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HONOURS THESIS

TRIPPLISM
IN
CELTIC ICONOGRAPHY

BY

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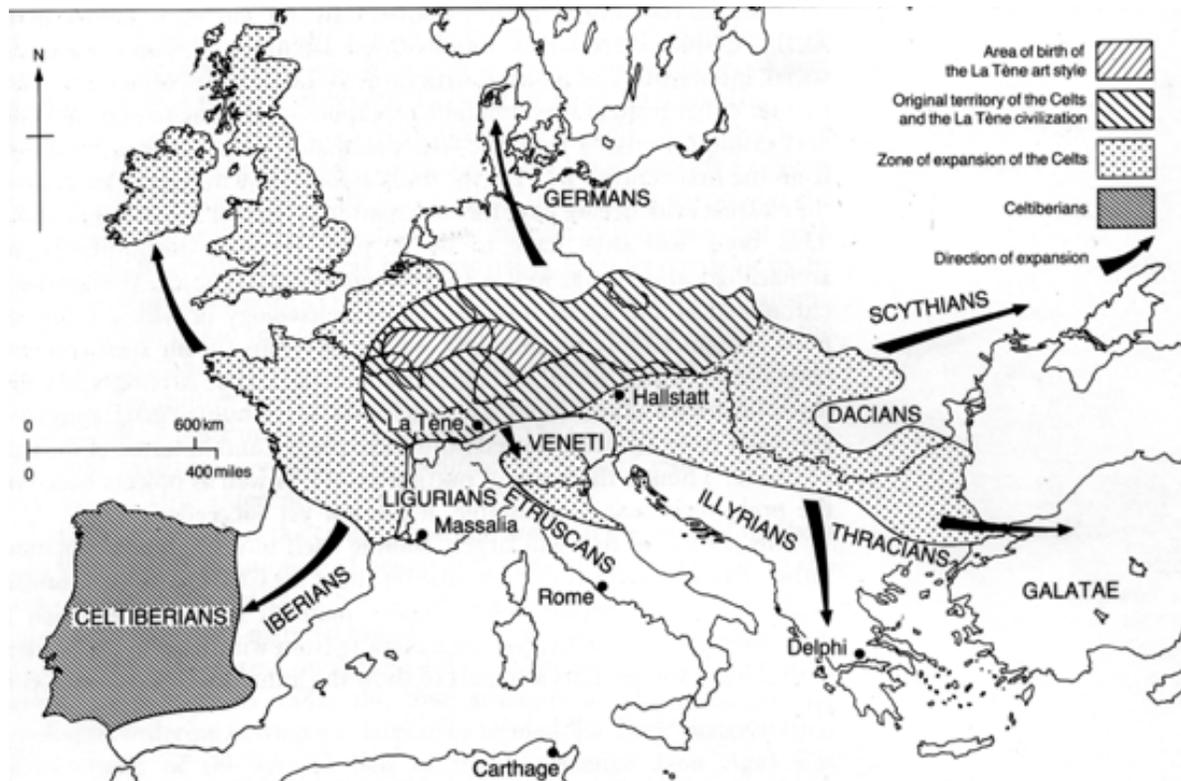
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Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to shed light on the causes of the pervasive triplism found in Celtic iconography. The number “three”, under the form of triple deities, heroes, animals and symbols seems to have held a primordial place in the mythology, cosmology, theology and the art of the Celtic people.

The Celtic people originated as nomadic groups coming from Eastern Europe by c.600-500 B.C. (Megaw, 1970, p.179 and Megaw, 1989, p.11) and spread in the west to Gaul, Spain, Ireland and Britain, as well as in the East as far as the Black Sea (see map 1).

Established throughout Europe, they were divided into independent tribes that shared similar social organization, languages, mythology, cosmogony and art styles. However, their constant tribal feuds and lack of political unity made them vulnerable to the well-organized Roman empire which was expanding its frontiers to Gaul, conquered by 52 B.C. Furthermore, Julius Caesar pursued his invasion to Britain whose people were allies of the Gauls against the Roman invasion. It is only in 43 A.D. however that the Claudian invasion added Britain to the Roman Empire. This slowly transformed the Celtic culture and art styles of Britain. Most of the Celtic people adapted to the Roman culture, while others, more rebellious, refused Roman ascendancy and joined other groups in Wales or Cornwall, at the frontier of which Roman garrisons were established.



Map 1: Territories occupied by Celts from the 5th century B.C. until the Roman conquests (Megaw, 1989, Fig. 2).

This could explain why in Gloucestershire, at the limit of these two “worlds”, we find many pieces of iconography that are simultaneously linked to Celtic beliefs and rituals, as well as deities or symbols worshipped by the Roman army. A syncretism of both religious beliefs and art styles slowly took place until the end of the empire by c. 5th century A.D. The Romans, as they had previously done in their other conquered provinces, tried to associate their own deities with similar Celtic ones. However, it is obvious when we look at the material that Celtic mythologies and theogony were not eradicated by this invasion, but remained intact or slightly transformed to the Roman taste. Ireland, on the other hand, was not invaded by Rome, but only later by Scandinavian (Norse) people. Within the analysis of the iconographical material, we find examples of Scandinavian iconography that closely resemble, in a stylistic as well as symbolic manner, the material found in the Celtic regions.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive grasp of the significance of Celtic triple motifs and representations, it is essential to acquire some basic knowledge of the Celtic mythology, cosmology and theogony from which the cultural and religious values inevitably derive. These societal and religious values, which undoubtedly have an impact on a culture’s iconography, can only guide us to safer inferences and interpretations about the meaning of these artistic representations.

However, the danger of misinterpretations is great. As we know, the Celts did not leave any written records. Thus, the available literature regarding the early days of this people is provided, on one hand, by the writings of enemies and conquerors from the Classical world, and on the other hand, by the early Christian Irish monks who left accounts of Celtic mythologies and rituals, in an era in which Christianity was eager to replace heathen beliefs. Therefore, the ethnocentric and propagandistic writings of both Classical and early medieval periods should be used with extreme care. Actually, it would be tempting to make *tabula rasa* of this literature and rely strictly on archaeological finds. However, the absence of Celtic scriptures and the paucity of archaeological material, which could shed light on the more abstract aspects of this society, forces us to rely at least partly on this ancient literature.

The attribution of a symbolic meaning to iconography or art styles is one of the aims of post-processualists. Post-processualism tries to avoid generalizations based on "rabid" empiricism (Shanks and Tilley in Stark, 1993, p. 98). It favors a historical relativist approach to archeological interpretation. Many archaeologists are trying to find a middle ground between these two approaches. Post-processualism questions our cultural, temporal and gender biases, which is an essential step in the study of archaeology. However, some post-processualists have been accused of over-interpreting the meaning of iconographical material (Renfrew and Zubrow, 1994, pp.3-4). The direct historical approach is one of the solutions proposed by the moderate post-processualists in order to obtain plausible inferences to the meaning of these representations. In the case of our study, however, it is difficult to establish correlations between the modern European social structure and Celtic culture because of the multiple invasions and social transformations that took place throughout time.

It is generally assumed that iconographical material must be a reflection of the society. Hodder, however, has proposed that material culture sometimes was used as part of ideology to mask, contradict or exaggerate social relations. Furthermore, he believes that

material culture transforms rather than reflects social organization, beliefs, concepts and ideologies, and that a population's conception of how the world runs plays an essential part in controlling and regulating society. This is obviously an interesting point of view. However, as he says himself, what decides the forms of these ideologies and transformations? (Hodder, 1982, p.186, 207). The solution or strategy he proposes in order to answer this question is the “contextual” approach that allows an interpretation of the values or symbols of a society based on its specific social and ecological context (Hodder, 1982, p.217). This strategy however cannot be applied to our particular research, since it deals with the analysis of iconographical material found throughout Europe, where the ecology and social structures can vary greatly from one region to the other. In any case, if we transpose Hodder’s point of view to our analysis of Celtic material, could we infer that the symbol of triplication found throughout Celtic iconography was in fact not a representation of social structure but rather an exaggerated or opposite perception of the society? There is no way we can be sure but it certainly is an important point of view to keep in mind during our analysis.

Before we attempt, in the final part of this essay, to infer some possible meaning to the Celtic iconographic representations from the early Bronze Age to the early Christian period, we will examine, in the second part of the essay, the main aspects of Celtic mythology, theogony and its perception of time and space. To begin with, however, it is important to present two important general schemes of interpretation that have been suggested in order to provide a possible interpretation of the iconographical representations of the Celtic people – these are Georges Dumézil’s triadic scheme versus the tetradic scheme proposed by Emily Lyle. These schemes are proposed to complement the already well-known tradition of triplication of deities and heroes typical of Celtic people.

Schemes of Interpretation

Most scholars in the field seem to agree that the triplication of deities was essential to the Celtic tradition. However, we are still trying to understand the meaning or reason for this triplication, which eludes us. Dumézil’s triadic scheme of interpretation is an important hypothesis, which can at least in part shed some light on the structure of the Celtic society and give a greater time depth.

Dumézil's Triadic Scheme

At the starting point of this research, my intentions were to restrict my analysis to insular Celtic iconographical material. Quite rapidly, however, one is forced to realize that insular Celtic material cannot be easily dissociated from its continental counterpart. The reason for this resides in the fact that, except for some regional and tribal variations, the Celts throughout Europe seem to have shared most of their mythology/cosmology and a stylized conception of artistic representations. Furthermore, this broadening of horizon does not end with an inclusion of Continental Celtic culture. When we begin to observe the similarities between the culture, mythology, cosmology, theogony and iconography of the Celts, the Scandinavians and the Romans, we are tempted to find a common cultural denominator. The most plausible explanation for these similarities is their Indo-European root. The French philologist Georges Dumézil, who has studied the Indo-European

mythology and languages, has come up with a tripartite pattern or scheme which seems to have been the basis of the Indo- European social and theological organization.

Dumezil was able to identify three major social castes or social layers, which consisted of the priests and rulers, the warriors and the cultivators or food producers. These three functions were also defined in the three main types of gods encountered in the Indian Veda. As seen in table 1 and 2, the gods of the first function (priests and kings), the Aditya, were celestial and cosmic projections of the human office of sovereigns, kings, priests and ministers. The second function (warriors) is symbolized by the Rudra, who were atmospheric projections (the storm) of a band of young warriors, simultaneously indispensable, fearsome and excessive, who played a great role in the expansion of the Arya. The third and last function (food producers) is symbolized by the Vasu, providers of health, material wealth and rural abundance (Dumezil, 1952: p.8). This last function is not only associated with food production but also reproduction, plant and animal fertility, bodily well being and comfort. Furthermore, Dumezil argues that these three-part divisions in mythology outlasted the tripartite division of social organization (Hodder, 1990, p.303).

Quality	Colour	Macrocosm	Mesocosm	Microcosm
1. Sacred	White	Heaven	Priests	Head
2. Physical force	Red	Atmosphere	Warrior	Upper body
3. Prosperity	Black	Earth	Food producers	Lower body

Table 1

Table 2 illustrates parallels that were drawn by Dumezil between the function of the Indian Vedic gods, the Roman and Scandinavian Eddic gods (Dumezil, 1952: pp.9, 26, 34). Dumezil found a strong parallel between the Vasu gods of the third function and a goddess Vesuna, who was in Roman inscriptions, associated with Fortuna, the provider of material wealth and fortune.

Function	Groups of gods of the Veda	Gods of the Veda	Roman gods	Scandinavian gods: Edda
1. Sacred	The Aditya(s)	Varuna or Mitra	Dius, Jupiter	Odinn or Tyr
2. Physical force	The Rudra (s)	Indra	Mars	Porr
3. Prosperity	The Vasu (s)	Goddess, Asvin twins or Nasatya	Isis or Alcis twins	Freyja or Njqrdr, Freyr

Table 2

Dumezil's triple functions based on the stratification of social classes can be observed in early Irish society, which was divided between the druids, the warrior-nobles (*flatha*) and free men (*bo-airigh*). This pattern also corresponds to Cesar's division of Gaulish society into *druides*, *equites* and *plebs*. (MacCana, 1970, p. 60)

Lyle's Tetradic Scheme

In her book, *Archaic Cosmos, Polarity, Space and Time*, Emily Lyle from Edinburgh University, has suggested that the triple function scheme proposed by Georges Dumézil was correct but incomplete to a certain extent. In Lyle's view, when we observe Roman and Celtic societies, as well as other societies around the world, we realize that the female aspect seems to be discrete but, nonetheless, an essential element within social and cosmological organization. This essential element was known to Dumézil, as he states:

“ In fact among the Germans as well as the Indo-Iranians, we can observe the following structure. As a counterbalance to the group of masculine gods, each of whom embodies distinctly and analytically one and only one of the three basic functions, there is a goddess who synthesizes these functions, who assumes and reconciles all three...” (Dumézil, 1970 p. 300).

