his passage to the west Mithras was identified with the Chaldaean sun-god Shamash, and this is said by Cumont<sup>2</sup> to be the reason for the frequent assimilation of Mithras to Sol by the Romans. The belief that before birth and after death the soul came to and left the earth through the seven planetary spheres, reflected in the recurrence of the number seven in the cult,<sup>3</sup> is also said to be Chaldaean.<sup>4</sup> Hence in Britain Mithras is addressed on altars as invictus Mithras, his usual title,<sup>5</sup> and also as Sol invictus,<sup>6</sup> Sol Mithras (VII 890 Castlesteads), invictus Mithras saecularis (VII 646 Housesteads) and Sol invictus Mithras saecularis (VII 645 Housesteads). The title

- 1 As, e.g., at Housesteads; see R.C. Bosanquet, Excavations at Housesteads: the temple of Mithras, AA<sup>2</sup> 25, pp. 255 ff.
- 2 Op. cit. p. 136. But according to Jayne (op. cit. pp. 486 ff.) the assimilation came about through Aurelian's State cult of Sol invictus, which absorbed Mithraism and caused the god to be called deus Sol invictus Mithras (see also above, p. 67, note 3).
- 3 E.g. in the seven grades of worshippers, mentioned by St. Jerome; cf. Richmond, op. cit. p. 4, Toutain, op. cit. p. 129; for a view that there were only six grades, see W.J. Phythian Adams, The Problem of the Mithraic Grades, JRS 2 (1912), pp. 53 ff.
- 4 Cumont, op. cit., p. 282, note 69.
- 5 VII 541 Rudchester, JRS 1950 pp. 114-5 Carrawburgh; sanctus Mithras occurs on VII 99 Caerleon.
- 6 If these inscriptions are not evidence of the cult of the Syrian sun-god; see below, p. 30-1. VII 831 Bordswald or Castlesteads, 1039 High Rochester, 889 Castlesteads, 542 Rudchester, EE IX 1381 Corbridge, VII 649 Housesteads.

saecularis suggests connection, <sup>in fact</sup> even identification, with Saeculum-Chronos; and a sculpture from Housesteads shows Mithras being born from an egg, as Chronos was said to have been. These facts indicate that at Housesteads syncretism confused or identified Mithras with Chronos, and he was also assimilated at Housesteads to the sun-god (VII 645, 647, 648, 649); but the latter phenomenon is still more prominent at Rudchester<sup>1</sup> and Castlesteads.<sup>2</sup> Mithras was occasionally assimilated to Apollo; an altar dedicated to Apollo, from Whitley Castle (VII 309), bears sculptures of Apollo Citharoedus, Mithras, Sol, and a deity who is probably Maonus.<sup>3</sup> This altar shows a complicated syncretism scarcely paralleled elsewhere in Britain.

Mithraism had three periods of popularity <sup>in the</sup> ~~in the~~ imperial <sup>the Empire</sup> period,<sup>4</sup> from 150 to 250 A.D. (approximately), the Tetrarchy (284-313 A.D.) and the reign of Julian. During these periods the worship of Mithras spread especially

- 1 Of four altars from the Mithraeum, two are dedicated to the Sun, VII 542, 543.
- 2 VII 889, 890; VII 831 is more likely to come from Castlesteads than Birdoswald, according to Richmond (op. cit. p. 7), "because the dedicator is a praefectus and not the tribunus normally in charge at Birdoswald".
- 3 See below, pp. 10-1. Another possible example of the equation of Mithras with Apollo is the altar to Sol Apollo Anicetus at Rudchester, VII 543. Anicetus is presumably the Latin transliteration of the Greek ἀνικητος, invincible.
- 4 According to Toutain, Cultes païens II, pp. 171-172.

strongly, perhaps because it was in favour with the imperial household. The higher ranks of the army would probably be influenced by this to adopt Mithraism. It would have a special appeal to them, for it was a highly developed religion, making exacting moral demands on its followers, and appealing more to the individual than the corporate body.<sup>1</sup> Such a religion would naturally be preferred to the simple Celtic cults or to the formalized and spiritless Roman religion by men of some intelligence and education.<sup>2</sup> This was clearly the case in Britain, where the leading part in the establishment of the cult was taken by legionaries and the officers of the auxiliary units. At Housesteads three altars (out of five) bear the names of their dedicators; they were a centurion, a consular beneficiary and a man named Herion, whose eastern name suggests that he was a slave of a trader.<sup>3</sup> At Rudchester one of the four altars was dedicated by a soldier of the sixth legion, and two others by prefects of the auxiliary unit (VII 544, 541, 542). Prefects appear on two of the three Castlesteads altars (VII 831, 889) and on the three altars from Carrawburgh (JRS 1950 pp. 114-5). A tribune dedicated the inscription from High Rochester, and legionary

1 Most Oriental cults were of this kind. Altars to Mithras are nearly all dedicated by individuals.

2 Cf. Richmond, op. cit. pp. 7-8.

3 Richmond, op. cit. p. 6. VII 646, 645, 647.

soldiers those from Corbridge, Caerleon and London.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that the rank and file of the auxiliary troops did not adopt the worship of Mithras with enthusiasm. The temples are all of small size, that of London being the largest; those of Hadrian's Wall would scarcely hold more than two dozen worshippers. This suggests that the appeal of Mithraism in Britain was very limited, being almost confined to educated soldiers in the north, and in the south to traders and retired soldiers. The temples seem to have been in use at intervals, not continuously. One of the principal altars of Housesteads Mithraeum was erected in 253 A.D., suggesting that this was when the cult was first established there;<sup>2</sup> the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh appears to have been first built in the late second century A.D., rebuilt shortly before 222 and destroyed in 296-7, and again rebuilt a few years later. It was finally abandoned quite early in the fourth century, and became flooded and ruinous; there was some destruction and removal of statues which suggests Christian desecration.<sup>3</sup> The Rudchester

1 VII 1039 High Rochester, EE IX 1381 Corbridge, VII 99 Caerleon, EE VII 816 London.

2 VII 646; Richmond, op. cit., p. 6.

3 The Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh, I.A. Richmond and J.P. Gillam, pp. 28, 34-5, 39-44. (AA<sup>4</sup> 29, 1951, pp. 1-92).

Mithraeum shows signs of restoration,<sup>1</sup> showing that worship must have lapsed once at least, and of desecration also.<sup>2</sup> The inference is that at some periods there were no men at the forts interested in the worship of Mithras, and that probably the commander of the unit was always the leading spirit of the cult.

### 3. Jupiter Dolichenus.

The Asian god Jupiter Dolichenus was also much worshipped in the western provinces. Originally he was the local god of Doliche, a town in Commagene, and according to Cumont<sup>3</sup> was a god of lightning and protector of smiths. On inscriptions he is usually called Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, and Toutain thinks this shows that he retained, when brought into the Roman pantheon, his original function as a protector of the city.<sup>4</sup> Many statues of Dolichenus have been found in the Western provinces; these

1 Dated to the end of the third century approximately, by J.P. Gillam and I. McIvor, The Temple of Mithras at Rudchester, AA<sup>4</sup> 32(1954), p. 196.

2 Gillam and McIvor, op. cit., p. 201; the Mithraeum was probably first built in the early third century, and the final desecration and abandonment may be contemporary with that at Housesteads and Carrawburgh (pp. 217-8).

3 Religions orientales, pp. 104-5; cf. VI 30947 (Rome, the Quirinal), III 11927 (Pfunz, Raetia), 1128 (Apulum, Dacia), which seem to show Dolichenus' connection with iron. VI 406 (Rome, Aventine) shows that he was regarded as a sky-god ("conservator totius poli").

4 Toutain, op. cit. p. 36. His function as a god of lightning may have helped to link him more closely with Jupiter.

generally represent him as bearded, with features like those of Zeus or Jupiter, standing on the back of a bull, wearing a helmet or the Phrygian cap, a cuirass and the paludamentum of a Roman general. He holds the thunderbolt and a double axe, which also appears in Cretan religious symbolism and is supposed by Cumont<sup>1</sup> to be a token of Dolichenus' mastery of lightning. The cult was probably spread from Commagene by soldiers rather than by traders,<sup>2</sup> for Dolichenus appears to have developed into a soldiers' god par excellence,<sup>3</sup> through his patronage of the smiths so necessary to an army.

