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The Mead Hall

Notes on the Name of Milan, Italy

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Introduction

When I started reading an article by Fumagalli (2008) about the etymology of the name of Milan, the capital of Lombardy as well as the economical heart of Italy, at first I began jotting down notes, only to notice that there was an Ariadne's thread of symbols. The final result of this quest is a picture of Lombardy during the Bronze and Iron Ages, which can draw from a common Indo-European heritage, shared with better documented regions to support my hypotheses. The point of view is anthropological, and the conclusions are obviously partial and in progress. I hope, however, to contribute to shed some brighter light on the cultures of the Proto-Celts and the Celts who lived in Cisalpine Gaul, which so far could rely only on a number of archaeological remains as well as ambiguous Latin and Greek documentary sources.

I first started from Giorgio Fumagalli's article *Le capitali dei Celti d'Italia* (The Capitals of the Celts in Italy), published in Bibrax, Associazione Culturale Celtica (http://www.bibrax.org/celti_storia/mediolanon.htm 06/01/2008). It is an article influential among the cultural groups interested in studying, and in some way revitalizing, the ancient, little known Celtic history and culture in the northern-central regions of the Italian peninsula (cf. Kruta and Manfredi 1999, Kruta 2003).

According to Fumagalli, the most authoritative interpretation of the original name of Milan is *Medhelanon*, and it means 'land in the middle of the plain,' although following Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h (1990) he finds more interesting the meaning 'place of perfection.' It exists a graffito on the Augustean walls in Via S. Vito 18, Milan with the name of the city, written from right to left, in Lepontic, an extinct Celtic language. Fumagalli adds that there are a number of place names similar to Milan/Medhelanon, interpreted as 'center of perfection,' that is central sanctuary. These place names are, according to Fumagalli, Lepontic Melano (on the Lugano Lake, Canton Ticino, Switzerland), Cenoman Mandolossa near Brixia (Brescia), the Boian Medelana, near Marzabotto (Bologna), the Lingonian Medelana, near Ferrara, and the Senonian Melano near Fabriano (Ancona). A Latin stone slab (*CIL V. 4285)* from Gussago, near Brescia, has engraved the words *Neptuno/Viribus'* a dedication to the god Neptune which Fumagalli believes to be a Celtic one. Fumagalli also believes that the Romans did not understand well the term Nectain, whose meaning (a wrong one as we will see later) would be 'sacred clearing,' so they thought it referred to Neptune.

I am not going to discuss the capitals of the various Celtic peoples according to Fumagalli. Here I am going to analyze the meaning of the name Mediolanum, interpreted either as 'land in the middle of the plain,' or 'place of

perfection, sacred place' or 'central sanctuary' according to the French scholars Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h (1990). Kruta and Manfredi (1999:53-4) and Kruta (2003 [2000]:301, 346-7) support the translation of Mediolamun as 'center of the territory,' 'center of the land.'

Here I briefly remark that the recent transliteration *Mes'iolanom* looks to be conceived in order to support the idea, a favorite one among the Italian scholars, that 'medio' means 'in the middle of'. In fact, it looks more a kind of 'Greek interpretation' (*mesos*=middle), than a Celtic one (Proto Celtic **medjo- *medi*=middle). Polybius and Plutarch write *Mediòlanon*, and Strabo writes *Mediolànion*.

The name of Milan is connected with the legend of its foundation; the Italian name, Milano, stems from the Latin *Mediolanum*, the town founded by the Celtic tribe of the Insubres, which was under Roman rule since the second century BC. The origin of the name and of a bas relief of a female boar (the *scrofa semilanuta*) as a symbol of the city are fancifully accounted for in Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1584), beneath a woodcut of the first raising of the city walls, and the etymology of Mediolanum is given as 'half-woolly', explained in Latin and in French. Alciato credits Saint Ambrose for his account of the foundation of Milan: the city was founded by two Celtic peoples, the Bituriges and the Aedui, having as their emblems a ram and a boar, therefore the city's symbol is a wool-bearing boar, a chimera, sporting both bristles and wool. The Latin name Mediolanum, that is *medio-lanum* (in the middle of the plain or middle plain) is supposedly the translation from the Insubrian name and, as I have already said, the most popular interpretation among the Italian scholars, who rely only on the Latin and Greek languages, and curiously never refer to the Celtic ones. Hence they discard the alternative (central sanctuary, central sacred place) proposed by the French scholars Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h (1990), which is a favorite one among Northern Italian Celtic associations. Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h have the important merit of basing their interpretation strictly on Celtic sources and languages.