However, the point Lyle is trying to make is that:

“If the goddess synthesizes all three functions, it seems that she is attached to the population as a whole rather than to any particular social group. She is the deity of the entire people. It should be observed that, since the goddess is present within the three functions, she need not be located separately and so her existence can easily be overlooked when triads alone are being considered. The special value of the relationship with the world quarters for students of the system lies in the fact that the requirement of relating to the tetrad of the directions means that the fourth element, the whole which completes the triad, must be made explicit.” (Lyle, 1990: pp. 2-3).

Examples of this can be found in Roman theology where, as observed in figure 1.1, the three main functions played by the gods Jupiter, Mars and Saturn or Neptune are complemented by the goddess Venus or Flora symbolizing Rome itself (Lyle, 1990: pp.10-11). In Greece, a similar pattern was encountered where male deities such as Zeus, Poseidon and Hephaistos were represented with Athena, the goddess of the Athenian city state. These examples in the Mediterranean are numerous.

Mars (Red)
Jupiter (White) Venus or Flora (Green)
Saturn or Neptune (Blue)

Figure 1.1

Plato's *Republic* was also constructed around this tetradic scheme. His ideal city was divided into three hierarchically ordered classes: 1. Philosopher-rulers, 2. Soldiers and 3. Farmers and craftsmen. This pattern was observed by Dumézil as being related to his own triadic scheme. Plato's main question was: "What is justice?" He reaches the conclusion that justice is the result of each class accomplishing its duties. In search of justice, he affirms that his perfect city would possess the four virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. These virtues are matched with each of the functions (see figure 1.2). Then, he affirms that justice does not belong to any particular class but to all three. Thus, this principle of Justice becomes the synthesis or link among these elements. (Lyle, 1990: pp.16-17).

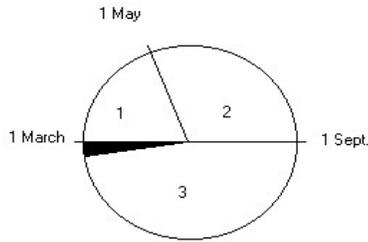


Figure: 1.4 Ancient Roman and Celtic tripartite calendar.

Later, however, the Celts as well as the Romans modified their calendar into a more symmetrical quadripartite model. This, was not only representative of the world's four quarters, as seen in the example of the Irish division of regions (see figure 1.3), but also of the main solar points of the year, the two solstices and two equinoxes. The four festivals of the Celtic year: Samain (November 1st), Imbolc (February 1st), Beltaine (May 1st) and Lughnasad (August 1st) did not correspond to the dates of the four solar points. However, they were included within each of the quarters of the year. Thus, the solar points were situated in the middle of the seasons, of which the four festival days marked the beginning (Lyle, 1990: pp.77- 79) (see fig. 1.5).

Lyle's view is that each of the quarters represented a stage in the life of a man. The first quarter symbolized his boyhood, the second his manhood before marriage, and the Nov 1st festival of Samain his marriage to the female counterpart. The third quarter symbolized his manhood after marriage. Lastly, the fourth quarter included the interlunium, which represented his death and the state or period of "being dead". This symbolization of human life can be equated to the sequence of the seasons in which the yearly cycle that was divided into bright days and dark days (corresponding to human birth and young age, and old age followed by death). This notion of dark versus bright days can be equated with the cyclical death and growth of crops (see fig 1.5 and 1.6).

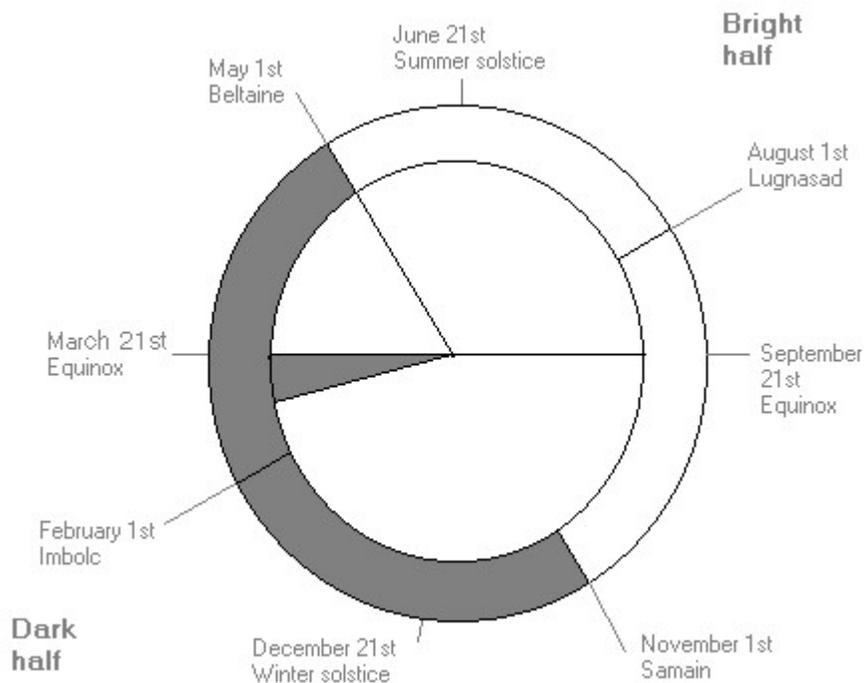


Figure: 1.5 Early tripartite versus the later quadripartite calendar.

An interesting fact that can be linked to Lyle’s hypothesis is that the Samain festival of November 1st (described by Lyle as the symbol of marriage between men and women) was also the start of the Celtic year, following an Indo-European belief that darkness preceded light. The year would have started when the days were shorter and thus during the darker half of the year. Samain was the festival or celebration of the king’s nuptial feast (Lyle, 1990: p.84). Furthermore, the association between Samain and femaleness can be observed in the Celtic custom of performing, on this day, human sacrifices to the triple goddess Brighid, which symbolically represented the whole. These sacrifices involved a triple “death” by drowning, stabbing and strangulation.

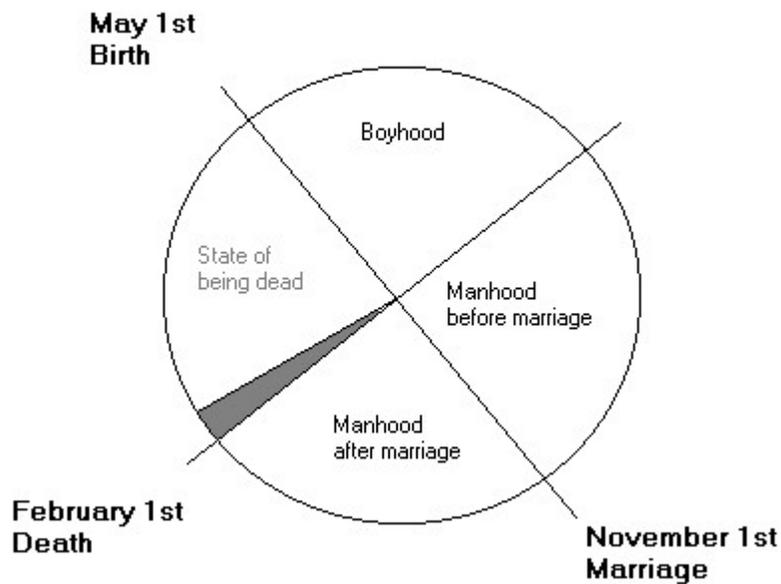


Figure: 1.6 Year and life cycles

Celtic Triple Deities and Cults

Like most early religions, the Celtic one was rich in cults and deities. In this section, we will examine some of these cults and describe briefly the main triple deities of the Celtic religion. These representations will be treated in greater depth, in the third section of the essay dealing with the actual analysis of the iconographical material.

Cult of the Head

For the Celts, the human head was an important symbol of divinity and otherworldly power. The motif of the severed head is found throughout the iconography and literary contexts from the earlier to later times. Diodorus and Strabo mentioned that severed heads of distinguished enemies were embalmed in cedar oil, preserved in chests and shown with pride as symbols of military prowess. Early Irish literature is rich in descriptions of heroes returning from battle with severed heads impaled on stakes to be placed next to their fortresses and homesteads. Archaeology suggests however that this cult even predated the arrival of Celtic people (Ross, 1967: pp.: 61,64-66,73). Many cephalic representations were actually triple, as we will see in the analysis of the material.

Horned God

Another important Celtic cult concerned horned deities. This was a current symbol in northern Europe and seems to be of proto-Celtic influence. Since horned animals, such as the stag and bull, played an important role in pre-Celtic and Celtic life from an economic point of view, this element pervaded Celtic imagery. Many zoomorphic (bull, stag, ram, boar, birds and serpents) and anthropomorphic (men, male deity)

representations are depicted with two or three horns and sometimes an erect phallus, symbolizing virility and strength (Ross, 1967: p.129). The horned god Cernunnos, "Lord of the Animals", is a typical representation of a fertility god. He seemed to have been associated with war, and was identified with the god Mars (Belatucadros) evoked as a protector of the tribe, and sometimes with the god Mercury who, apart from his chthonic associations, was perceived as protector of herds and flocks. Furthermore, the horned god was perceived as a Silvanus type of deity, which would have been associated with ventry and woods (Ross, 1967: pp.135, 155-160).

Genii Cucullati

The *genii cucullati* or "hooded spirits" pervaded Celtic iconography. These hooded spirits are almost always represented in a triple form and wearing a cloak and hood. They are often depicted next to a goddess to whom they offer homage or protection. Some British iconographical specimens are depicted holding eggs, symbols of fertility but also of death and rebirth, since an egg has to be broken to release life. Their continental counterparts are often shown alone, sometimes without a hood and/or exposing a phallus. The hood is suggested to imply a phallic imagery. *Genii cucullati* were often found at sites of healing springs and wells, which were very sacred to the Celts. It has also been suggested that the hoods represented the cloak worn by humbler people or peasants while working in the fields (Green, 1991, pp.103-104). They could have been a representation of Dumézil's third function, the food providers and the protectors of the agricultural layer of society. There is no way to be sure.

Goddesses

Goddesses played a major role in Celtic cults and the belief in their powers was very pronounced. It seems that the Celtic people were deeply concerned with the powers of the female, thus exclusive male cults such as Mithraism would not have had a long lasting appeal to them (Ross, 1967, p: 204). It is interesting that Celtic goddesses were associated with fertility, childbirth and nurturing –seen in the *deae matres*, or as goddesses of war; however, no traces are found of a goddess of love or beauty. Within iconography and mythology, more often than not, both mother and war goddesses took a triple form.

Mother- goddesses

From literary and iconographical material, we can easily deduce that Celts were concerned with the concept of protection and nurturing by mother-goddesses. This is emphasized by the depiction of infants being bathed and fed by these goddesses, or by symbols of fertility and abundance such as *cornucopia*. However, these female deities were not only perceived as nurturers but also symbolized the passage of life from youth to maturity and death, protecting Celtic people throughout their lives (Green, 1991, p.105). This is clearly visible in the iconography through the representations of triple goddesses sometimes youthful or of a more mature age performing different but connected symbolic roles. A younger goddess could be depicted as nurturing and protecting an infant, symbolizing fecundity while older goddesses would be shown with a *cornucopia* a sign of earthly riches and abundance. A third one, more mature, could be holding a scroll symbolizing the one-way direction of life, which ends by death. The

Roman worship of triple goddesses such as the Nymphs or Fates most probably influenced Celtic beliefs and iconography. It has also been suggested that the Roman *Iunones* represented *Iuno*, the Roman concept of the essential spirit of femininity (Green, 1991, p.105).

Goddesses of war

Triple goddesses of war such as the triple Macha and Morrigan, which might be similar or intertwined cults, were often depicted under zoomorphical forms, mostly ornithomorphic or in the form of horses (Ross, 1967:pp.205-6). Sometimes, they can appear in the company of the god Mars or Mercury. They represented the protection of the Celtic territory through armed fighting but also by means of magical power and incantations, in opposition to the physical force employed by men (Ross, 1967: p.226). The triple Morrigan or Macha are described in literary sources and mythology, as possessing marked sexual characteristics. These deities, which were frequently depicted in the form of ravens, crows and geese, were sometimes perceived as beautiful young women or paradoxically terror-inspiring hags using, magical incantations to destroy or lure men (Ross, 19867, p.219). It is important to specify, however, that the triple mother-goddesses - symbols of protection and fertility, played a primary role in Celtic theogony, while the war goddesses seem to have played a more secondary role (Ross, 1967; p.230).