Twelve dedications to Dolichenus<sup>4</sup> have been found in Britain. They all come from the northern military zone except one from Caerleon. No temple of Dolichenus has yet been discovered and excavated in Britain, though inscriptions from Bewcastle and Old Penrith<sup>5</sup> seem to mention temples or buildings, and a fragmentary sculptured frieze found at Corbridge probably came from Dolichenum.<sup>6</sup> Nothing is known

1 Op. cit. p. 137.

2 Cf. Cumont, op. cit., p. 104.

3 Cumont op. cit., p. 105, Toutain, op. cit., p. 40.

4 Together with three doubtfully ascribed to Dolichenus, VII 419 Piercebridge, VII 753 Carvoran, VII 956 Netherby.

5 VII 976, 316.

6 Richmond, Roman legionaries at Corbridge..., (AA<sup>4</sup> 21, 1943, p. 181 ff.) discusses the symbolism of this frieze. Birley (Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 72-3) assumes that there were temples at Benwell, Chesters and Carvoran because inscriptions have been found in these places.

of the cult ritual of Dolichenus at Doliche itself, and though the western provinces have furnished a great many statues and inscriptions, these throw little light on the ritual of the cult, though much on the god's nature. One feature is very noticeable, in Britain as elsewhere; other deities were very freely associated with the cult.<sup>1</sup> This is most clearly observable at Corbridge, where the frieze depicts Castor and Pollux, the sun-god and perhaps Apollo, with Dolichenus, and an altar associates him with Caelestis, Brigantia and Salus.<sup>2</sup> The Sun and Moon were closely connected with the cult;<sup>3</sup> the numina of the emperors appear with the god on an inscription from Benwell, and Juno on an altar from Caerleon.<sup>4</sup> The consort of the deity was called by the Romans Juno Regina; she was probably a goddess of fertility, and is represented standing on a cow or hart.<sup>5</sup> Richmond believes<sup>6</sup> that the association with other gods was a considered policy of the priests, intended to gain

- 1 Noted by I.A. Richmond, op. cit., pp. 180-181; he also notes that the Dolichenum in Rome attracted Roman and Egyptian deities.
- 2 Richmond, loc. cit., EE IX 1141; see above, p. 13 and below, p. 489.
- 3 Toutain, op. cit. p. 42. Toutain believes that the representations of the Sun and Moon associated with the cult are merely portrayals of the god and his consort in a different guise.
- 4 VII 506 Benwell, 98 Caerleon.
- 5 Toutain, op. cit. p. 41-2; Richmond op. cit. p. 179. She appears with Dolichenus on a relief from Croy Hill (PSAScot. 66, pp. 268 ff.).
- 6 Loc. cit. (following Hoey, Official Policy towards Oriental Cults in the Roman Army, TAPAssn. 70 p. 473), and op. cit. p. 194.

followers for the cult by offering them familiar gods in combinations with unfamiliar.

The worshippers of Dolichenus seem to have come for the most part from the same class as those of Mithras. The Corbridge altar was dedicated by a legionary centurion, as were those of Great Chesters and Benwell (EE IX 1141, 1192, VII 506); a tribune appears on a Risingham dedication and a prefect on that from Old Penrith.<sup>1</sup> The Caerleon inscription was dedicated by a legate, presumably of the second legion (VII 98). Other inscriptions bear the names of men who apparently had the tria nomina of Roman citizens and were presumably soldiers, probably commanders of units.<sup>2</sup> Only one altar, from Birrens (EE IX 1229), seems to have been dedicated by an auxiliary soldier of the rank and file, a man named Magunna. It seems that the worship of Dolichenus in Britain was confined to the army; as he was above all the patron of soldiers in his romanized form, his worship would not have much attraction for civilians.

#### 4. Other Oriental deities: causes of their presence in Britain.

##### (a) Composition of the Army.

There are traces in

- 1 VII 991 Risingham, VII 316 Old Penrith (if Hübner's expansion is correct).
- 2 Iulius Valentinus, VII 422 Gainford; Galerius Verecundus(?), EE VII 1016 Chesters; several people appear to be named on VII 725 Great Chesters, including a woman.



Britain of the worship of other Oriental deities; several explanations of their presence may be put forward.

Sometimes the constitution of the army of occupation was the cause, as it was for the worship of many Celtic and German deities. At Carvoran there was stationed at one period<sup>1</sup> a cohort of Hamian archers from Syria, and these men brought with them the worship of two Syrian deities. The "dea Syria" appears on two Carvoran inscriptions (VII 758, 759), one dedicated by Licinius Clemens, prefect of the cohort, the other by Marcus Caecilius Donatianus, "militans tribunus in praefecto dono principis", a tribune given temporary command as prefect by the emperor.<sup>2</sup> The latter is a remarkable metrical dedication, in which the goddess is identified with Pax, Virtus, Ceres, Mater deum (= Cybele), and apparently with the constellation of the Virgin.<sup>3</sup> In her Syrian home, Hierapolis near the Euphrates, this goddess was called Atargatis or Derketo,<sup>4</sup> but in the western provinces she was known only as dea Syria or Suria, corrupted sometimes to Iasura.<sup>5</sup> Another inscription from Carvoran (VII 750) was dedicated to "dee Hammi", the goddess

1 During Hadrian's reign; their commander "set up an altar (VII 748) for the health of that emperor's adopted son in A.D. 136-38" (Bruce, Handbook to the Roman Wall (10th edition), p. 157). They were also there under Calpurnius Agricola and in the time of Severus (ibid.).

2 Bruce, op. cit., p. 158.

3 See below, p. 96-5.

4 Toutain, op. cit., p. 50.

5 Cumont, op. cit., pp. 96-7.

Hammia, or of the Hammii. She was undoubtedly the goddess of the Hamians in particular, and though Hodgson and others<sup>1</sup> identified her with the Magna Mater, it is more probable that she was either Atargatis herself or the consort of Belus of Apamea, whose worship is attested in Gaul.<sup>2</sup> Of Atargatis' cult at Carvoran nothing is known; it has been supposed that it was part of the unit's official worship,<sup>3</sup> but, as E. Birley<sup>4</sup> remarks, the metrical inscription was not appropriate to that worship. It was not set up on behalf of the unit, but is a very personal expression of private devotion; it was probably built into the inside wall of a temple, for the lettering is hardly weathered. One other inscription to the Syrian goddess (VII 272) comes from Thornborough in Yorkshire. It was erected by a man called, apparently, Saio; the name is perhaps corrupt.<sup>5</sup>

Another Syrian deity, Jupiter Heliopolitanus, appears on inscriptions from Carvoran. He was the Baal Hadad of Heliopolis (Baalbek), and, like Dolichenus, was

1 According to Hübner in VII, s.n. 750.

2 So Toutain, op. cit. p. 51. He cites Hübner's conjecture (loc. cit.) that "the name Hammii meant the Apameans, because the Syrian name of Apamea was Hama". Belus appears on XII 1277 (Vasio, Narbonese Gaul).

3 By Domaszewski, Religion des römischen Heeres, p. 52.

4 Roman Britain and the Roman Army, p. 73.

5 The letters BF after the dedicatory name seem to show that he was a legionary soldier, a consular beneficiary; but if he was a legionary it is strange that he did not give all his three names on the altar.

a god of lightning and protector of his city,<sup>1</sup> he was portrayed with lightning and the eagle, and assimilated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. But he was also a chthonic deity, which Dolichenus was not. Reliefs and statuettes<sup>2</sup> from Marseilles, Nîmes, Carnuntum and Graz show him crowned with the calathos and bearing ears of corn, as well as the lightning and sometimes the whip of the sun.<sup>3</sup> Chthonic deities were also deities of vegetation, like Ceres and Sucellus. But the likenesses between the Baals of Doliche and Heliopolis were sufficiently numerous to cause them to be worshipped together<sup>4</sup> and sometimes even assimilated; an altar from Carvoran, which seems to read "I O M D H", is probably an example.<sup>5</sup> The other altar from Carvoran gives the name of the god, "I O M Heliopoli,..."<sup>6</sup> but is thereafter illegible, so that nothing can be inferred about the status of the deity's worshippers. The cult appears nowhere else in Britain, and clearly the Hamii must have brought it

1 So Toutain, op. cit., p. 47.

2 Described by Toutain, op. cit., pp. 43-7.

3 Cf. Macrobius, Saturnalia I, 23, 12, who describes the statue of the god of Heliopolis, and mentions the whip, corn and thunderbolt.

4 E.g. III 3908 Treffen (Upper Pannonia).

5 VII 753, cf. III 3462 Aquincum (Lower Pannonia).

6 According to Bruce's reading, given in VII s.n. 752.

directly from Syria.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Influence of the imperial house. The higher ranks of the army were undoubtedly influenced by the imperial house in their worship of oriental deities. We have seen that this was probably the case with Mithraism,<sup>2</sup> and it is so with the Syrian cults also. The second-century emperors, especially Commodus and the Severi, favoured these cults, and most of the datable monuments of the Syrian deities in the western provinces are of this period. The imperial influence appears to have reached as far as Britain; one of the Carvoran dedications to the Syrian goddess (VII 758) was set up in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and two inscriptions to Dolichenus, from Benwell and Gainford,<sup>3</sup> are datable to the reign of Antoninus Pius and 217 A.D.<sup>4</sup> respectively. But imperial influence can be detected in other cults also. An inscription to Sol Invictus from Corbridge (EE IX 1381) shows it working in the opposite way. The Invincible Sun, though often assimilated to Mithras, was originally a different deity,

- 1 Toutain (op. cit. p. 43) notes that the worship of Heliopolitanus was much less widespread in the western provinces than that of Dolichenus; this is perhaps because he had less appeal to the army. He may have been worshipped mostly by traders.
- 2 Above, p. 70-71. Commodus worshipped Mithras (Lampridius, *Vita Commodi* IX,6), so did the Tetrarchs (Toutain, op. cit. p. 160, III 4413 Carnuntum, Upper Pannonia), and Julian (Toutain, loc. cit.).
- 3 VII 506 Benwell, 422 (= EE IX 1131) Gainford.
- 4 So Haverfield in EE IX s.n. 1131.

worshipped in Rome early in the Imperial period;<sup>1</sup> at a later date Elagabal and Aurelian adopted him as the State deity. Commodus, in 192, adopted the title Invictus<sup>2</sup> and was associated with Jupiter Heliopolitanus on a dedication,<sup>3</sup> which suggests that he was trying to identify himself ~~with~~ with Sol Invictus as well as with Hercules. Though he died soon afterwards, and his example can hardly have had time to penetrate to the provinces and cause erections of dedications to Sol Invictus in his honour, the Corbridge inscription suggests that some soldiers thought it did; the inscription was erected about 162 A.D.; and was later defaced by the erasure of the god's name; and I.A. Richmond has shown<sup>4</sup> that this was probably done ~~by~~ through mistaken association of the deity with the late detested emperor.

There are traces of the worship of the Greco-Egyptian Serapis in Britain. This cult was organized in Alexandria by Ptolemy I (Soter) to give the Greeks and Egyptians of that city a common object of worship,<sup>5</sup> and it spread thence to Greece and Rome. Serapis' origins have

- 1 E.g. Vespasian replaced at the head of Nero's colossus with a head of Sol (Pliny, Naturalis Historia XXXIV 45); other examples are given by Richmond, Roman Legionaries at Corbridge...., AA4 21(1943), p. 211. Worship of the Invincible Sun-god was originally Syrian.
- 2 Dio Cassius, LXXII, 15,5.
- 3 VI 420; Richmond, op. cit. p. 212.
- 4 op. cit. pp. 211-213.
- 5 Jayne, Healing Gods, p. 77, Cumont, op. cit., p. 71.

been disputed; some think he was originally the god of Babylon or of Eridu<sup>1</sup> in Mesopotamia; but it seems that he was in fact a fusion of Osiris, god of the dead, with the bull-god Apis. The cult was Hellenized; its liturgical language was Greek,<sup>2</sup> which probably facilitated its adoption in Rome. The cult passed into the western provinces through soldiers and merchants, being found mainly in places where the numbers of these classes were greatest.<sup>3</sup> The influence of the emperors no doubt played a great part in its propagation. The two British inscriptions, from York and Kirby Thore (VII 240, 298), are probably connected with the presence of Severus and Caracalla in Britain.<sup>4</sup> However, the dedicator of the York inscription, Claudius Hieronymianus, clearly came from the eastern<sup>n</sup> Mediterranean, and his interest in the cult may have been quite independent of the imperial bias towards it.

1 Jayne, op. cit., pp. 77 ff., Cumont, op. cit., p. 70.

2 Cumont, op. cit., p. 71.

3 Toutain, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

4 Richmond, Roman Britain, p. 208. Birley (Roman Britain and the Roman Army, p. 51) says that Claudius Hieronymianus, who set up the York inscription to commemorate his restoration (or possibly first construction) of a temple of Serapis, was in Britain at the turn of the second and third centuries, just when Severus was active in restoring peace in north Britain after the invasion of the Maeatae in 196-7 A.D. The temple was perhaps destroyed in this invasion (which certainly reached York, cf. R.G. Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, p. 136) and restored in honour of Severus.

(c) Presence of orientals in Britain.

A few other

Oriental cults are attested in Britain, but the chief (indeed perhaps the only) reason for their presence is the presence of orientals. The Egyptian goddess Isis was worshipped in towns of the western provinces, mostly by <sup>people</sup> men from the eastern Mediterranean or of low social status,<sup>1</sup> but very little, it seems, by soldiers. Only one inscription betrays the presence of Isis-worship in Britain; it is the address of a tavern or wine-merchant, "Londini ad fanum Isidis"(EE IX 1372), scratched on the side of a jug of first-century type, which was found in London. We know that London was a port and good centre of trade, and it seems likely that Isis, like Mithras, was worshipped there by traders. The use of "the temple of Isis" as sole address shows that it was well-known and probably large and wealthy; but no remains have yet been discovered. Orientals were present at Corbridge, as we know from several inscriptions,<sup>2</sup> and they were probably the worshippers of Astarte, Heracles of Tyre and Cybele, each of whom had an altar at Corbridge.<sup>3</sup>

1 Toutain, op. cit., pp. 26-7.

2 Birley (op. cit. pp. 81-3) cites six: Diodora and Pulcher (VII p. 97); Dyonisius and Surius Egnatius (VII 477); Aurelia Achaice (EE III 96); and Barates of Palmyra (EE IX 1153a), who, he claims, was a vendor or maker of ensigns.

3 VII p. 97, AA<sup>3</sup> 11 pp. 306-7 (= AA<sup>4</sup> 21 pp. 196-9).

Astarte was the chief goddess of the Phoenicians, called by Herodotus<sup>1</sup> Aphrodite Urania and by Cicero<sup>2</sup> the Venus of Syria and Cyprus. The Heracles of Tyre is mentioned by Cicero and Herodotus<sup>3</sup>; he was the Baal Melqart of the city of Tyre, and was worshipped there in a joint sanctuary with Astarte, according to Josephus.<sup>4</sup> It is probable, as I.A. Richmond<sup>5</sup> has shown, that the two deities were worshipped together at Corbridge also. The altar to Cybele is damaged, and the deity meant is not clear from its text,<sup>6</sup> but it bears carvings of mourning youths in Phrygian dress which show that the goddess is probably the Phrygian Magna Mater or Cybele; her greatest festival was that commemorating her search for her dead lover Attis and his resurrection.<sup>7</sup> There is another altar to Cybele at Carrawburgh (VII 618), dedicated by a woman whose origin cannot be deduced from her name. The cult was clearly not popular in Britain; its only other traces are a

1 I, 105, 2.

2 De natura deorum, III 23(59).

3 Cicero, op. cit. III 16(42); Herodotus II, 44,1.

4 Contra Apion I, 18.

5 Roman legionaries at Corbridge....., AA<sup>4</sup> 21, pp. 127-224. He shows that the two altars have many points in common; e.g. they are both in Greek, the Greek script is the same on each, both inscriptions are in rough hexameters, the mouldings of the capitals are identical (pp. 200-201).

6 "B F deae pantheae..." (AA<sup>3</sup> 11, p. 306).

7 This stone also depicts Mercury or Hermes, who functioned as leader of the soul through the purificatory sacrifices; this was a late development (Richmond, op. cit., p. 198), showing that the altar is of late date, probably third century.



statuette of Attis at Bevis Marks and a temple at Verulamium whose attribution to Cybele's cult is not certain. One other oriental deity, Ma of Cappadocia, appears, at Old Carlisle (VII 338); she was originally a deity of fruitful nature<sup>1</sup>, but had also some warlike characteristics which caused her to be identified with the Roman Bellona. Her worshippers at Old Carlisle were Rufinus, "prefect of horse of the Augustan ala", and Latinianus his son; nothing can be deduced about their origins from their names.

#### 5. Extent of worship in Britain.

The general distribution of the altars and statues of these cults suggests that none of them became popular with the British people, except perhaps to a slight extent in the towns.<sup>2</sup> There is scarcely any evidence of worship by civilians; it cannot have been very widespread, or more traces would surely have been found. Hence it seems that Cumont's theory of the widespread worship of these deities is not valid for Britain; Toutain's view that these cults were "exotics", practised chiefly by the people who imported them, seems much nearer the truth. But it is necessary to remember that evidence for religions of all kinds in Britain

1 Cumont, op. cit., p. 50.

2 If the assignation of the temple at Verulamium to Cybele is correct, it indicates some civilian interest in the cult, since Verulamium was a predominantly civilian settlement.

is much more abundant in the western and northern military zones than in the civilian south-east, and it is reasonable to suppose that the worship of Roman or Oriental gods by native Britons may have been somewhat more extensive than the evidence shows.

## Chapter VI

Syncretism1. Nature of syncretism.

Towards the beginning of the third century A.D., according to Toutain,<sup>1</sup> there was taking place throughout the Roman empire a "religious awakening". Signs of this had been observable throughout the second century, and it reached its flower in the third, under the strong influence of philosophy and Oriental religion.

At this period men were worshipping gods not only of Greece and Rome, but of many of the other countries of the empire also. Yet there was an ever-growing tendency to recognize a single and all-powerful divinity, above the multitude of gods and goddesses commonly worshipped, of whom the latter represented the different functions. The spheres of action of the "specialized" Roman and Greek deities were becoming less clearly defined, gods of the same religion or of different religions were being confused and worshipped together, a process called "syncretism"<sup>2</sup> or "theocrasis"<sup>3</sup>.