Analysis of the iconographical material

In this section of the paper, we will be analyzing the iconographical material in relation to the known phenomenon of divine triplism and testing Lyle's tetradic scheme of interpretation against the artifactual evidence. Instead of presenting the material according to a chronological approach, the division among different themes of representation will permit a less scattered view of each of the themes discussed in the previous section. Table 3 provides a basic overview of the art styles' chronology.

In the first part of this section, we will be analyzing the triple motifs that pervaded insular as well as continental Celtic art, from the early Bronze Age to the early middle ages. Furthermore, we will be examining representations of the *genii cucullati*, the triple mother-goddesses, the tricephaloi, triple-horned animals and deities as well as triple human or divine representations.

	Eastern France	S.Germany / Switzerland	N.Italy	Jugoslavia	Dendro-chronology	Historical Events	Early Celtic Art Styles
BC	Bronze final III	Hallstatt B3 (Late Urnfields)	Villanova III (Benacci II)			Steppe nomads in Assyria	
700	Hallstatt I	Ha I Ha C1 Long swords Hill-forts	VIII IVa	Slovenia: Podzemelj 'Thraco-Cimmerian' influence			
600	Ha IIa	Ha II Ha D1 Daggers Princely graves	VIII IVb (Arnoaldi)	Stična I Novo mesto Italian influence Stična II		c.600 Etruscans at Rome Foundation of Massalia	
500	Ha IIb Les Jogasses	Ha D2 Ha D3	Certosa	Horizon with double ridged helmets Scythian influence		c.520 Foundation of Spina 513 Persians in Balkans 508 End of Etruscan rule in Rome	
400	La Tène I	LT Ia Chieftains' graves LT A	Etruscans	Altrier 464		Etruria Padana	Early style
300	La Tène I	LT Ib LT B1 Duchcov & Münsingen brooches	Celts	Hallstatt graves with 'Negau' helmets La Tène influence		387 Gaulish invasion of Italy/Pannonia Sack of Rome	
200	LT II	LT Ic LT B2	Romans	West group: Mokronog 1 East group: Belgrade 1		335 Celtic embassy to Alexander the Great 279-7 Celts in Balkans Sack of Delphi 270 Settlement of Asia Minor	'Waldalgesheim' or 'Vegetal' 'Sword' styles Early 'plastic' Late 'plastic'
100	LT III	LT II LT C1 LT C2 Oppida LT III LT D1		La Tène shields 229 Wederath 208 Fellbach 123 Cornaux 120-16 Manching 105		240/30 War of Attalos I against Galatae 233/2 Ager gallicus 225 Battle of Telamon 222 Defeat of Insubres 191 Defeat of Boii 190/81 Pergamene reliefs 124/3 Roman conquest of Gallia Narbonensis 113/101 Invasion of Cimbri & Teutones	Early insular style (Torrs-Witham)
0		LT D2 Nauheim brooches		Ehrang 70		58 Celto-Dacian wars Defeat of Helvetii 58/50 Gallic wars 52 Fall of Alesia End of Oppida 15 Alpine campaign	Later insular style (mirrors/harness mounts)
AD		LT D3		Mokronog 2-4 Belgrade 2 Mokronog 5-6 Belgrade 3		AD43 Claudian invasion of Britain	
100							Ultimate or Late N. British/Irish

Table 3 Chronology of art styles' (Megaw, 1990, p.258).

Triple motifs

In the analysis of this particular material, we will examine motifs such as the triskele and other triple decorations. When one tries to infer a meaning or to associate a cultural symbolism to purely decorative designs, one is left with no other choice but to infer their symbolic meaning, since no inscription or description of these motifs was provided (Megaw, 1989, p.19). Thus, we have to be careful to avoid over-symbolization in the interpretation, and we can only propose inferences based on mythology and on other types of triple representations. The only certainty lies in our knowledge that Celts almost systematically 'triplified' their deities and other sacred symbols. We can only infer that these triple motifs were somehow related and literally symbolized these triplicate deities.

As early as the late Neolithic, we find triple spirals pecked on stone walls of the fine collective tombs at Newgrange, Ireland. On figure 1, we can observe two triple spirals, roughly shaped as a triskele. One of these two triskeles (see fig.1 right), quite large in size, occupies a third of the high wall (Piggott, 1951, p.12). Its prominence probably means that this symbol was already an important sacred symbol in the late Neolithic, and continued to pervade the iconography of the following periods.

The decorations on the Turoe stone from Co. Galway in Ireland, (see fig.2) depicts motifs that are typical of the La Tene style (c.350 B.C on the continent). These motifs consist of triskeles found in the midst of a series of spirals and tendrils. The La Tene style remained quite alive in Ireland even in later periods. Indeed, Ireland was spared by invasions, which would have naturally brought new artistic currents that would have modified the La Tene style (Finlay, 1973, p.89). Dr Françoise Henry has suggested that these decorations were in fact protective signs (Henry, 1940, p.188 *non vidi*). Finlay on the other hand, proposes that the stone itself, probably due to its shape, may have been a phallic symbol, which was perceived as possessing special powers (Finlay, 1973, p.91). Again only inferences can be made.

Figure 3 shows a bronze and iron helmet, partly decorated with gold (4th-early 3rd century B.C.) from Amfreville, France. It is said to be the most elaborate surviving Celtic helmet (Arts Council of G.B, 1970, p.2). One of the friezes (see detail fig.3, right) is made of a wave tendril of Waldalgesheim Style. This decoration, based on a Greek motif, is found throughout Celtic Europe (Stead, 1985, p.18). An example of Style V triple motifs can be observed on figure 4, where the designs were engraved or chased on a scabbard from Hunsbury (Stead, 1985, p.21). Another example of triple motifs of Style V can be seen at the back of bronze mirrors (see fig 5) from: a) southern England, b) Colchester, c) Birdlip, Gloucestershire and d) from Holcombe. Figure 6 shows another of these mirrors from Aston (Stead, 1985, pp.7, 42 and Arts Council of G.B., 1970, p.28). On figure 7, the terminal of the Clevedon (Avon) torc is also decorated with a Style V triskele (Stead, 1985, Fig.43).

Another triskele can be seen on a fired clay mould for the head of a linch-pin (see fig. 8). This mould, as well as one for a horse-bit, was found with bone and iron modeling tools in a pit at the settlement of Gussage All Saints, Dorset. In this site, fragments of seven thousand moulds were found (Stead, 1985, p.10). This suggests that this motif was used to decorate objects of daily life and was not restricted only to tombs or shrines.

However, some of these daily life objects may have been owned only by people of a high social class, since, as we will see in the next figures, some of these pieces of jewelry or horse harness decoration were of a high quality and fine craftsmanship, and thus were probably not accessible to people of limited means.

An example of this high quality craftsmanship comes from the River Tarn in France and dates to the third century B.C. (see fig. 9). This bronze armband is decorated with high-relief triple ornament in the Plastic Style (Arts Council of G.B., 1970, p.24 and Finlay, 1973, p.74-75). It closely resembles the larger armband from Klettham, Oberbayern, Germany (see fig. 10) that also has triple high-relief motifs typical of the Plastic Style (Arts Council of G.B., 1970, p.24). Also very similar in style, the bronze fair-lead or harness-ring attached to a mask from France (see fig. 11) depicts the same high relief triple motifs, again in the Plastic Style (MacCana, 1970, p.134).

On figure 12, we can admire a simply decorated but fine piece of jewelry from the first century B.C. It is a bronze crescentic plaque (most probably a neck ornament) from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey (an important insular druidic sanctuary) with as its sole decoration a triquetral design in relief (Piggott, 1951, p.19). This motif of Style V, done in repoussé, called the 'trumpet voids' owes its name to trumpet-shaped voids created by the three branches (Stead, 1985, p.23).

Also from the first century B.C., we can see on figure 13, a bronze cauldron from Rynkeby, Denmark. On a portion of the inner panel of the cauldron, we can see an interesting type of triskele, where the branches are closely fitted together to form a perfect circle. Finlay finds an apparent oriental influence in this piece of iconography, particularly the masks depicted on other portions of the cauldron (Finlay, 1973, p.57).

A bronze bracelet with a similar type of tight triskele, made from a coiled strip was found at River Deel, Ballymahon, Co. Meath, Ireland (see fig. 14). These two triskeles, now in false relief, were originally set against a background of red enamel (MacCana, 1970, p.136).

A uniquely shaped bronze harness-mount was found at Sudeley Castle, Gloucester, and dates to the first century A.D. (see fig.15). It is decorated with two sunken circles in which two three-pointed geometrical lobes were set against a stippled background (Piggott, 1951, p.19 and Stead, 1985, p.64).

Dating to the same period, a wooden tankard was found in peat bog – probably as a votive offering, from Trawsfynydd, Merionethshire, Wales (see fig. 16). It is said to be one of the finest achievements of La Tene art in Western Europe because of its harmonious simplicity and balance. The only decoration consists of a bronze handle with four triskele-roundels held to the tankard by two spherical-headed pins. Each pair of roundels is identical and was probably cast in the same two-piece mould (Piggott, 1951, p.25 and Arts Council of G.B., 1970, p.20).

A bronze triquetral ornament (see fig.17) from the second century B.C. (South Shields, Northumberland) either served as a brooch or a harness-decoration. This type of ornament was quite popular in the Roman military world of that period. It shows an openwork 'trumpet' motif. It was found at the Roman fort of Arbeia in Britain. However, Piggott suggests that its place of manufacture was probably Northern Gaul or the Rhineland, where this type appears most frequently (Arts Council of G.B., 1970, p.32).

From Norrie's Law, Fife, Scotland (7th century A.D.) comes an interesting piece of Pictish art (see fig.18). It consists of two almost identical silver plaques engraved with symbols and double triskeles (Finlay, 1973, p.116).

Again from Scotland (Birsay, Orkney), dating to the 8th-10th century A.D., a carved wooden box was found (see fig.19). On its sides is a frieze of carved stylized triskeles. This period of Celtic art was under many artistic influences: Mediterranean, Byzantine and Germanic. We can observe in this period, a re-emergence of the La Tene style with flowing linear patterns (Finlay, 1973, p.156). It is interesting to compare the motifs found on this figure (19) with the ones on figure 20, which were painted on an earthenware vase from Prunay, Marne, France (c.300B.C.) (Finlay, 1973, p. 54).

Another piece of iconography dating from this period (see fig. 21) is a shrine or reliquary found in Norway but which, most probably, was made in Ireland in the 8th century A.D. This reliquary, inlaid with enamel and garnets, is decorated with three triskeles encircled in high relief (Finlay, 1973, p.124).

The following figures (22, 23, 24) dating to the Christian period show an extraordinary ability in working with the typical Celtic motifs (triskeles and interlacing) in a very intricate and minute way. Such decoration is particularly prominent in the decorations of the Book of Durrow, Northumbria (second half of 7th century A.D.) (see fig. 22) (Meehan, 1996, p.128). In the Lichfield gospels from Wales (8th century A.D.) (see fig. 23), the Chi-Rho page is less charged in terms of decoration than figure 22, but is still an example of great craftsmanship with its flowing triskeles and interlacing (Finlay, 1973, p.145). Finally, in figure 24, we can observe a representation of St. Matthew from the Book of Kells, Dalriada, Iona, Ireland from 900 A.D. The decoration seems more contained within the different frames of the page, than in the previous two figures. Again, the typical triskeles and animal representations are found (Finlay, 1973, p.145).

It is interesting to examine a series of figures depicting motifs that are associated with birds, such as cranes, geese or swans. As we know, these birds played an important part in Celtic mythology and symbology. They were mostly associated with the triple goddesses of war Macha or Morrigan etc. It is thus tempting to infer that the following figures had some sort of symbolic association with war and its related deities.

An example of this can be seen in figure 25, from Carniola, northern Italy. We can observe the cheek-piece of a bronze helmet decorated with cranes around three dots. Ross suggests that since these egrets or cranes have been represented on other martial objects such as shields, and are known to be symbols of war, they may have been represented as luck-bringers, who inflicted misfortune to the enemies of its owner (Ross, 1967, p.280). Another triple decoration with swans comes from Radovesice, Czechoslovakia (c. 400 B.C.) (see fig. 26). It is a pottery dish ornamented with three red-painted swans. Not only were the birds were associated with war, but the color red was also an important Celtic symbol of death and disaster (Green, 1998, p. 175 and Ross, 1967, p.327). Furthermore, we can see on figure 27, the top of an iron scabbard decorated with a triple bird design (Obermenzing, Germany: c. 200 B.C.).

Lastly, a unique piece of iconography has been found at Chester, England. It is a clay triple-vase on a hollow ring base (see figure 28). Green suggests that it might have been associated with the worship of triads of gods in their triple form (Green, 1983, p.57).

When we observe the figures, which depict triple birds, we are tempted to associate these birds with the triple war or death goddesses, Macha and Morrigan. This is not only suggested by the fact that throughout Celtic mythology these goddesses are seen as interchangeable with cranes, ravens and swans (symbols of war or death), but also because most of these representations were depicted on objects or with colors that are related to war or fighting, such as helmets or scabbards. It is my belief that this triplication of a war goddess (Morrigan or Macha) should be associated with the mother goddesses to form a polarity. On the one hand, the mother goddesses would protect and nurture humankind in a peaceful way, and on the other hand, the war goddesses (represented by these birds) would act as protectors of the territory and the people, mostly the soldiers, in a more aggressive way through magic and the terror they inspired (MacCana, 1970, p. 86). The reason why the Macha triple deity should be associated with the mother goddesses in this role of wholeness is seen in Irish mythology where she is associated with the three social functions of Dumézil. Sometimes, she is associated with the sacerdotal class, other times she is a warrior and queen and still others a mother and a peasant woman (Philibert, 1998, pp. 170-171).

If we can suppose that the triple motifs were in fact symbolized triplications of Celtic deities, it would be interesting to push the idea further. If we observe the shape of the triskele, it is evident that its three branches are not placed randomly, but stem from a central or pivotal point. This motif is contained within a circle, which is not always depicted, but can easily be imagined. Obviously this can be the result of simple aesthetical balance and harmony. However, as Lyle mentioned, the triplicity is not all, because there is a fourth element that always represents the whole. Thus, the stemming point as well as the frame surrounding the triple motif could represent this fourth and complementary element. It could represent the female aspect complementing the triple male deity, or simply be the discrete representation of the deity working as a unit.

Genii Cucullati

As explained in the previous section, the *genii cucullati* seem to have been associated with fertility, water and agriculture. However, it is still a matter of speculation (Ross, p.380, MacCana, p.74). The British *genii cucullati* representations were almost always triple. About ten of these groups were found in Gloucestershire (south-west Britain) where they are often associated with the triple mother-goddesses cult.

However, figure 29 is one of the few representations from the Northern part of Britain that comes from Housesteads, Northumberland. It shows a coarse, frontal scene, in which it is quite difficult to ascertain a gender to these hooded deities. Ross suggests that their *cochull* or hood was frequently mentioned in Irish mythology and that they were given a supernatural significance (Ross, 1967, p.380).

Figure 30, from the southwest of Britain, shows the three hooded deities represented in a schematic way, different from the representations of the Cirencester (Corinium Dobunorum), Gloucestershire region. Green suggests that these deities not only may

have been associated with prosperity, fertility and well-being, but perhaps possessed apotropaic virtues- i.e. the power to avert evil (Green, 1983, pp.56-57, 74).

Two monuments in the Gloucestershire region seem to suggest that the *genii cucullati* may have been connected with the war god and his capacity to heal. This can be seen in figure 31, discovered in a well at Lower Slaughter, Gloucester. What seems to be a warrior or a war deity, with curly hair and wearing the short belted kilt-typical of these deities, stands close to the three *genii*. Above the figures, are depicted a rosette and two ravens, which are associated with war in Celtic mythology (Ross, 1967, p.187-188). The healing virtue of the triple deities is suggested in figure 33. This piece of iconography from *Aquae Sulis* (Bath), Somerset, depicts a horned war god and his seated consort accompanied by a ram and three hooded deities. Ross suggests that the ram and triple deities are associated with healing cults, related to the Celtic war god in his role as warrior-healer (Ross, 1967, p.188).

In figure 34, from Cirencester, Gloucestershire (2nd -3rd century A.D.), the *genii cucullati* are depicted with a seated goddess. It is suggested by Green that they were probably “subservient” to the mother-goddess and “enhancing her symbolism of plenty”. It is suggested that the *genii* on this figure are defending the goddess and her powers. This is supported by the fact that two of the hooded deities are depicted carrying swords. Green, on the other hand, suggests that the *genii cucullati* represented the martial aspect of the goddess. This is supported by the fact that the mother-goddesses in their triple form seem to have been worshipped by the soldiers of the Roman army in Britain and Rhineland (Green, 1996, p.36). Finally, figure 35, from Daglingworth near Cirencester, also depicts the triple hooded deities standing next to a seated mother-goddess and appear to either give or receive something from her (Ross, 1967, p.211).

To conclude, it is interesting to note that all the symbols depicted in relation to the *genii cucullati* are always related to healing, fertility, abundance etc. As we mentioned in the first section of the paper, Dumézil’s third function corresponds very closely to the function of these hooded deities. Could they be the representation or the protectors of the food producing class or simply the representation of health, prosperity and food production? Again we can only speculate. The fact that the *genii* are often depicted with a female deity could suggest that she represented the whole of this triple unit.

Triple mother-goddesses

With the triple mother-goddesses we find the fundamental Celtic belief in the threefold power of divinities (Ross, 1967, p.207). On figure 36, from Cirencester, Gloucestershire, are depicted the three *deae matres*. Two of them are holding trays of fruits and one a tray of cakes or bread loaves (Green, 1983, p.52 and MacCana, 1970, p.88). A similar, but cruder, representation of seated mother-goddesses is seen holding trays of goods in figure 37. These trays of goods were most probably symbols of abundance and fertility.

The next three figures all depict triple female goddesses of very peculiar and heterogeneous style. The first piece was found in *Alauna* (Maryport), Cumberland. This figure (fig. 38) represents three naked goddesses each one placed in a different niche and each with their hands placed in different ways suggesting different attitudes. It is far from being a typical representation of triple goddesses, which are elsewhere depicted clothed

(Ross, 1967, p.214). This singularity remains unexplained and may be due to temporal variation. Figure 39, from Lund church near Kirkham, Lancashire, depicts quite crudely, a group of three standing goddesses. Two groups of three dancing women are also depicted on the right and left lateral faces. Ross suggests that this altar probably came from the Ribchester Roman fort twelve miles away (Ross, 1967, p.207). The last of these unique depictions comes from Bath (see fig. 40). It depicts, on a schist plaque, a group of three females with bare heads and crude features, standing with three different arm positions (Green, 1991, p.106).

Figure 41, from Carrawburgh, Northumberland, depicts a triple deity, which seems to be associated with water since the deities are seen holding pitchers, some of which are overturned, letting the water flow. This piece of iconography was found in the sacred well of Coventina, a typically Celtic goddess. Next to this sacred well was found an altar to the Roman “Nymphs”, which were always represented in a triple form. It has been proposed that a syncretism between the Nymphs and Coventina took place in this representation. However, Green argues that this representation is only a typical triplication of the goddess Coventina (Green, 1996, pp.99-100). Another representation of nymphs comes from High Rochester (Bremenium), Northumberland (see fig.42) (Ross, 1967, p.207).

The triple-goddess representations were not typical to all regions of the continent. It is mostly in Burgundy and in Germany that the triplism for mother-goddesses was found. We will now analyze some material from these two regions.

From the Roman–Gaulish town of Alesia in Burgundy, came a piece of iconography (see fig. 43) depicting the triple deities accompanied by a group of naked infants playing at their feet, one of them sitting in a boat accompanied by a swan. The three goddesses are of distinctive ages. The central figure is the youngest, while the one on the extreme left is the oldest. The central and right figures (the two younger of the three) show a bare right breast, as if to suckle infants. The oldest is fully clothed and wears a crown. Green suggests that this crown might reflect her status as the personification of Alesia herself (Green, 1996, p.108). Furthermore, Green suggests that like other Burgundian representations, these three goddesses may represent the three ages of womanhood: nubile youth, maturity and old age, thus, representing the main periods of human life cycle (both male and female). They were perhaps perceived as guardians of children until death and beyond. This is suggested by the fact that their images are found in graves, underground rooms and caves (Green, 1996, p.108).

Another Burgundian representation (fig. 44) depicts three seated goddesses, each of them with the right breast bare for the suckling of infants. The deity on the left is carrying a small child in her arms, the one in the center unrolls a swathing-band or napkin while the third holds a basin and sponge. Green suggests that these domestic scenes may have a deeper meaning relating to the function of the goddesses. She suggests that the wash-basin may become an offering dish and the napkin can be turned into a scroll, which reflects the idea of a spirit of destiny, like the Roman *Parcae* (the Fates), unrolling the scroll of life and weighing human souls. Thus, Green suggests that the Burgundian mother-goddesses not only were in control of human fertility and the protection and nurturance of children, but also were responsible for the passage between life and death (Green, 1996, pp.108-109).

We move on to the analysis of the Rhennish material from Germany. Figure 45 (1st- 2nd century A.D.) depicts three small clay goddesses, holding fruit, grain and coins on their lap. The central figure is younger and shorter than the other two, who are wearing the typical beehive-shaped Rhennish headdress (Green, 1996, p.72). On figure 46, we can observe another group of female goddesses that differ slightly from figure 45, since the central figure seems older and wears the Rhennish headdress, while she is flanked by two younger deities who wear their hair long and loose.

Figure 47, which is similar to figure 45, depicts a young woman flanked by the two older females with the bonnet. The three of them are sitting on a finely carved altar with inscriptions indicating that they were the *matrones Aufaniae*. In these Rhennish representations, the dedications inform us that the goddesses were local topographical spirits named after this particular locality, even if they all shared the same physical attributes (Green, 1991, p.106). It would seem that high officials or army officers within the Roman administration often set up these altars to indigenous deities. These deities in the Rhennish region were mostly associated with food (fruits, bread) or money, but not with human fertility and activities related to the nurturing of infants, as seen elsewhere in the Celtic world. Mostly floral and faunal symbolism pervaded these representations (Green, 1991, p.106). In the region of Pesch, a sanctuary was visited by pilgrims who worshipped representations of these triple goddesses who had bread for an emblem. These pilgrims seem to have been mainly soldiers in the Roman army and bread was the staple diet of the legionary (Green, 1996, p.110).

Two British figures which do not depict three identical deities are interesting in the light of the idea that soldiers, warriors, or war gods were associated with a female, possibly mother or wife, figure that acted as protector or counterpart. On figure 48 from the Bon Marche site at Gloucester, Gloucestershire, there is a representation of the god Mercury accompanied by two female figures (Ross, 1967, p.210). Another figure with a similar theme (fig. 49), from Easton Grey near Malmesbury, Wiltshire, shows three very similar male figures standing next to a seated female. Ross suggests that a parallel can be drawn with the Irish tradition. In this tradition or mythology, a group of three heroes, sometimes brothers would be born at a single birth and would bear the same name. One of them would be married to a woman but the trio would act as a single unit (Ross, 1967, pp.211-212).

It is important to recognize that, like the *genii cucullati*, these mother-goddesses are associated with fertility, abundance and healing. They are also depicted as the nurturers of humankind and as responsible for their protection and destiny throughout their lives. Present and protecting people, at birth, death and during their whole lives, might these mother-goddesses have symbolized the concept of wholeness, the fourth element of Lyle's tetradic scheme? These mother goddesses are often represented with other deities who seem to pertain both to the third function (*genii cucullati*) and second function (warrior gods), thus emphasizing this concept of wholeness.

Tricephaloi

When we analyze the tricephaloi of the insular as well as continental regions, we notice strong variability in style. Some sculptures depict three distinct heads attached to a single

body, each facing in a different direction. Sometimes only three faces are depicted, which can have individual features. Some show triple faces which share the same eyes or nose to form intertwined figures or optical illusions. It seems undeniable that these triple representations have some sort of connection with the cult of the head, typical of the Celtic people. Since inscriptions did not accompany most of these pieces of iconography –being either absent or lost, is it difficult to infer if they represented the severed heads of enemies or the typical triplication of a Celtic god. In any case it is interesting that no tricephalos represents female heads or faces.