1 Cultes païens II, pp. 227-8 (citing J. Réville, Religion à Rome sous les Sévères).

2 Toutain, op. cit., pp. 227 ff.

3 Wissowa, Religion und Kultus der Römer, p. 82.

The phenomenon has been denied by some,<sup>1</sup> but it cannot be doubted that many people, especially the educated and those of high social standing, held monotheistic or pantheistic ideas. The belief (of pagans) in a single and supreme god is affirmed by theologians in terms like these:

"Equidem unum esse deum summum, sine initio, sine prole naturae, ceu patrem magnum atque magnificum, quis tam demens, tam mente captus neget esse certissimum? Huius nos virtutes per mundanum opus diffusas multis vocabulis invocamus, quoniam nomen eius cuncti proprium videlicet ignoramus. Nam Deus omnibus religionibus commune nomen est. Ita fit ut, dum eius quasi quaedam membra carptim variis supplicationibus prosequimur, solum colere profecto videamur."<sup>2</sup>

"Dii te servent, per quas et eorum atque cunctorum mortalium communem patrem, universi mortales, quos terra sustinet, mille modis concordia discordia veneramus et colimus."<sup>3</sup>

"Gentiles, quamvis idola colunt, tamen summum

1 E.g. V. Macchiero, Il sincretismo religioso e l'epigrafia, in Revue archéologique.

2 Maximus of Madaura, a pagan; St. Augustine, Letters, 16(48), Migne, Patrologia latina, XXX\_III, cols. 81-2.

3 id. Ibid.

deum patrem, creatorem cognoscunt et confitentur."<sup>1</sup>

Religion had now come to be strongly influenced by philosophy, or perhaps more properly, philosophy now occupied itself above all with the study of the gods and the nature of the Divinity. The Stoics had long been interested in bringing their philosophy into relationship with popular religion.<sup>2</sup> They affirmed that everything in the world contained a little of God, of the Universal Soul, and it was these "fragments", as it were, of God that were taken to be the different gods and goddesses by the common man.<sup>3</sup> The Platonic school of the second century made a similar attempt to reconcile philosophy and popular religion.<sup>4</sup> Apuleius, in his works De Platone et eius dogmate and De deo Socratis, expounds the Platonist ideas of deity. They believed that there was a single supreme god dwelling beyond the universe, and author of all,<sup>5</sup> incomprehensible and indescribable;<sup>6</sup> below him in rank were lesser gods, of

- 1 Saturninus, bishop of Thugga (Migne, op. cit., III, col. 1068). Maximus and Saturninus lived c. 35 A.D., but the ideas they state must have been current for some time.
- 2 Boissier, La religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins, II, p. 126 f.
- 3 Boissier, op. cit. II, pp. 127-8. Cicero, de natura deorum, II, 15-28.
- 4 They were particularly interested in foreign cults, e.g. Plutarch (De Iside et Osiride) and Apuleius, who travelled very widely in the course of his study of religions.
- 5 De Plat. I, 11(204), cf. de d.S. 3(124), and Maximus of Tyre, Dissertations, XIV, 8.
- 6 De d. S. 3(124).

two kinds, the sun and the other heavenly bodies, and the gods of mythology<sup>1</sup>. The abyss between man and God is filled by intermediaries called ἀγγέλους <sup>2</sup>; Apuleius supposes these to be immortal and visible<sup>3</sup>. Similar ideas were held by the Neo-Pythagorean school; Maximus of Madaura and Saturninus were clearly well acquainted with them.

The monotheistic conception was not native to Greek or Roman religion. Greek and Roman gods had each their personal and peculiar character<sup>4</sup>, but Oriental gods were all-powerful, ruling the whole universe. This common characteristic often caused them to be assimilated to each other<sup>5</sup>, and when their worship became popular in the Roman empire, each was assimilated to several Greek or Roman deities of various and more limited spheres. The Greek and Roman gods were regarded as the different functions of the supreme divinity; in the words of Maximus of Madaura, their names were the vocabula designating the virtutes per mundanum opus diffusas of the supreme god, Serapis, Mithras, Sol Invictus, or whatever name he might be given.

1 De d.S. 2(119), cf. De Plat. I, 11(204-5).

2 De d.S. 6(132-3), cf. Tertullian, Apologeticus, 22.

3 De d.S. 13(147), 20(166). Plutarch supposed them to be mortal (De defectu oraculorum, 4(9)).

4 cf. Toutain, op. cit. II, pp. 236-7.

5 As in Apuleius, Metamorphoses XI 5, where Isis is called mater deum (i.e. Cybele), the Paphian Venus (i.e. Astarte), Bellona, as well as by the names of Greek and Roman goddesses.

That syncretism was actively practised in religious cult, and was not merely a system devised by philosophers, is clearly shown by the considerable number of inscriptions in which numerous gods are invoked in a single act of worship. Inscriptions to "di deaeque omnes" are also common, and reveal the same tendency to confuse all deities, and perhaps also the notion that God is everywhere and in everything, in short pantheism, which syncretism tended to produce alongside monotheism. The epithets Pantheus or Panthea which are occasionally found are manifestations of the same idea.

## 2. Distribution and nature of evidence.

The distribution throughout the Empire of inscriptions showing syncretist ideas is irregular, and shows that these ideas were most prevalent among the higher officers of the army, and to a lesser extent among freedmen and slaves.<sup>1</sup> Syncretism appears to have spread from the centre of the empire outwards;<sup>2</sup> probably the imperial court had considerable influence upon it, especially during the ascendancy of Julia Domna and her circle of literary

1 For a detailed discussion of the distribution, see Toutain, *op. cit.* II, pp. 248 ff.

2 Toutain, *op. cit.* II, p. 255.

men and philosophers.<sup>1</sup> The inscriptions of Britain which show syncretizing tendencies support these inferences. They number about twenty-three, and come mainly from the military stations in the north of Britain. Their dedicators are six officers of the army,<sup>2</sup> three centurions,<sup>3</sup> one consular beneficiary,<sup>4</sup> at least one soldier of the rank and file,<sup>5</sup> a freedman,<sup>6</sup> and once an entire cohort.<sup>7</sup> On four altars the dedicator's name is illegible.<sup>8</sup> These inscriptions may be divided into three classes: firstly those which mention the names of two or more deities or belong to a group suggesting the existence of a syncretistic cult; secondly the "di deaeque omnes" and "Pantheus" inscriptions; thirdly inscriptions naming only one deity but associated with figures having syncretist characteristics.

(a) Inscriptions naming several deities.

The first class contains groups of altars from Auchendavy, Housesteads and Rudchester, and single

- 1 Elagabalus may have had syncretist ideas; according to Lampridius (Vita Elagabali III 4) and Dio Cassius (LXXIX 12, 1) he "desired to transfer the emblem of the Great Mother, the fire of Vesta, the Palladium, the shields of the Salii" to the temple of the god of Emesa, and made the "Carthaginian Urania", i.e. Caelestis-Tanit, the wife of the god.
- 2 VII 370 Maryport, 759 Carvoran, VII 541, 542 Rudchester, 704 Chesterholm, 137 Lydney Park.
- 3 VII 646 Housesteads, 1111-1114 Auchendavy, EE IX 1141 Corbridge.
- 4 VII 645 Housesteads.
- 5 VII 1074 Birrens, probably VII 1062 Birrens and 138 Lydney Park also.
- 6 VII 1038 High Rochester.
- 7 VII 633 Housesteads.
- 8 VII 309 Whitley Castle, 368 Maryport, 543 Rudchester, AA<sup>3</sup> 11 p. 306 Corbridge.



inscriptions from Carvoran, Maryport and Corbridge.

The group from Auchendavy has been discussed by E. Birley in an article, "Marcus Cocceius Firmus: an Epigraphic Study"<sup>1</sup>. Birley has shown that Cocceius Firmus' choice of the deities to whom he dedicated his four altars was in all probability determined by his nationality and the nature of his earlier service in the army.<sup>2</sup> Toutain assumes that the altars show the influence of syncretism; but this cannot be taken as certain. The altars are dedicated to Diana and Apollo, to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Victorious Victory, to the Genius of the British land, and to Mars, Minerva, the Campestres, Hercules, Epona and Victory. This grouping seems not without significance. Birley has shown<sup>3</sup> that the chief gods of Thrace became Diana and Apollo in the interpretatio Romana and that when they are invoked under those names Diana precedes Apollo; and he shows that Cocceius Firmus was probably a native of Thrace or its neighbourhood worshipping the deities of his birthplace. Jupiter Optimus Maximus was the god of the Roman state as an entity, and Victory (the adjective Victorious seems to be added merely for emphasis) is the natural associate of

1 Roman Britain and the Roman Army, pp. 87-103 (originally appeared in PSAScot. 70 (1936), pp. 363-377).

2 See above, pp. 38 and 60, Birley, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-103.

3 *op. cit.* p. 97.

the guardian god of a people who so often gained victory. The Genius of the British land was doubtless worshipped in the spirit, so prevalent among the Romans (and ancient peoples generally), of paying proper respect to, and so securing the favour of, the deity of the place in which one lived and worked; Cocceius appears to have been thinking of Britain as the province which was a section of the empire. The fourth group of deities can be shown to be homogeneous; they all have some connection with the life and business of an army unit.<sup>1</sup> Mars the war-god was specially invoked by soldiers; Minerva had connections with war in so far as she was the Latin counterpart of the warlike Greek Pallas Athene;<sup>2</sup> the Campestris, the deities of the parade-ground, were the special patrons of cavalry units.<sup>3</sup> Hercules was probably worshipped as the bold and successful fighter;<sup>4</sup> Epona, goddess of horses, was another

1 Whether Cocceius Firmus was a member of one of the working-parties which built the Antonine Wall, or was commander of an auxiliary unit at Auchendavy is uncertain; the latter seems rather more probable. Birley affirms (op. cit. p. 91) that putting a legionary centurion in command of an auxiliary unit was a recognized and regular practice at this period; cf. VII 1084 Cramond, 1092 Rough Castle, and EE IX 1157 Wallsend, dated by Haverfield after the middle of the second century A.D.