We will start with the analysis of material from France, where the tricephaloi are more common. On figure 50, we can see a tricephalos from Condat, France, where three male heads share the same body. Each of the three bearded figures is looking in a different direction. Furthermore, each of these figures has holes on the head (now empty) in order to insert antlers. Another tricephalos is depicted sharing one body on a vase from Bavai, north of France (Fig. 51).

Similarly, figure 52, from Autun (Saône-et-Loire), France, depicts a tricephalic deity - with two small heads protruding on each side of the main central one. Above the forehead of the larger and central head, two holes are found for the insertion of antlers. This deity is wearing a long sleeveless garment, a torc around his neck and a bracelet around his wrist. He is feeding two ram-headed serpents that are encircling his body. Above the head of the serpents, the torc emblem is depicted again (MacCana, 1970, p.45). Because the figure is seated in the 'Buddhic' position, typical of that deity on many iconographical representations (Green 1991, p.101), we can safely infer that it is a representation of the antlered god Cernunnos.

Another piece of iconography from France (Beaune, Burgundy) (see fig. 52) shows a relief with, in the center, a triple headed deity attached to a single body, flanked on the right by an antlered god, and on the left by another deity. Green suggests that the Aedui and Lingones tribes of Burgundy worshipped this deity depicted as a tricephaloi. Furthermore, it seems that this deity was called Cernunnos, as it is written on another monument, which also depicted this deity accompanied by a semi-zoomorphic antlered god and a hooved deity (Green, 1991, p.101).

Figure 53 from Reims in France, depicts another tricephalos of which we can only observe one of the faces in the frontal view. He is depicted wreathed with a leaf crown. Ross suggests that the tricephalos in Northern France and probably of all the Celtic ones are depictions of the triplication of the tribal god.

From the Remi territory (north-east Gaul), comes a coin decorated with three beardless heads seen in profile, accompanied by a snake (see fig. 55). Again, Ross suggests the manifestation of triplication of a deity (Ross, 1967, p. 78 and Green, 1991, p.101). Figure 56 also depicts a tricephalos from Reims, France. These bearded figures have intertwined facial traits; the central figure's eyes being shared by the right and left figures. They are again wreathed with the bay-leaf crown, typical symbols of the Celtic tribal god of this northeastern region of France (Green, 1991, p.101).

When we turn to the Danish tricephaloi, we are intrigued by a triple head with a single body depicted in a position of attack or defense. He is seen pointing an axe towards wild

animals (see fig. 57). This scene is depicted on the horn of a head-armor or decoration for a pony. The symbolic or meaning of this figure, man or god, still eludes scholars (Ross, 1967, p. 78).

Another Danish piece of iconography comes from Jutland in Denmark. Figure 58, shows a tricephalos dating from the Iron Age. The three figures are facing three opposite directions. Ross suggests that since they resemble later Danish head representations that had the power to avert evil, these earlier ones probably served as talismans (Ross, 1967, pp.119-120). It is interesting to notice the similarity between the Danish and Irish tricephalos style, as we will see in the following paragraph, where the figures share the same beardless and hairless features.

The Irish tricephalos mostly date from the Iron Age and, like the Danish ones, are characterized by the round aspect of the triple heads. Figure 59 a tricephalos from Corleck, Co. Cavan, Ireland, depicts three clean shaved and hairless figures, which are looking in opposite directions. Their closely-set but wide eyes, narrow mouth and long narrow nose are typical of Celtic representations. A hole found at the base of the tricephalos suggests that it was originally attached to a stone pillar or platform on which it might have been worshipped (Ross, 1967, p.75).

A similar piece of iconography was found in Woodlands, Co. Donegal, Ireland (see fig. 60), built into a wall. The two larger faces definitely date on stylistic grounds from the Iron Age period, as does the smaller one, which is cut on the left side of the front face. The three faces differ significantly from each other; however, Ross judges that they seem to be stylistically related (Ross, 1967, p.75).

When we observe the British material - by comparison with the unity within the tricephaloi material of northeast Gaul and the Iron Age material from Denmark and Ireland- we find that it is more stylistically heterogeneous. The longer time period over which these artifacts were produced are mostly responsible for this heterogeneity. However, the fact remains that genuinely British tricephaloi are quite rare and most had a Gaulish provenance (Ross, 1967, p.74).

One of these British tricephaloi has been claimed to come from Sutherland, Scotland (see fig. 61). It seems to have typical Celtic features: prominent eyes, drooping triangular moustache, straight and narrow mouth and wedge-shaped nose. The three faces are distributed round the sides and are separated by an equal-armed cross, which is the reason for which the head has been said to date from Christian times. Professor Kenneth Jackson has suggested that these "crosses" might be ears. Ross seems to find the portrayal of ears in this fashion quite unusual, but she does not reject the hypothesis (Ross, 1967. p.74). At the top of the head is a conical cup more than two inches in depth, which means, as Ross suggests, that this tricephalos served as a portable shrine use for libations. The fact that it is made of coarse-grained granite suggests that its actual provenance was not Scotland but rather the continent, probably Gaul, during the Roman occupation or Viking times. Ross suggests also that it probably dates from the Christian era. Yet it displays some similarities with the La Tene style of metal mask from which it derives its ancestry (Ross, 1967, pp.74-75).

Another tricephalos, from La Pouquelaie, Guernsey (see fig. 62), has strong affinities with the Gaulish ones. It is depicted with three different heads attached to a bust of gray-granite. Stylistically, it can be dated to the 1st century A.D., immediately prior to, or in the early period of the Roman occupation of Britain (Ross, 1967, p.76).

Figure 63 found at Llandinam Church, Monmouthshire, Wales, was fashioned from wood. The heads are carved in high relief and, like one of the tricephaloi from southeastern Gaul, the central figure - the only bearded one - shares an eye with each of the flanking figures. The actual history of this artifact is obscure. It was found hanging by a nail on a wall of the church. We do not have dates for it. It could have been a representation of the Christian Trinity. Ross, however, affirms that stylistically it is not the typical way the Trinity was represented (Ross, 1967, p.77).

Another tricephalos was part of a capital of the basilica in Wroxeter (Viroconium), Shropshire (see fig. 64). It was fashioned from a block of grey sandstone and unclassical both in execution and conception. Ross suggests that it is clearly the work of a Celtic artist and the figure represents some local deity. Since the lower part of the faces is damaged, it is difficult to infer if they were bearded or not. An independent figure was found not far from the tricephaloi. It is difficult to affirm whether that independent figure was in fact originally part of the triple group (Ross, 1967, pp.76-77).

When we observe the contexts in which the tricephaloi are found, they are often associated with cult centers, shrines or libations, as well as with the god Cernunnos, one of the leading Celtic deities, who was related to venery and hunting. Green notes that ancient writers such as Arrian mention that, among the Celts, hunting as well as warfare were activities closely related to rituals (Green, 1996, p. 28). It might be inferred that these tricephaloi were the triplication of either a leader god or sacerdotal figures. That obviously could represent the first function of social organization (kings and priests). Strangely enough, however, unlike the other type of representations, the tricephaloi are never depicted in the company of a female deity. One of the possible explanations for this would be that, even if women held an important place in Celtic society, they were not usually associated with leading, sacerdotal and warfare activities.

Triple horned animals

In this section, we will examine iconographical representations of triple-horned animals. In the early days, composites of animals were found, such as the one on figure 65, depicting a three-horned bird beast from Urnfield Europe. However, even if some representations of triple-horned horses (Provence) and boars (Burgundy) have been found, most triple-horned zoomorphic representations consisted of bulls.

About forty examples of triple-horned bulls have been recovered in eastern Gaulish contexts –favored by the Sequani and Lingones tribes. They were mostly made of bronze, occasionally of stone or clay, and were most probably sacred since they were recovered in shrines and graves, sometimes with an associated dedication (Green, 1991, p.102). It has been proposed by Stephanie Boucher (Boucher, 1976, pp.170ff) that the Gauls copied the style of Mediterranean bulls, which sometimes were represented with two horns, between which stood a bird, an image that the Celts transformed or adapted to their own patterns of triplication. Green suggests that the third horn of the bull was an

intensification of the power of fertility and aggression that Celts associated with horns. The bull itself was a symbol of power, virility and invincibility (Green, 1991, p.103).

Apart from the Gaulish specimens, we find a few British triple-horned bulls, such as figure 66, made of clay, which was retrieved from a child's grave at Colchester. Another interesting British specimen comes from a shrine at Maiden Castle, Dorset (4th century A.D.) (see fig. 67). This strange, silver-washed bronze triple-horned bull carries on his back the remains of a group of triple-goddesses. It has been associated with the Gaulish carving of 'Tarvostrigaranus' ('the bull with three cranes'); a large bull represented with three egrets perched on his back (Green, 1991, p.103). Ross has pointed out that in Irish mythology women could interchange shape with cranes and *vice versa* (Ross, 1967, p.282).

One unique and interesting figure comes from Hafenturm, Germany (1st century A.D.). It depicts a triple horned bronze human head with a little sphere at the tip of each horn (see fig. 68). It is one of the rare three-horned anthropomorphic representations (Green, 1998, p. 240).

It is known that the bull was a very powerful and important symbol in Celtic society as well as in many other cultures. Not only were cattle an extremely important economic asset for the Celts, but this animal was the living representation of power, aggressiveness and fertility. It has been suggested many times that the horn was a phallic symbol (related to fertility and strength) - thus the triple horns would have been, again, an example of triplication of a sacred and meaningful symbol.

Other triple anthropomorphic representations

In this last section, we will examine three types of triple anthropomorphic representations that do not fall into the categories of the triple *genii cucullati* or triple mother-goddesses. In the first part, we will examine pieces of iconography that represent identical triple anthropomorphic bodies, while, in the second part, we will look at identical triple human heads, as well as non-identical ones. In the last section, we examine some examples of early Christian crosses, on which often appear identical triple human figures.

Let us first examine the identical triple human representations. The antlered-god Cernunnos (see p.11) was a major Celtic deity that pervades the continental iconography. His triplication, however, is uncommon. Figure 69 is a Rumanian example. It depicts three identical crude horned figures, surrounded by vertical striped and zigzagged motifs. It decorates the bronze strip of a sword scabbard dating to La Tene III. Another, specimen (see fig. 70), from Hallstatt, Austria, depicts on a sword, three identical figures armed with shields and spears. It is difficult to be certain whether they represent the triplication of a war god or simply human warriors. However, it would be tempting to associate them with a war deity when we observe other pieces of iconography that depict a triple war deity in the later periods. An example is figure 71, where each figure of a trio of war gods from a well at Lower Slaughter, Gloucestershire, is seen holding a shield and sword. Ross suggests that its association with the Roman war god Mars, was a convenient Roman way to associate the chief god of the Roman armies with an ancient Celtic deity that probably possessed very similar attributes (Ross, 1967, p.168).

Some identical triple heads were found in Britain. The first group comes from Welwyn, Hertfordshire (1st century A.D.) (see fig. 72) and depicts three independent identical male

masks which can be associated with the typical representation of Celtic chieftains – characterized by their hair combed back and long heavy moustaches. These bronze mounts were found in a burial next to fire-dogs and other objects (Piggott, 1951, pp.24-25). Figure 73, from Marson, shows, on a sword, three identical heads. Could they also be associated with their owner, maybe a chieftain, or, simply as we have seen before, with the triplism of the Celtic war god? There is no way to be sure.

On the portico of the Celto-Ligurian temple of Roquepertuse (Bouches-du-Rhône) (3rd-4th century B.C.) (see fig. 74), each of the three pillars was furnished with three niches for human skulls. On top of the central pillar stands a great goose. We have seen in the previous section that the goose was a symbol of war, like the crow, and that the Celts had the habit of exposing the severed heads of their conquered enemies (MacCana, 1970, p.104). Another piece of iconography (see fig. 75) showing three heads was found in the marshes at the source of the Seine River, in the vicinity of the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Sequana, the goddess of the source. This sanctuary was a therapeutic center and this object, as well as many others, would have been *ex voto* offerings to the deity (MacCana, 1970, p.57). Again the meaning of the three faces is not evident. Can we assume that, as Ross suggested (see p.15), that these figures, similar to the *genii cucullati* but without the hood, served as warrior-healer deities? Again, we can only infer.