2 She was also goddess of learning (cf. above, p. 59); and a centurion might be expected to be rather better educated than the average soldier.

3 For the identity of the garrison of Auchendavy, see G. Macdonald, The Roman Wall in Scotland (2nd edition), pp. 429, 431, 439-442.

4 Birley (op. cit. pp. 100-101) suggests that Cocceius learnt to worship Hercules while with the equites singulares. H. was commonly identified with Donar, *a German war- and thunder-god* (Macdonald, op. cit. pp. 417-8).

patroness of cavalrymen; and Victory was obviously invoked to secure success for the unit in battle. So the grouping on the deities on Cocceius' altars can be explained without reference to syncretism; but it would be improper to assert positively that Marcus Cocceius' Firmus' religious ideas were not influenced by syncretism.

The group of altars from Housesteads Mithraeum has interest in that it shows a development of the Mithraic cult not paralleled elsewhere in Britain, which was perhaps due to the syncretist ideas of one man. On two of these altars (VII 645, 646) Mithras is called saecularis, "the eternal", and has clearly been identified with the dedicators with Saeculum or Chronos, who was originally the chief god of the Persian pantheon, Mithras being his inferior though holding an important place. Chronos was sometimes represented as being born from an egg,<sup>1</sup> and a relief from Housesteads shows Mithras springing out of an egg surrounded by the signs of the Zodiac; Mithras is usually represented as *πετρογενής*, born from a rock. Altars from Housesteads also identify Mithras with the sun; on one he is called

1 cf. Richmond, Mithraism in Roman Britain, DUJ new series 5 no. 1 (1943), p. 6, where he mentions a relief from Modena showing Chronos springing from an egg, which is similar in conception to the Housesteads relief.

deus Sol invictus Mithras (VII 645), on three others simply Sol (VII 647, 648, 649). This is a much more common phenomenon than the assimilation to Chronos; it occurs at Castlesteads and Rudchester as well as at Housesteads<sup>1</sup> and frequently in other provinces.

Three of a group of four altars from the Mithraeum at Rudchester show that worshippers there were influenced by syncretism; in this case the identity of Mithras and the sun is the important idea. One altar identifies the Greco-Roman and Syrian sun-gods<sup>2</sup> and since it came from the Mithraeum we may assume that the dedicator meant to identify both with Mithras. A still more comprehensive syncretism of this kind occurs on a Whitley Castle altar which falls into the category of inscriptions associated with iconographical syncretism. The cult of Mithras at London was apparently also syncretistic; it will be discussed with the group of inscriptions which are associated with iconographical syncretism.

Three other inscriptions may be placed in the first group; they come from Carvoran, Corbridge and Maryport. The Carvoran inscription (VII 759) is a metrical dedication

1 See above, pp. 70 and 80.

2 VII 543, "Soli Apollini Aniceto" (= invicto). According to R.P. Wright (JRS 33 p. 37) the dedicator was Aponius Rogatianus, prefect.

to the Syrian goddess, Atargatis, and is so remarkable that it is worth quoting in full:

Imminet Leoni Virgo caelesti situ,  
 Spicifera iusti inventrix urbium conditrix.  
 Exquis muneribus nosse contigit deos;  
 Ergo eadem Mater divum, Pax, Virtus, Ceres,  
 Dea Syria lance vitam et iura p<sup>n</sup>sitans. 5  
 In caelo visum Syria sidus edidit  
 Libyae colendum, unde cuncti didicimus;  
 Ita intellexit numine inductus tuo  
 Marcus Caecilius Donatianus, militans  
 Tribunus in praefecto dono principis. 10

The Virgin of the first line is clearly the constellation of that name, which comes next to the Lion in the order of the signs of the Zodiac. "Spicifera" appears to mean "bearer of the ear of corn", and, with the name of Ceres given to the goddess in line 4, shows that she had powers over vegetation.<sup>1</sup> "Iusti inventrix, urbium conditrix" suggest the she was a goddess of law and justice and tutelary goddess of cities, perhaps equivalent to Minerva and Tyche or Fortuna. Caecilius clearly

1 Unless the epithet is simply an ornamental reference to the bright star called Spica, in the constellation of the Virgin.

regarded her as the supreme, though not the unique, deity; "from these bounties it has befallen that we know the gods", he says, believing that the Syrian goddess was the source of Knowledge. So he gives her the names of Mother of the Gods (Cybelè), Peace, Virtue or Goodness, and Ceres. The next lines are not clear, but Caecilius seems to have thought that the goddess had inspired him with understanding. It is plain that his religion was more than a formal observance, that it was intellectual as well as emotional, to a degree unusual among soldiers; and certainly he had some sort of acquaintance with syncretist philosophy.

The Corbridge inscription (EE IX 1141) is a dedication to Jupiter Dolichenus, Caelestis, Brigantia and Salus; it has been discussed above.<sup>1</sup> As with the Auchendavy altars, it is difficult to say positively whether or not the dedicator knew anything of syncretism. Caelestis and Brigantia are plainly confused, but the "et...et" carefully inserted after the name of Dolichenus and before that of Salus seem to indicate some idea of distinction between the personalities of the other deities. Yet the naming of all four deities on one altar suggests a common

1 p. 13. Cf. N. Jolliffe, Dea Brigantia, (in AJ 98) pp. 46-7.

factor of some kind; it seems most probable that they were invoked together because they had healing powers, but that the dedicator did not fully identify them one with another.<sup>1</sup>

The inscription from Maryport (VII 370) is dedicated "Genio loci Fortun(ae) reduci Romae aetern(ae) et Fato bono" by a tribune from Mauretania Caesariensis. Birley<sup>2</sup> suggests that the man "is plainly pining for a more congenial post". Toutain regards the inscription as syncretistic; but Birley's explanation seems to account satisfactorily for this selection of deities.

(b) "Di deaeque omnes" and "Pantheus" altars.

The second group of inscriptions, the "di deaeque omnes" and "Pantheus" altars, number six; they come from Maryport, Birrens, Chesterholm, Housesteads, Corbridge and High Rochester.<sup>3</sup> The Maryport and Birrens altars are dedicated simply "(dis) deabus(que om)nibus", "dib(us) deab(us)q(ue) omnib(us)", but the Chesterholm inscription reads "I O M ceterisque diis immort(alibus) et gen(io) praetor(i) Q. Petronius", etc. Presumably Jupiter Optimus

1 See above, p. 13 (and note 1 to p. 13), and Jolliffe, loc. cit.

2 Roman Britain and the Roman Army, p. 99.

3 VII 368, 1074, 704, 633, AA<sup>2</sup> 11 p. 306, VII 1038.

Maximus was regarded as the supreme god to whom all ~~others~~ others were in some degree inferior.<sup>1</sup> The inscription from Housesteads (VII 633) was set up "diis deabusque" on an order from the oracular shrine of Apollo at Clarus in Ionia; two similar inscriptions have been found in Numidia and Dalmatia,<sup>2</sup> and Birley<sup>3</sup> mentions a fourth, from Sardinia. He shows that these inscriptions were probably all set up in response to an oracle given in the time of Severus, possibly to the emperor himself since it seems to have affected the whole empire.<sup>4</sup> Two inscriptions bear the title Pantheus or Panthea; in one case<sup>5</sup> the god so named is Silvanus, in the other the deity is not indicated but is almost certainly Cybele.<sup>6</sup> Cybele is not infrequently named Panthea, but the title is rarely given to Silvanus. According to Toutain,<sup>7</sup> it was perhaps bestowed because theological speculations turned Silvanus (and Pan) into a cosmogonic deity.

- 1 The genius of the praetorium seems to have been added as an afterthought. Cf. a similar instance of odd position, VII 886 Old Wall (milecastle 59), "(D)eo (s.) Marti (C)ocidius-(C)ocidio .... Martius (c)oh. I Ba. genio vali" (so Haverfield in *EE IX*, p. 604)
- 2 III 2880 Karin (Dalmatia), VIII Cuicul (Numidia).
- 3 *Germania* 33 (1939), pp. 189-190.
- 4 Birley, loc. cit.
- 5 VII 1038 High Rochester.
- 6 AA<sup>3</sup> 11 p. 306, Corbridge; see above, pp. 84-5, and Richmond, Roman legionaries at Corbridge...., AA<sup>4</sup> 21, pp. 198-9.
- 7 op. cit. I, p. 261; Wissowa, Religion und Kultus der Römer, p. 177.



(c) Iconographical Syncretism.

The remaining class of inscriptions, those associated with iconographical syncretism, number six; they come from Whitley Castle, Birrens and Lydney Park.<sup>1</sup> The Whitley Castle altar, dedicated "deo Apollini", has been mentioned above.<sup>2</sup> It bears four carvings: on the front face, Apollo with a plectrum in one hand and resting the other upon his lyre; on the back, a figure standing on a rock, bearing an object like a sceptre or whip, with torch-bearers on either side, one with torch raised, the other with torch lowered to the ground. This appears to represent Mithras with his torch-bearers Cautes and Cauto-pates. On the left side (of the spectator) the Sun-god is portrayed, with radiate crown and whip. On the right side (of the spectator) is shown a bearded man bearing a cup and jug, standing before a platform on which is a figure wearing a tunic and cloak and carrying a sceptre. It is reasonable to suppose that this is the British god equivalent to Apollo, Sol and Mithras, that is, Maponus.<sup>3</sup> The altar was apparently found in swampy ground, and was

1 VII 309(=JRS 1943, p. 77), VII 1062, VII 37-40.

2 pp. 10, 60, 70.

3 The description, and the identification of the fourth figure with Maponus, are given by R.P.Wright, The Whitley Castle altar to Apollo, JRS 1943, pp. 36 ff.

perhaps originally associated with a spring.<sup>1</sup> This altar is clearly another ~~trace~~<sup>instance</sup> of syncretism applied to the solar deities; worship of the Sun, with whom many other gods were identified, became the chief religion of paganism in the third century, encouraged by Elagabalus and Aurelian.<sup>2</sup> Wright dates this altar to that period; it is interesting to note that all the Mithraea of Hadrian's Wall were in use at this period,<sup>3</sup> and that in all of them there is some evidence for of the confusion of Mithras and Sol.<sup>4</sup> They and the Whitley Castle altar are an interesting illustration of the way in which the popularity of the cults in favour at the centre of the Empire is reflected at its borders.

An inscribed relief from Birrens (VII 1062) is another instance of the syncretism which united the characteristics of Roman, British and Oriental deities in one godhead. The relief is dedicated to Brigantia, and represents the goddess as a winged woman standing, with a horned, non-Roman helmet and a mural crown on her head,

1 R.P.Wright, loc. cit.

2 Cf. Macrobius, Saturnalia, book I passim. The solar theory of the origin of religion, described by Macrobius, had obviously been current for some time (the work is dated approximately 400 A.D.).

3 See above, pp. 72-3. <sup>also</sup> The London Mithraea was also in use in the third century (JRS 45, 1955, p. 136).

4 VII 645, 647-9 at Housesteads; VII 542, 543 at Rudchester; the representation of Mithras with radiate crown and whip on JRS 1950 p. 115, 3 at Carrawburgh.

wearing a long tunic, cloak and medallion of the gorgon's head, and carrying a spear and a globe. Near her are a shield and an omphaloid stone. The wings and globe are commonly attributes of Victory, the gorgon's head, spear, shield and helmet of Minerva-Pallas Athene (though here the helmet has the British (presumably), not the Roman, form); the mural crown is typical of deities who protect towns or provinces, and the stone is probably connected with the cult of Tanit-Caelestis of Carthage.<sup>1</sup> N. Jolliffe<sup>2</sup> has shown that the dedication probably reflects the results of the Severan reconstruction and reorganization of the Brigantian state; it can be dated to this period (c. 210 A.D.).<sup>3</sup> The identification of the goddess with Victory (which appears on other inscriptions<sup>4</sup>) was perhaps first made earlier than this, but the characteristics of Minerva and Tanit show that the cult of Brigantia was almost certainly romanized and that enough was known about the African goddess, worshipped by the Severi, for the dedicator to assimilate her also to Brigantia, perhaps rather as a compliment to the Imperial house than <sup>through</sup> to desire to revere

1 See above, pp. 12-13, and N. Jolliffe, Dea Brigantia (AJ 98) pp. 47-54, with plate I.

2 op. cit.

3 Jolliffe, op. cit., p. 40, S.N. Miller, Note on an inscription from Birrens (Dumfriesshire), JRS 27(1937), pp. 208-9.

4 VII 200 Slack, EE IX 1120 near Castleford.

the African goddess.

We have seen that syncretism often identified Mithras with Sol and Apollo; a different kind of syncretism is found in Mithras' London temple, where it is purely iconographical. Besides parts of statues of Mithras and a relief of Cautopates, heads of Minerva and Serapis, a statuette of Mercury with a ram, and a small group of Dionysus, Pan, Silenus, a satyr and a maenad were found.<sup>1</sup> We cannot now tell whether Mithras was actually identified with Mercury, Serapis and Dionysus. The two latter were chthonic, and hence probably vegetation deities,<sup>2</sup> but as far as we know, Mithras was neither. But he was confused with the Sun, the power which makes things grow; and, as slayer of the bull from which sprang animals and plants, might be regarded as in some sense creator of living things.<sup>3</sup> His relations with Mercury and Minerva remain obscure.

The latest examples of syncretistic cults in

1 JRS 45 (1955), plates XLIV-XLVII.

2 Cf. Demeter, the corn-goddess, who was also chthonic,<sup>and Sicilian.</sup>

3 Jupiter Heliopolitanus (see above, pp. 78-79) had as attributes the whip (solar), corn (vegetation), and the thunderbolt (symbol of a sky-god), with the calathos of chthonic deities (cf. S. Reinach, Cultes, mythes et religions I, chapter xviii). The Gaulish god of the horseman and giant columns was also apparently solar and chthonic (see above, pp. 30-31).

Roman Britain are the cult of Nodens at Lydney and the cult of Tarvos Trigaranus at Maiden Castle. Most, perhaps all, of the examples already discussed belong to the second or early third centuries, when the spirit of syncretism was spreading; but the cult of Nodens, in its romanized form, cannot be proved to have begun before 364 A.D.<sup>1</sup> The four inscriptions to Nodens (VII 137-140) which are known to assimilate him only to Mars, and that is doubtful, for the name is abbreviated to M and occurs on only two inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> The British god was perhaps primarily a god of hunting or fishing,<sup>3</sup> his cult appears to have assumed its prominence and syncretistic form in the pagan revival of Julian, and to have been influenced to some extent by Oriental religion; a bronze plaque portrays the sun-god in his chariot,<sup>4</sup> and the plan of the temple, almost unparalleled throughout the Empire, seems to be nearer the basilical type than any other. This type was freely used for the buildings of Oriental religions and, in the late Empire, for Christian churches, but seldom for Roman and other

- 1 Sir M. Wheeler, Report on Lydney Park Excavations 1932, pp. 26, 31-33.
- 2 VII 138, D M Nodonti, 139, deo Nudente M. VII 137 may have read D M or D N, the latter being more likely.
- 3 See above, pp. 18-19.
- 4 See above, p. 18; Rhys, Hibbert Lectures 1886 p. 127, Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

non-Oriental cults.<sup>1</sup> Nodens appears to have been regarded also as sea-god and god of healing.<sup>2</sup>

One inscription was found associated with the temple at Maiden Castle, on a plaque with a figure of Minerva, but it was undecipherable. However, objects found in and near the temple suggest a syncretistic cult like that at Lydney, but perhaps less well-developed, and certainly less wealthy. The deity appears to <sup>have</sup> been the Tarvos Trigaranus who occurs on an altar from Paris (XIII 3026b).<sup>3</sup> A statuette of a three-horned bull, bearing three female busts upon its back and head, was found close to the temple. As the cult was apparently connected with water,<sup>4</sup> the busts presumably represent water-nymphs. A statue-base, with the feet of a hound and a deity, probably Diana, was found in a hut near the temple. The cult was no doubt of a complex kind, like that of Nodens; Diana was perhaps associated with the bull-god because both were deities of wild nature, but Minerva's place in the cult remains obscure. However, we may note that Minerva was elsewhere in Britain associated with deities having some connection with water, being assimilated to Sulis, Brigantia and Coventina.<sup>5</sup>

1 Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 34-36.

2 Incubatio was apparently practised at the site, and votive dogs have been found; a mosaic represented fish and sea-monsters, and a bronze plaque bears figures of fishermen and tritons (see above, pp. 18-19).

3 See above, p. 39.

4 See above, p. 40; cf. Czarnowski, L'arbre d'Esus, etc. (Revue celtique XLII, 1925, pp. 49-52.

5 See above, pp. 13, 16, 21; VII 39, 42, 43 Bath, 1062 <sup>no 5</sup> *Girens*, [CE III 196 Cornwall]

Clearly Britain, remote though it was from the centre of the empire, had felt something of the philosophical and religious movements going on there. The medium of communication was plainly the army, in whose stations most of the evidence of syncretistic cults has been found. It seems that in general the native population of Britain did not take part in these cults; the Mithraea of Hadrian's Wall can have held only small congregations, and the inscriptions from Auchendavy, Carvoran, Maryport, Birrens, Whitley Castle and Corbridge, and most of the "di deaeque" and "Pantheus" inscriptions, appear to have been expressions of individual rather than corporate piety. The syncretistic cult of Brigantia perhaps attracted more native worshippers, but there is no concrete evidence of this; and though many, if not most, of the worshippers of Nodens must have been native Britons, at least one army officer made a gift to the temple<sup>1</sup>, and it was perhaps his knowledge of syncretism and Oriental cult that brought about the identification of Nodens with the Sun-god.