Pottery vessels seem to have been a medium for the expression of native traditions and superstitions during the Roman period (Ross, 1967, p.102). They depict cruder, triple non-identical figures. An example of this is figure 76, from Burgh by Sands, Cumberland, of a pot decorated with two heads and a bust. One of the heads seems to be coiffed with a sort of hood that may have some sort of relation with the *genii cucullati*. However, no inferences have been proposed for this figure, since it does not fit with typical Celtic iconography. Another one of these cruder faces comes from Glauberg, a hill-fort in Hesse, Germany, (see fig. 77). We can observe three crude figures on the fragmentary remains of a bronze torc (Jacobsthal, 1941, p.11). Again, their meaning escapes us.

Finally the last pieces of iconography, which depict identical and triple anthropomorphic figures, are found on the early Christian crosses of Ireland. Figure 78, from Carndonagh Donegal, depicts three almost identical figures on the bottom frieze. Since it is dated to the early Christian period, we could infer that these figures represent either the Trinity or some biblical or apostolic figures, as in figures 79 and 80, respectively from Drumcliff (Co. Sligo: 10th century A.D.) and Muiredach (Monasterboice, Co. Louth: 10th century A.D.). Could they be the representation of Christianized native pagan triple deities? Again we can only infer.

The material in this last section is not representative of a particular deity but seems to depict different cults noted in the previous sections, such as those involving the triplication of the god Cernunnos and the war gods, and probably the *genii cucullati*. The Celto-Ligurian portico, however, seems to indicate the presence of a cult of the head, probably associated with the severed heads of defeated enemies.

Conclusion

The concept that links all the iconographical material that we have analyzed is the triplication of Celtic deities. We have tried to understand the reason for this triplication. The tetradic scheme proposed by Lyle, that encompasses the triple function scheme of Dumézil, emphasizes the discrete fourth dimension of Celtic society, that is, the role of females, as women and deities, symbolizing the people belonging to all three estates.

I believe that a pattern of polarity emerges from this analysis of the material. On one hand, the mother goddesses, symbolizing fertility, nurturance and earthly abundance, protected the people throughout their lives and were responsible for their destiny. On the other hand, the war goddesses were responsible for the protection of the territory and soldiers against the enemies.

These female deities (mostly the mother goddesses) are seen accompanying deities who correspond to the functions of Dumézil, that is, the *genii cucullati*, associated with the fertility of the land and healing; thus, with the third function related to food producers and bodily comfort. Secondly, the mothers are also associated with what seem to be war deities or warriors, maybe heroes of the mythologies corresponding to the second function of Dumézil. Interestingly enough, no female deities accompany deities related to the first function of rulers and priests.

Three possible explanations can be provided for this occurrence. Primarily, it is possible that the representatives of the first function are not made clear to us and they could be symbolized under the form of either the Cernunnos god or the tricephaloi. Secondly, since women were not associated with the positions of rulers and priests, they would not be represented in their company. Thirdly, it is possible that the unification of the leader or ruler deity, with his female counterpart, was not depicted in a triple form. We know from the Celtic calendar that at Samain, at the beginning of the Celtic year, the king celebrated his nuptial feast. This could have been the symbolization of the marriage of the leader with its territory or land, symbolized by a female deity, a concept that is often celebrated in Irish mythology.

It should be kept in mind that, as Sjoestedt mentions, deities were not necessarily titular deities but were representations of religious and societal values that were depicted differently in different times and localities. Sometimes, the actual name or features of these deities differed but the symbolic attributes or values remained, as if coming from "the same generative impulse" (Sjoestedt, 1982, p.39).

The study of symbolism in culture is mostly tackled by post-processualists. Those who try to find a common ground between processualism and post-processualism propose direct historical approach as a possible solution to this question of the meaning/role of symbolism in a society. We cannot however use this solution since modern European society has changed greatly since Celtic times. Therefore, one is left with two possible viewpoints on the purpose of symbolism. Either, the iconographical symbolism reflects cultural and religious values or on the contrary, as Hodder proposes, symbols are a mask, an exaggeration or a contradiction of the societal values. The analysis of the material does not permit us to support either of these viewpoints exclusively. On the contrary, we are tempted to see these two viewpoints as complementary since symbols can play

different and complex roles in a society. Some serve as regulators/reflectors of societal values and others seem to contradict or mask these same values.

I am conscious that the majority of hypotheses proposed within the Celtic iconography rely mostly on inferences derived either from ancient texts that have their own biases or on the analysis of a limited bank of archaeological material. Thus, I believe that it is mostly through the recovery and analysis of new iconographical material that we will be able to have a clearer picture of the symbolism of this triplication.

Figures



Figure 1: Carvings on stone from New Grange and Loughcrew, Ireland, c.1800-1500 B.C. (Piggott, 1951, plate 2 and 4).



Figure 2: Turoe stone from Co. Galway, Ireland (Finlay, 1973, Fig. 26).



Figure 3: Bronze and iron helmet (detail right) from Amfreville, France (Arts Council of G.B., 1970, Fig. 8).



Figure 4: Style V decoration on a scabbard from Hunsbury, Northants. (Stead, 1985, Fig. 26b).

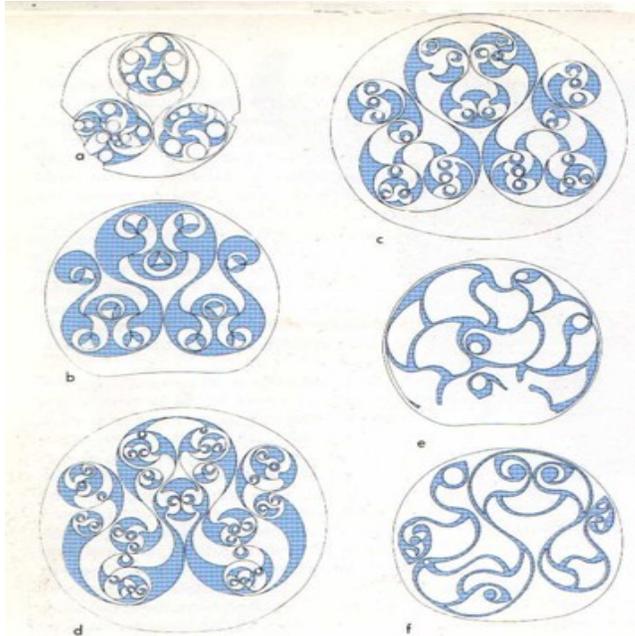


Figure 5: Decoration on the back of mirrors from: a) Southern England b) Colchester, c) Birdlip, d) Holcombe (Stead, 1985, Fig. 56a-d).



Figure 6: Decoration on back of a bronze mirror from Aston, Herts. (Stead, 1985, Fig. 5).



Figure 7: Terminal of the Clevedon torc with triskele motif of Style V (Stead, 1985, p.33).



Figure 8: Fired clay mould of a head of a linch-pin from Gussage All Saints, Dorset (Stead, 1985, Fig. 8).



Figure 9: Bronze armlet from River Tarn, France, 3rd century B.C. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 36).



Figure 10: Bronze armlet from Klettham, Germany, 3rd century B.C. (Arts Council of G.B., 1970, Plate 125)



Figure 11: Bronze fair-lead, or harness ring with mask from France (MacCana, 1970, p.134).



Figure 12: Bronze crescentic plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey, 1st century B.C. (Piggott, 1951, Fig. 42).



Figure 13: Portion of inner panel of a bronze cauldron from Rynkeby, Denmark, 1st century B.C. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 20 below).



Figure 14: Bronze bracelet with triskele from River Deel, Ballymahon, Co. Meath, Ireland (MacCana, 1970, p.136).

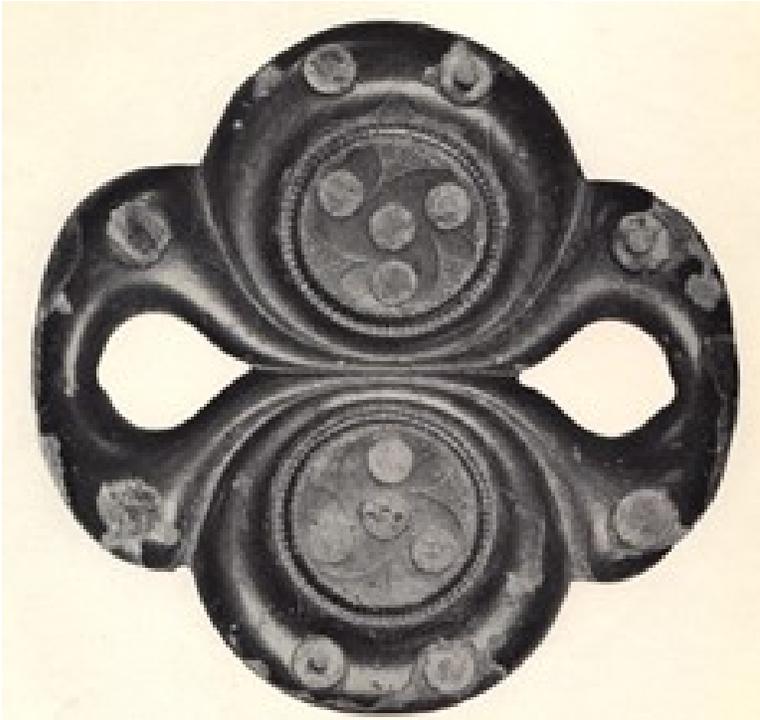


Figure 15: Bronze enamelled ornament from Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham, 1st century A.D. (Piggott, 1951, Fig. 44).



Figure 16: Bronze-plated wooden tankard from Trawsfynydd, Wales, 1st century A.D. (Piggott, 1951, Fig.73).



Figure 17: Bronze triquetra ornament from South Shields, Northumb., 2nd century A.D.
(Arts Council of G.B., 1970, Fig. 166).



Figure 18: Pictish silver plates from Norrie's Law, Fife, Scotland, 7th century A.D.
(Finlay, 1973, Plate 67).



Figure 19: Carved wooden box from Birsay, Orkney, Scotland, 8th–10th century A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 97).



Figure 20: Painted earthenware vase from Prunay, Marne, France, c.300 B.C. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 18).



Figure 21: Shrine or reliquary, inlaid with enamel and garnets found in Norway but made in Ireland, 8th century

A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 74).

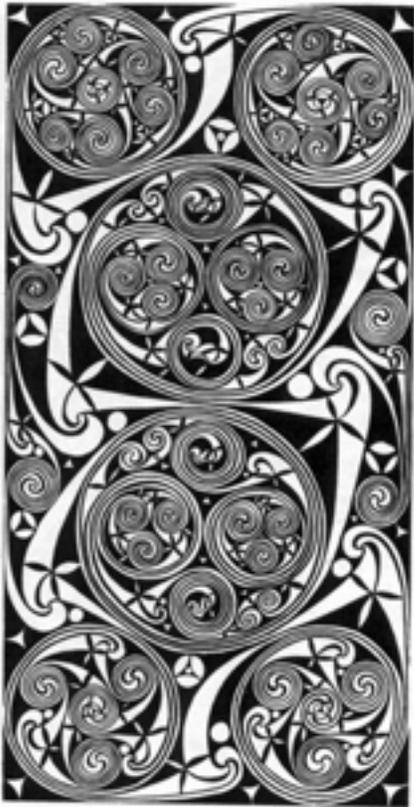


Figure 22: Spiral panel from the Book of Durrow, Ireland, c.650 A.D. (Meehan, 1996, Fig.78).



Figure 23: The Lichfield gospels, Chi- Rho page, Wales, 8th century A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate IV).



Figure 24: The book of Kells, St-Matthew, from Dalriada, Iona, 900 A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 86).

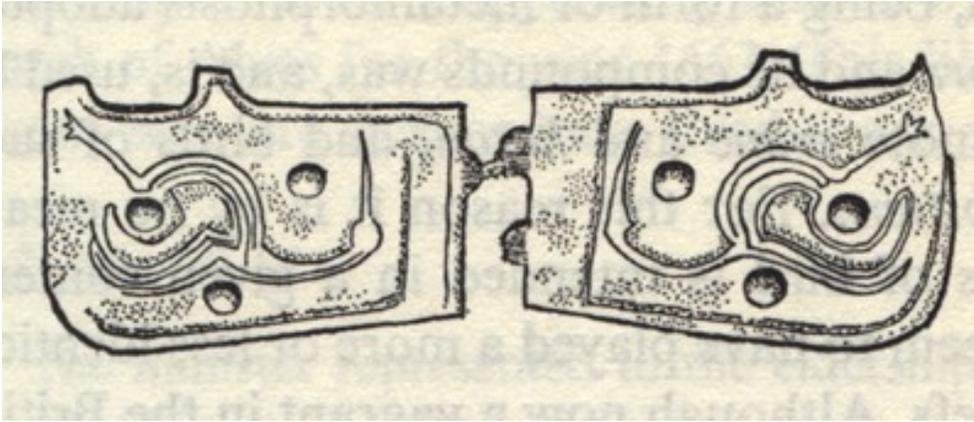


Figure 25: Cheek-piece of bronze helmet decorated with cranes from Carniola, N. Italy (Ross, 1967, Fig. 165).