1 The mosaic, VII 137; the dedicator was Titus(?) Flavius Senilis, praepositus of the fleet's supply-depot (so Collingwood in Wheeler, op. cit.). Flavius Blandinus, dedicator of VII 138, was probably a soldier. He is called "armatura", a word which appears on the tombstone of a legionary soldier from Mainz (ILS 2362, cf. EE IV p. 440), and seems to denote some military duty (so Dessau, ILS loc. cit.), perhaps maker of weapons or overseer of an arms-store.

## Chapter VII

Conclusion

The evidence which has been examined can be shown to give a coherent and fairly complete picture of the religious life of Roman Britain. Such inconsistencies as may be found are due chiefly to gaps in our information rather than to the nature of that information.

1. Worship of the Britons at the time of the conquest.

The habits of worship of the Britons at the time of the conquest must, in default of adequate contemporary evidence, be deduced from that of later date, a procedure which must be followed with caution. Of the Druids we learn a little from classical authors. They worshipped a plurality of gods<sup>1</sup>, and believed in the immortality of the soul, which Caesar<sup>2</sup> regarded as their only extraordinary doctrine. Britain seems to have been the stronghold of Druidic practice, and apparently Gauls who wished to study it went to Britain for training<sup>3</sup>. But it would seem that

1 Lucan I, 450 ff., Tacitus Annals XIV 30, Diodorus V, 31, 3, Pomponius Mela III 2, 18.

2 B.G. VI 14,5; cf. Diodorus V 28,6 and Strabo IV 4, ch. 197, 4, and Ammianus XV 9,8; the latter authors probably took some, perhaps all, of their material from Caesar.

3 So Caesar, B.G. V 13. Whether Druidism originated in Britain or not (discussed by T.D.Kendrick, The Druids, pp. 194-207), it seems to have persisted there in its purest form, possibly because Britain was less affected by racial movements and conquests than Gaul (cf. Kendrick, op. cit., pp. 204-6).



they did not bring the worship of British gods back to Gaul with them. Kendrick<sup>1</sup> believes that the Britons who called themselves Druids were learned men, not priests; if this was so, the Gauls would come for instruction in temporal rather than spiritual *wisdom and would not* influence British religion, neither would it influence them. The migrations of the Belgae in the first century B.C.<sup>2</sup> would be more likely to introduce Gaulish deities into Britain. The cult of the Matres may have been widespread among the Celtic peoples of the Continent,<sup>3</sup> and the Belgae may have brought it to Britain; but there is no proof that they did so. The cult of Toutates was perhaps introduced by the Belgic Catuvellauni. Dedications to Mars (VII 82, 84, 85) from Barkway (Hertfordshire), in Catuvellaunian territory, suggest the presence of a shrine, which may have been raised by members of the tribe, under the influence of Roman practice, to a deity they had worshipped before the conquest; but here again we have no direct proof. The small shrine of late Roman date at Maiden Castle<sup>4</sup> was

1 op. cit. p. 209.

2 C. 75 and c. 50 B.C.; so G.C. Brooke in Antiquity VII, p. 269 (citing Hawkes and Dunning, Belgae of Gaul and Britain, in AJ 87(1930), pp. 150 ff.); cf. Caesar B.G. II 4, V 12.

3 See above, pp. 25-26.

4 Sir M. Wheeler, Maiden Castle, Dorset, pp. 72-78.

probably dedicated to Tarvos Trigaranus, the three-horned bull-god of north-east Gaul.<sup>1</sup> (Traces of this deity have been found at a few other places in England within Belgic<sup>c</sup> territory.<sup>2</sup>) It seems not improbable that he was worshipped by the Belgae of the district before and after their migration from Gaul, the cult lingering on after the capture of Maiden Castle and apparently gaining new vigour in the later fourth century A.D.<sup>3</sup>

The Latin inscriptions to British deities seem to show that these gods and goddesses were very numerous and very localized; perhaps the extent of their territories was even less than the distribution of the inscriptions would suggest.<sup>4</sup> The distribution of altars to Cocidius, Belatucadrus, Vitiris and Maponus shows clearly their localized character. A cluster of inscriptions is found at one particular spot and all or most of the others come from the district surrounding that place,<sup>5</sup> this suggests that the deity was regarded as presiding over a limited

1 See above, pp. 39-40.

2 Three-horned bull statuettes have been found at Stoke Abbott (Dorset) and Colchester; one found at Leicester perhaps belonged to a soldier or solitary Gaul.

3 Wheeler, op. cit., pp. 74-8. A hut of the Belgic period underlay a hut almost contemporary with the temple, in what must have been an important position in the Belgic settlement; perhaps it was the earlier home of the cult.

4 Because the Roman garrison (who dedicated most of the inscriptions) was moved about; hence soldiers might continue to worship a god in whose territory they no longer lived.

5 See above, pp. 7, 8-9, 10-11, 14.

area, having the centre of his worship at a place within that area.<sup>1</sup> Brigantia's worship was more widespread; as the tribal goddess of the Brigantes she was presumably worshipped all over Brigantian territory, which appears to have covered most of northern England as far as Hadrian's Wall, and part of Dumfriesshire also. Sulis of Bath, Nodens of Lydney and Coventina of Carrawburgh are also undoubtedly local deities. As far as we can tell, no god was worshipped over the whole of Britain, as Toutates, Taranis, the cross-legged god and probably Sucellus were apparently worshipped over all Gaul and perhaps beyond.<sup>2</sup> This may have been due partly to the British "lack of political cohesion and cultural unity" of which Richmond<sup>3</sup> speaks. Political unity would be difficult in a country where there were traces of several different strata of settlers<sup>4</sup> and considerable natural obstacles to free communication.

## 2. Public and private worship of Roman deities by Britons.

On the arrival of the Roman forces, some of the

1 Cocidius' cult-centre seems to have been somewhere between Birdoswald and Bewcastle, that of Belatucadrus near Brougham or Old Penrith. Vitiris' centre was in the Carvoran-Chesterholm-Housesteads district. Maponus' five altars are located at Corbridge, Old Penrith and Ribchester.

2 In spite of S.Reinach (Cultes, mythes et religions I, pp. 204-216). See above, pp. 30-33.

3 Roman Britain, p. 214.

4 For the pre-Roman state of Britain see R.G.Collingwood, Oxford History of England I, pp. 16-31.

tribes of the south allied themselves with Rome. The Regni or Regnenses of west Sussex certainly did so. Their king Cogidubnus was confirmed in his kingdom and given the title rex (et) legatus Augusti in Britannia,<sup>1</sup> and to show his loyalty he took the names of the emperor and embraced the worship of Roman gods. The Iceni of Norfolk also formed an alliance with Rome; whether they also began to worship Roman gods is not known. The part of Britain seized by armed conquest, namely the land of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes, was organized into a Roman province, which involved the introduction of Emperor-worship. Other provinces had adopted the worship of the Emperor, at first after his death, later during his life, without compulsion, as a token of loyalty to Rome; and possibly the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes were willing to do so also. However, it was partly the oppression of the cult which caused the adherence of the Trinovantes to the rebellion of the Iceni in 61 A.D., according to Tacitus;<sup>2</sup> but it is possible that it was the heavy expenses involved in the proper upkeep of the cult, rather than the actual idea of worshipping the Emperor as a god, that was resented. The

1 VII 11 Chichester.

2 Annals XIV 31, 6-7.

cult was certainly re-established after the revolt, and was presumably now accepted by the Britons. It would also have been established in the other important towns of the province, and seviri Augustales, the priests of the cult, existed at Lincoln and York.<sup>1</sup> There are suggestions also of the public worship of Jupiter and other Roman gods in the towns;<sup>2</sup> such cults were almost certainly organized in the four coloniae, Colchester, Lincoln, Gloucester and York, and perhaps in the tribal capitals, such as Chichester, Leicester and Cirencester. Worship of Roman gods in the country seems to have been very slight; but the Roman gods were certainly known, for their names were often applied to the Celtic gods of the countryside. The Britons on the whole seem to have been conservative in religion, especially in the country; the Continental Celtic and Oriental cults brought in by the Roman army of occupation have left scarcely any traces of influence on civilian worship,<sup>3</sup> though this may be partly due to the deficiency of evidence for civilian habits of worship in Britain.

1 VII 248 York, JRS 11 pp. 101 ff., Bordeaux.

2 See above, pp. 51-52; Jupiter, EE IX 997 Cirencester (dated by Haverfield (AJ 1893, no. 123) to the fourth century); Neptune and Minerva, VII 11 Chichester (mid-first-century); Apollo, VII 179 Lincoln; Mercury, EE III 179 Lincoln, EE IX 1109 Leicester.

3 See above, pp. 19, 48, 65, 85-86, 107.

### 3. Worship of the army of occupation.

The religion of the Roman army in Britain is better documented. The majority of religious inscriptions come from the north and west, the military zones, and though the temples are not more numerous than those of the south and east, their presiding deities are in most cases known.

(a) The legions. The legions have left fewer indications of their religious practices than the auxiliary troops. No doubt their official observances followed the normal pattern of Roman worship, particular reverence being paid to the Emperor and to Jupiter, to the standards of the legion and to Mars and Victory.<sup>1</sup> Their private worship is also scantily recorded; Roman deities seem to have been most in favour, especially Fortune, but some altars to Celtic deities are found.<sup>2</sup> Serapis was worshipped at York (VII 240) and Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras at Caerleon (VII 98,99) and elsewhere.

(b) The auxiliary troops. We have ample information about the worship of the auxiliary soldiers. It seems clear that they were allowed to continue worshipping their

1 E.g. VII 103 Caerleon, EE VII 988 Corbridge, JRS 1925 p. 247, 1 Caerleon, EE IX 1383 Corbridge.

2 E.g. VII 876 High Strand, milecastle 60 (Cocidius), VII 168 Chester (I.O.M. Tanarus), VII 503 Benwell (Antenociticus).

native deities, individually or as a corporate body, as long as they kept up the official cult of the emperor's numen and of Jupiter Optimus Maximus as guardian god of the Roman state. Vows for the welfare of Emperor and State were taken annually, new altars erected and the old ones buried;<sup>1</sup> series of these altars have been found at Maryport and Birdoswald.<sup>2</sup> Auxiliary troops paid corporate worship both to their own gods and to the gods of Britain; for example, the Tuihanti, part of a Frisian corps stationed at Housesteads, worshipped the German Thingsus and the Alaisiagae (EE VII 1040, 1041), and a cohort of Dacians at Birdoswald set up an altar to the British Cocidius (VII 803). The religious emotions of these men would be satisfied by the Celtic cults, the official worship being merely a means of giving them esprit de corps, ensuring their loyalty to the empire, and implanting in them Roman ideas to prepare them for citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

The worship of Mithras, as we have seen,<sup>4</sup> appealed especially to educated and intelligent men, and there is reason to suppose that this was the ~~case~~<sup>case</sup> with several

- 1 L.P. Wenham in CW<sup>2</sup> 39 (1939), pp. 19-30, Richmond op. cit. p. 202.
- 2 VII 372-388, 390, 391, 394, 395, 398, EE III 93, EE VII 970 Maryport, VII 806-826, EE VII 1071, EE IX 1209 Birdoswald.
- 3 Small groups or single altars occur at many other auxiliary forts.
- 3 cf. Richmond, op. cit. p. 206.
- 4 *Abc.e.*, pp. 71-72.

other Oriental cults. Legionary soldiers and the officers of auxiliary units seem to have led the worship of Oriental gods in Britain, as can be seen by studying, for example, the groups of altars from the Mithraea of Hadrian's Wall.<sup>1</sup> These deities seem to have been worshipped mainly by the soldiers, though it is possible that civilians attended the temple of Serapis at York, <sup>and</sup> a temple at Verulamium has been tentatively attributed to Cybele.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Blending of the two traditions.

From this survey we see that religion in Roman Britain was a mixture, a "blend of cultures" as Collingwood called it.<sup>3</sup> That Roman religious practice influenced British, and British Roman, there can be no doubt. Which had the greater effect on the other is not so easily determined. Haverfield believed<sup>4</sup> that Rome was the dominant partner where there was combination; Collingwood<sup>5</sup> held that the Celtic element gradually came to predominate over the Roman. The more educated and advanced peoples of the south-eastern zone, the town-dwellers, worshipped Roman gods in Roman fashion, and set up inscriptions in

1 See above, pp. 71-72; and, for the worshippers of Jupiter Dolichenus, p. 76.

2 Sir M. Wheeler, Verulamium, a Belgic and two Roman cities, pp. 119-120.

3 Oxford History of England I, p. 261.

4 Roman Occupation of Britain, p. 247.

5 op. cit., p. 261.



Latin to Celtic gods, often assimilating them to Roman gods, as was done at Barkway, for example<sup>1</sup>; the cults of Celtic deities were sometimes romanized, as in the case of Sulis and Brigantia.<sup>2</sup> The Roman army adopted Celtic deities, wishing to propitiate the spirits of the land; not only the common soldiers, but centurions and other officers<sup>3</sup> erected altars to the native gods and called them by Roman names. So the two traditions blended, and we can speak with truth of "Romano-British" or "Romano-Celtic" religion; but the Celtic influence seems to have been more powerful than the Roman, for its deities appear to have been more living and "real" to their worshippers than the Roman gods, whose power was almost spent and was being replaced in the Empire generally by that of the Oriental cults. The contact of these cults with Britain was too short and restricted to allow of their making a lasting impression on the country's religion.

5. Factors influencing the development of Romano-British religion.

The general picture of Romano-British religion

- 1 VII 82, 84, 85; see above, pp. 48, 109. A few Latin inscriptions to British and Roman deities apparently set up by Britons have been found in the north also; AA<sup>3</sup> 12 p. 201 Chesterholm (Vulcan), VII 346 Old Carlisle (Jupiter and Vulcan), VII 712 = JRS 1925 p. 249 Chesterholm (Saitada).
- 2 See above, pp. 16, 12-13.
- 3 E.g. VII 642 Housesteads, EE III 113 Bewcastle, VII 471 Corbridge, JRS 1947 p. 179, 4 Bowes, VII 42 Bath; cf. VII 137 Lydney.

agrees, on the whole, with what we know of religion in other provinces. Like religion in the rest of the Empire its development was governed by four facts: (1) the willingness to worship gods of different natures and origins; (2) the tendency to confuse deities whose natures were similar; (3) the fact that the Greeks and Romans, Oriental and Celtic peoples had similar ideas of the nature of deity,<sup>1</sup> which facilitated assimilation and syncretism; (4) the idea that gods presided over particular territories and the consequent habit of propitiating the gods of the place where one was.<sup>2</sup> All these ideas are illustrated in the Romano-British religious inscriptions. Briton and Roman each worshipped the other's gods; one man might worship Epona of Gaul, the Diana and Apollo of Thrace, Jupiter and Mars of Rome and the Genius of the British land;<sup>3</sup> altars to Celtic or Roman deities were sometimes set in temples of Mithras;<sup>4</sup> assimilation of Roman and Celtic deities is very frequent indeed in the inscriptions; dedications to the genius loci are common, and we find also dedications to the genius terrae Britannicae (VII 1113

- 1 E.g. they were ~~pan~~<sup>poly</sup>theists, they assigned to each god a fairly well-defined sphere of action; cf. Boissier, Religion romaine, I, pp. 987-390, Kendrick, op. cit., p. 74.
- 2 These facts are stated in more detail above, pp. 1-3. Cf. Boissier, op. cit. I, pp. 335-6.
- 3 M. Cocceius Firmus, VII 1111-1114 Auchendavy; see above, pp. 93-95.
- 4 E.g. at Housesteads (Bosanquet, Excavations at Housesteads: the temple of Mithras, AA<sup>2</sup> 25 pp. 255 ff.) and Carrawburgh (Richmond and Gillam, The Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh, AA<sup>4</sup> 29, p. 33).

Auchendavy) and the di cultores huius loci (VII 980 Risingham).

#### 6. Unity and diversity.

The last idea, that of localization of deities and the necessity of paying proper respect to the spirits of the place, seems to have been deeply rooted in Roman consciousness, and was probably an important factor in the progress of religion in the Roman state.<sup>1</sup> Not least was it important in Roman Britain. Neither in Britain nor in the rest of the Empire did Roman rule greatly alter the worship of the native deities. But it no doubt threw into relief the extreme diversity of religion, especially in Britain, where no god was worshipped over the whole country. Roman religion was dead, surviving only as formal ritual; it was useful politically, to unify the province and attach it to the empire, but it ~~alone~~ could not alone satisfy the religious needs of the people. Yet, in that it helped to bring about the political unity

1 Boisseir<sup>24</sup> (op. cit. I, pp. 390-392) mentions the importance of the Roman soldiers as carriers of religions from one land to another, attributing it to their superstitious nature common to all soldiers. The idea of localization was not confined to the Romans; most peoples of antiquity held it, even the Jews of Old Testament times. Cf. Naaman's carrying away of soil from Israel so that he could pay proper reverence to the Jewish God in Syria, II Kings 5, 15-17; also I Samuel 26, 19, Psalm 137, 4. Opposition to the idea is implicit in Amos 9, 7. See A New Commentary on Holy Scripture (S.P.C.K.), p. 267.

of the province, it prepared the way for a faith which could do in a spiritual sense what the Roman religion could do only in a temporal. As Collingwood very justly remarked,<sup>1</sup> "Roman rule by degrees created a consciousness of unity, the unity of a single peace and a single culture, which needed some kind of religious expression. That need Roman religion could not satisfy..... A universal civilization demanded, as its complement and completion, a universal religion. Without understanding this demand it is impossible to understand the success of Christianity."

1 Oxford History of England I, pp. 269-270.





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