Figure 26: Pottery dish ornamented with red-painted swans from Radovice, Czechoslovakia, C.400 B.C. (Green, 1998, Fig. 7.7).



Figure 27: Top of an iron scabbard decorated with a triple bird design from Obermenzing, Germany, C.200 B.C. (Green, 1998, Fig. 6.5).



Figure 28: Clay triple-vase on hollow ring base from Chester (Green, 1983, Plate 40).



Figure 29: Hooded deities from Housestead, Northumberland (Ross, 1967, Plate 90).



Figure 30: Relief of *genii cucullati* portrayed as triangular, schematized figures from Cirencester, Gloucs. (Green, 1983, Fig. 39).



Figure 31: Warrior with three hooded deities, ravens and rosette from a well at Lower Slaughter, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 62a).



Figure 32: Three hooded deities from a well from Lower Slaughter, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 62b).



Figure 33: Relief of horned god, goddess, three hooded figures and ram from *Aquae Sulis* (Bath), Somerset (Ross, 1967, Plate 55a).



Figure 34: Stone relief of seated goddess with three *genii cucullati*, two of them with swords, from Cirenster, Gloucs, 2nd -3rd century A.D. (Green, 1996, p. 37).



Figure 35: Seated goddess with three hooded deities from Daglingworth, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 71b).



Figure 36: Relief of mother-goddesses from Cirencester, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 67a).



Figure 37: Three seated mother- goddesses from Ancaster, Lincs. (Ross, 1967, Fig. 133).



Figure 38: Three naked goddesses from *Alauna* (Maryport), Cumberland (Ross, 1967, Fig.142).



Figure 39: Mother-goddesses from Lund Church near Kirkham, Lancs. (Ross, 1967, Fig. 134).



Figure 40: Schist plaque with three mother-goddesses from Bath (Green, 1991, Plate 10).



Figure 41: Stone relief of British water-goddess Coventina from Carrawburgh, Northumb., 2nd century A.D. (Green, 1996, p.100).



Figure 42: Nymphs from *Bremenium* (High Rochester), Northumb. (Ross, 1967, Plate 67c).



Figure 43: Stone sculpture of mother-goddesses from Alesia, Burgundy (Green, 1996, p.107).



Figure 44: Stone plaque depicting three mother-goddesses from *Vertillum* (Vertault), Burgundy (Green, 1996, p.81).



Figure 45: Small clay group of three goddesses from Bonn, Germany, 1st-2nd century A.D. (Green, 1996, p.72).



Figure 46: Three mother-goddesses from Germany (MacCana, 1970, p.122).



Figure 47: Altar of the *Matronae Aufaniae* from Koln, Germany (Green, 1991, Plate 11).



Figure 48: Mercury accompanied by two goddesses from Bon Marche site, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 70a).

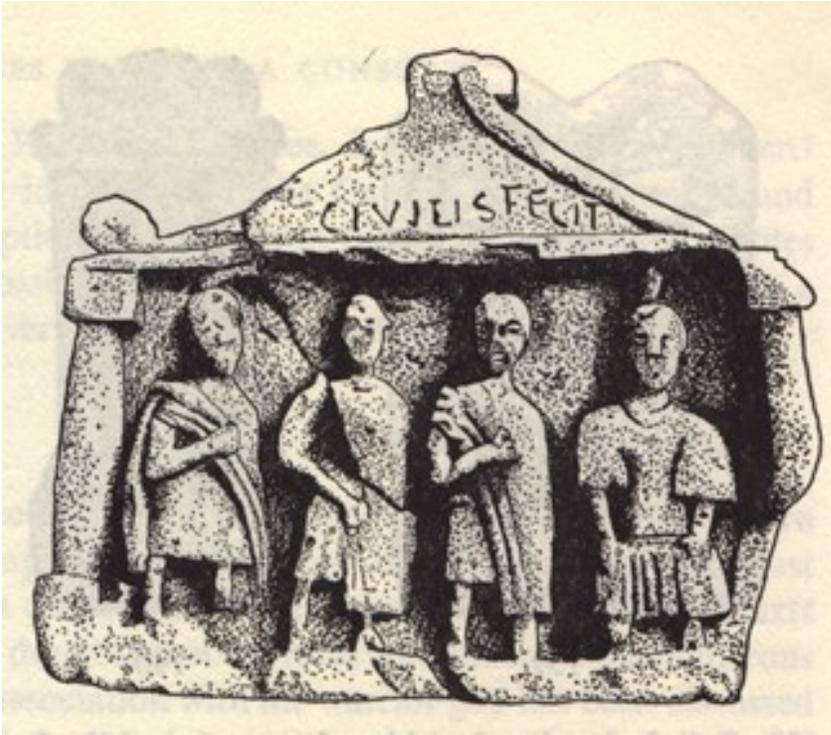


Figure 49: Relief portraying three male and one female figures from Easton Grey near Malmesbury, Wiltshire (Ross, 1967, Fig. 133).



Figure 50: Tricephaloi with holes on top for the insertion of antlers from Condat, France (Ross, 1967, Plate 41b).



Figure 51: Tricephaloi sitting in 'Buddhic' position from Autun, Saone-et-Loire (MacCana, 1970, p. 44).



Figure 52: Relief of triple-headed god with an antlered deity and third god from Beaune, Burgundy (Green, 1991, Plate 3).



Figure 53: Tricephaloi with leaf crown from Reims, France (Ross, 1967, Fig. 43).



Figure 54: Three-faced god on vase from Bavai, France (Ross, 1967, Fig. 44).



Figure 55: Bronze coin of the Remi with three heads in profile (Ross, 1967, Fig. 50a).



Figure 56: Triple-headed god sharing features, from Reims, France (Green, 1991, Plate 2).

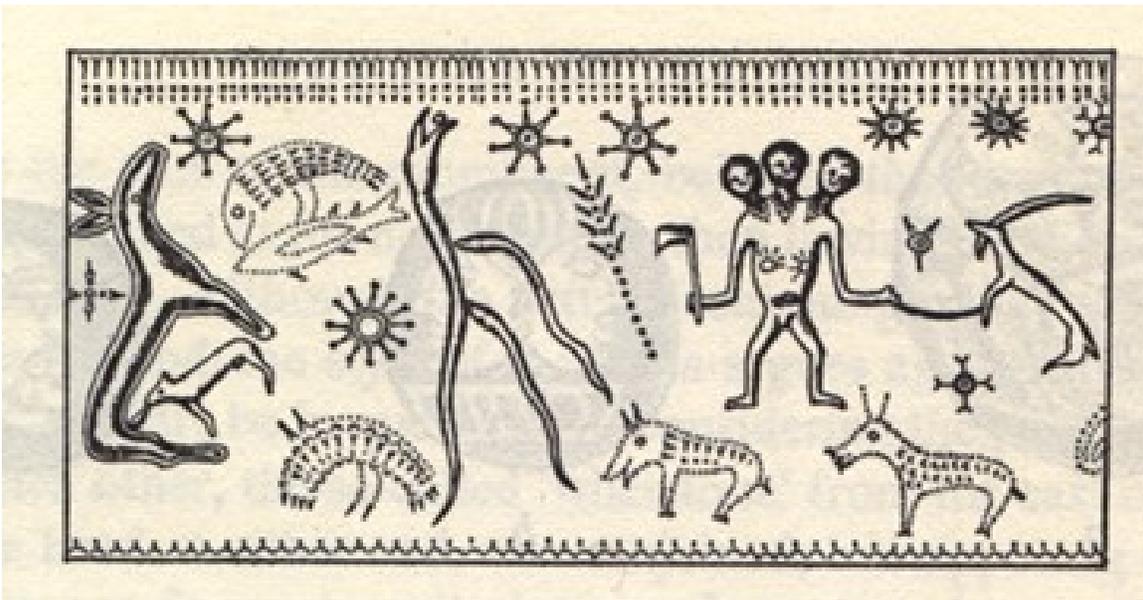


Figure 57: Golden horn showing three-headed figure holding an axe, from Gallehus, Denmark (Ross, 1967, Fig. 49).



Figure 58: Three-faced head from Jutland, Denmark (Ross, 1967, Plate 41a).



Figure 59: Tricephaloi from Corleck, Co. Cavan, Ireland (Ross, 1967, Fig. 45).

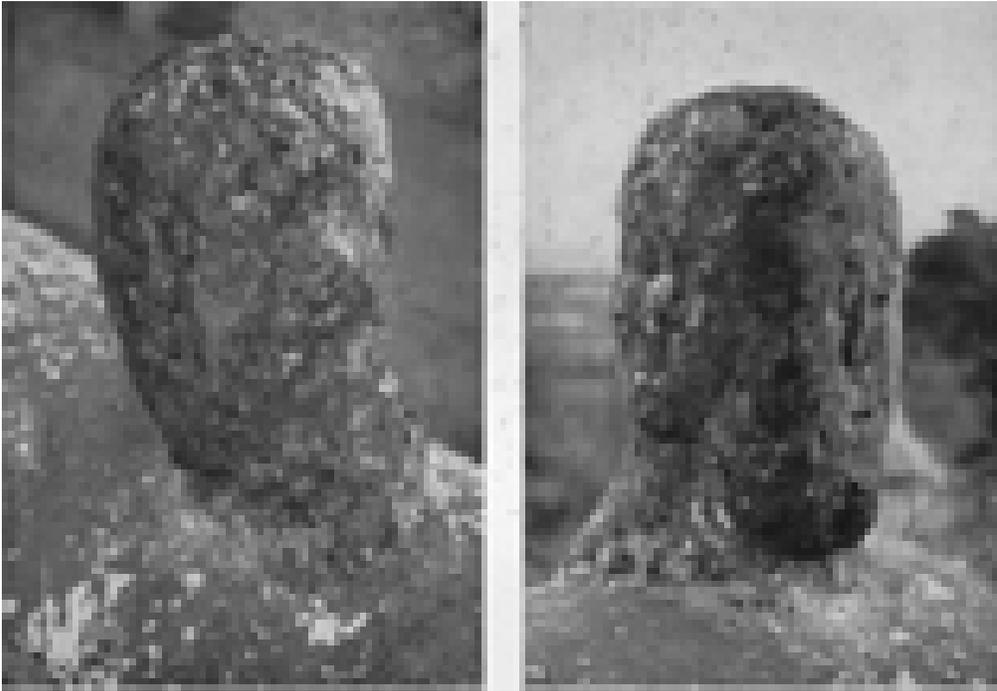


Figure 60: Three-faced head from Woodlands, Co. Donegal, Ireland (Ross, 1967, Plate 18a-b).

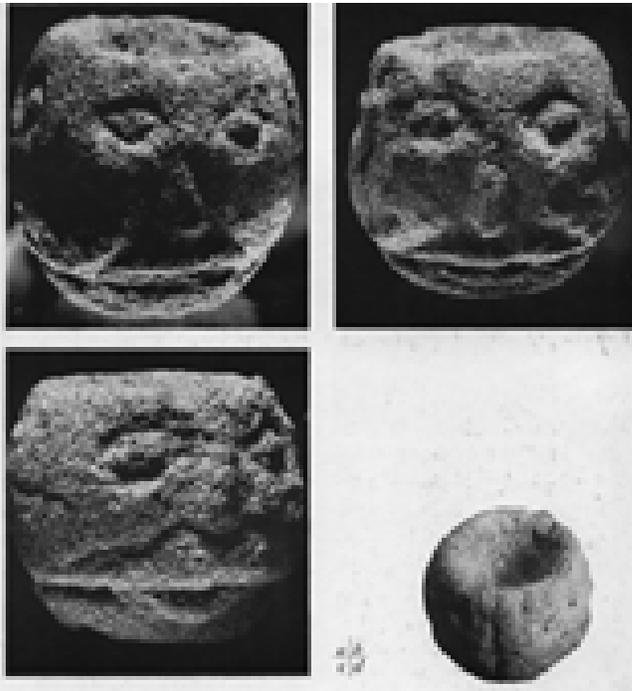


Figure 61: Tricephaloi from Sutherland hollow on top for libation (Ross, 1967, Plate 17a-d).



Figure 62: Stone tricephaloi from La Pouquelaie, Guernsey (Ross, 1967, Fig. 39).



Figure 63: Wooden tricephaloi in Llandinam Church, Monmouthshire (Ross, 1967, Fig. 48).



Figure 64: Three- or four-faced stone head from the temple at Wroxeter, Shropshire (Ross, 1967, Fig. 46).

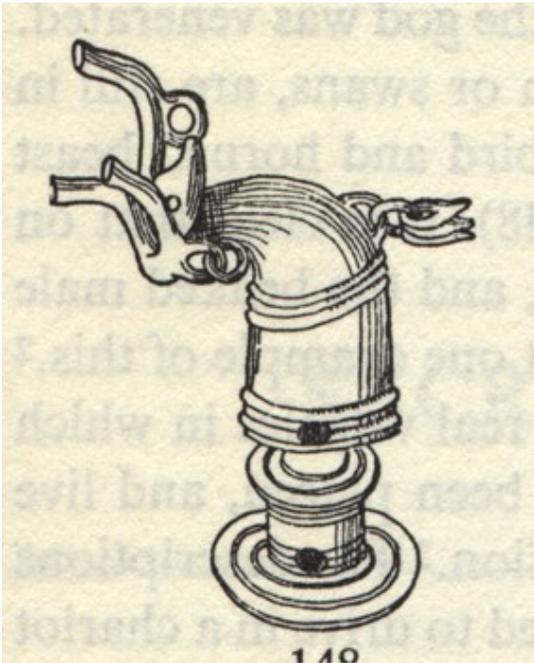


Figure 65: Three-horned bird-beast from Urnfield Europe (Ross, 1967, Fig. 148).



Figure 66: Clay triple-horned bull from a child's grave at Colchester (Green, 1991, Plate 3).



Figure 67: Silver-washed bronze triple-horned bull with the remains of a triad of goddesses on his back from a shrine at Maiden Castle, Dorset, 4th century A.D. (Green, 1996, p. 181).



Figure 68: Triple horned bronze human head from Hafenturm, Germany, 1st century A.D. (Green, 1998, Fig. 9.1).

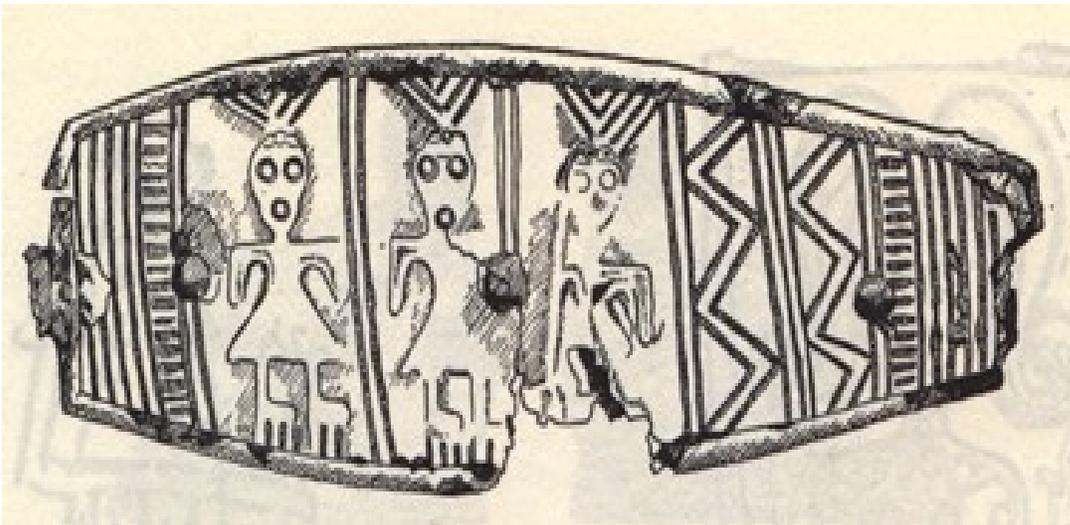


Figure 69: Triple 'Cernunnos' from Rumania (Ross, 1967, Fig. 91).

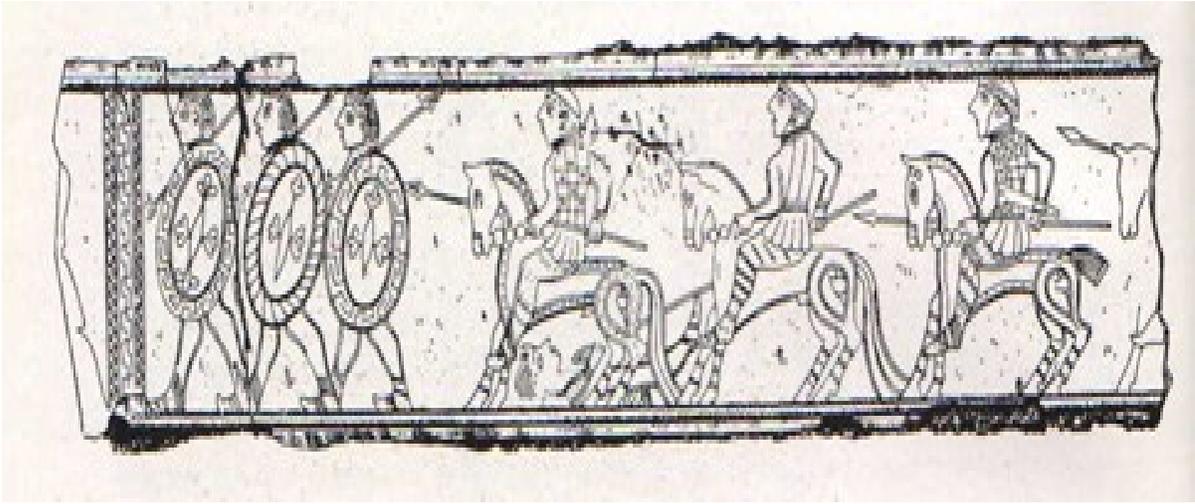


Figure 70: Hallstat sword with three soldiers from Vienna (Finlay, 1973, Fig. 9).



Figure 71: Triad of war gods from a well at Lower Slaughter, Gloucs. (Ross, 1967, Plate 61).



Figure 72: Three mounts in the form of human heads from a burial at Welwyn, Hertfordshire, 1st century A.D. (Stead, 1985, Fig. 30).



Figure 73: Detail of a sword decorated with three human heads from Marson (Jacobsthal, 1941, Plate 3b).



Figure 74: Portico of the Celto-Ligurian temple of Roquepertuse, Bouches-du-Rhone, 4th century B.C. (MacCana, 1970, p. 104)



Figure 75: Wooden *ex voto* from the marshes of the source of the Seine, France (MacCana, 1970, p.19).



Figure 76: Pot decorated with three human heads from Burgh by Sands, Cumberland (Ross, 1967, Plate 38c).

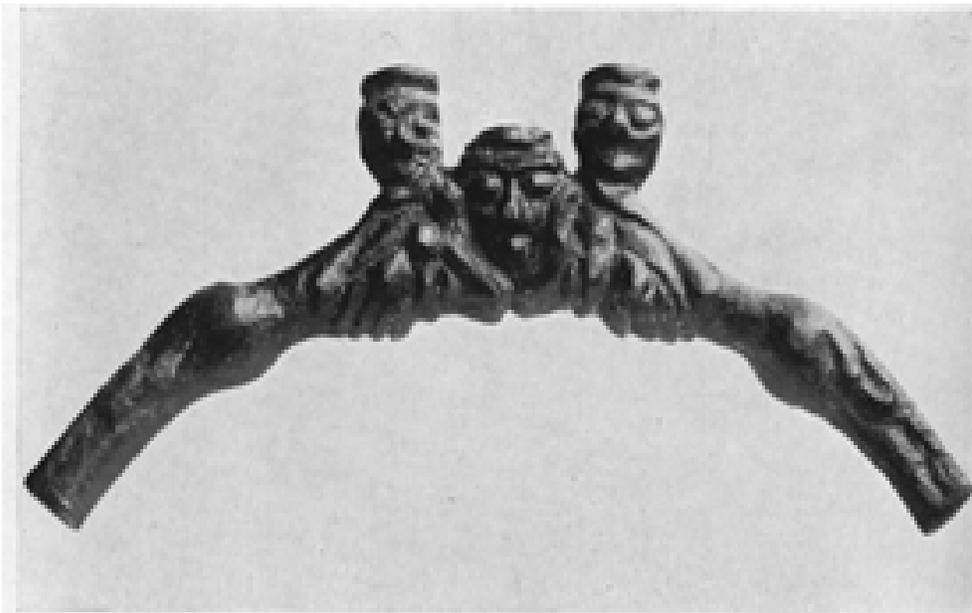


Figure 77: Fragmentary bronze torc from Glauberg, Hesse, Germany (Jacobsthal, 1941, Plate 10a).



Figure 78: Three figures at the bottom of the Carndonagh cross from Ireland (Finlay, 1973, Fig. 33).



Figure 79: Sculptured stone cross from Drumcliff, Co. Sligo, Ireland, 10th century A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 107).



Figure 80: Cross from Muiredach, Monasterboice, Co. Louth, Ireland, 10th century A.D. (Finlay, 1973, Plate 91).

	Eastern France	S.Germany / Switzerland	N. Italy	Jugoslavia	Dendro-chronology	Historical Events	Early Celtic Art Styles
BC	Bronze final III	Hallstatt B3 (Late Urnfields)	Villanova III (Benacci II)			Steppe nomads in Assyria	
700	Hallstatt I	Ha I Ha C1 Long swords Hill-forts	VIII IVa	Slovenia: Podzemelj 'Thraco-Cimmerian' influence			
600	Ha IIa	Ha II Ha D1 Daggers Princely graves	VIII IVb (Arnoaldi)	Stična I Novo mesto Italian influence Stična II		c.600 Etruscans at Rome Foundation of Massalia	
500	Ha IIb Les Jogasses	Ha D2 Ha D3	Certosa	Horizon with double ridged helmets Scythian influence		c.520 Foundation of Spina 513 Persians in Balkans 508 End of Etruscan rule in Rome	
400	La Tène I	LT Ia Chieftains' graves LT A	Etruscans	Altrier 464		Etruria Padana	Early style
300	La Tène I	LT Ib LT B1 Duchcov & Münsingen brooches	Celts	Hallstatt graves with 'Negau' helmets La Tène influence		387 Gaulish invasion of Italy/Pannonia Sack of Rome	
200	LT II	LT Ic LT B2	Romans	West group: Mokronog 1 East group: Belgrade 1		335 Celtic embassy to Alexander the Great 279-7 Celts in Balkans 270 Sack of Delphi Settlement of Asia Minor	'Waldalgesheim' or 'Vegetal' 'Sword' styles Early 'plastic' Late 'plastic'
100	LT III	LT II LT C1 LT C2 Oppida LT III LT D1		La Tène shields 229 Wederath 208 Fellbach 123 Cornaux 120-16 Manching 105		240/30 War of Attalos I against Galatae 233/2 Ager gallicus 225 Battle of Telamon 222 Defeat of Insubres 191 Defeat of Boii 190/81 Pergamene reliefs	Early insular style (Torrs-Witham)
0		LT D2 Nauheim brooches		Mokronog 2-4 Belgrade 2		124/3 Roman conquest of Gallia Narbonensis 113/101 Invasion of Cimbri & Teutones	
AD		LT D3		Mokronog 5-6 Belgrade 3		58 Celto-Dacian wars Defeat of Helvetii 58/50 Gallic wars 52 Fall of Alesia End of Oppida 15 Alpine campaign	Later insular style (mirrors/harness mounts)
100						AD43 Claudian invasion of Britain	Ultimate or Late N. British/Irish

Table 3 Chronology of art styles' (Megaw, 1990, p.258).

Neolithic	2 000-1 700 BC	
Early Bronze Age	1 700-1 500 BC	
Middle Bronze Age	1 500-1000 BC	Urnfield : 1 300- 700 BC
Late Bronze Age	1 000-450 BC	Halstatt: 700-500 BC
Iron Age	450 BC- 43 AD	La Tene: 500BC-43 A.D.
Britain		
Halstatt	Iron Age A	500-450 BC
La Tene	Iron Age B	450-250 BC
Belgic Arrival	Iron Age C	250-100 BC

Timeline

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