The White Sow, the Wool, the Land and the Hall

The half-woolly sow (Italian, *scrofa semilanuta*) is an ancient emblem of the city of Milan dating back at least to the Middle Ages. Several ancient sources, including the Gallo-Roman aristocrat and bishop Sidonius Apollinaris, the writer Datius, and, later, the already mentioned Andrea Alciato, esplained that the '*scrofa semilanuta*,' the etymology of the name of Milan, that is Mediolanum means 'half-woolly' (*medio*-half and *lanuta*-woolly). This translation is still occasionally mentioned, albeit dismissed, in modern sources. According to the legend about the foundation of the city (which partially draws from Livy's writings), the founder of Milan was a Gaulish chief named Bellovesus who lived between the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth centuries. He reached the Po Valley following a vision he had had in a dream, where a goddess showed him the place where the city would rise. In this dream, he saw a white sow with unusually long wool on the front half of her body under a hawthorn tree.

The above is the average information one can find about the legend of the foundation of the city and the etymology of its name. Instead of starting from the name of the city, I decided to start from the intriguing chimera, the half-woolly sow or '*scrofa semilanuta'*. In fact, I felt intuitively that there was a curious relationship between the chimerical half-woolly sow and the textile industry. Milan in the Middle Ages was a very important center of textile production. Hence I started to explore the possible connection between this fact, and the assonance between the Italian adjective '*lanuta'* (woolly), from '*lana'* (wool), and the English word 'lawn'.

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (5th edition), *lawn* means 1. kind of fine linen used especially for bishop's sleeves. Probably from Laon in France. The *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* writes: *lawn*[2] [ME from Laon, France] (15th century): a fine sheer linen or cotton fabric of plain weave that is thinner than cambric

– lawny, adj.

Dictionaries in general agree that a type of fabric known as 'lawn' comes from the city of Laon, a famous medieval textile center in northern France. Laon, in Picardy, has always held strategic importance. In the time of Julius Caesar it was an important Gallic town named Bibrax. Defeated the Gauls, the Romans fortified the town, which was known as Alaudanum or Lugdunum Clavatum, later Laon. Lugdunum means 'Lug's fortress', a name common to other towns where the great Celtic god Lug was worshipped, such as Lugdunum/Lyon, Lugdunum/ Loudun, Lugdunum Covenarum / Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, Lugdunum Batavorum/ Katwijk-Brittenburg/Leyden. I believe the idea of the half-woolly sow, '*scrofa semilanuta'*, may come by association of ideas between the textile-producing cities of Laon and Milan. As far as I know this possibility has never been explored, but it should be. A key element of the controversy about the sow is a bas relief affixed to the walls of the Palazzo della Ragione, former *broletto* (administrative building) of the medieval commune of Milan. The bas relief is reportedly a medieval copy of an older one, found during the excavations when the Palazzo was built (1228-1233), thereafter adopted as the main emblem of Milan, at least until the advent of the *biscione* (grass snake) of the House of Visconti. Was the assonance between Laon and *lana* (wool) enough for the medieval mind to create an interesting story which may symbolize an alliance between textile merchants of the two cities? The name of the French town, Laon, however, may come from *lan*, 'land, country': in fact, the Armorican word *lann* or *lan* means 'territory, country,' *lann* a prickly plant,' pl. *lannou,* 'heath, moor.' *Lann* and *lan* are elements of Breton toponyms.

I will leave the woolly sow here for a while and I will explore the other meaning of the word lawn.

Lawn also means a grassy area, a glade, a clearing. It comes from the Old French *lande*, heath, moor, barren land (Middle English *launde*, Italian *landa*, Proto-Germanic *landom*, Breton *lann*, heath, Old Irish *land*, Middle Welsh *llan*, open space, Welsh *llan*, enclosure, church, from the Proto-Indo-European **lendh*, land, moor, heath, uncultivated land). The online *Etymological Dictionary* states that etymological evidence and Gothic use indicate the original sense of land was 'a definite portion of the earth's surface owned by an individual or home of a nation.' The *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* writes for land: 3. Realm, domain. 4. The people of a country.

Here, however, I am more interested in the Old Irish and Scottish Gaelic words *lann*, *-lann*. There are two etymologies for *lann*:

Etymology 1**:**

from Proto-Celtic **plag-s-na*, from Proto-Indo-European **pelh₂-* (flat). Cognate with Welsh *llafn*; and with Old Norse *flatr* (flat), Latin *plānus* (flat). The Old Irish feminine noun *lann* means 1. sword (literary), 2.blade, 3.scale (of a fish), for example: *termslann rásúir* (razor blade). Scottish Gaelic: feminine noun *lann* 1.blade, knife, sword, weapon, any bladed instrument. For example: *lann liomhaidh*, a polished sword. 2.lancet, 3.washer (flat disc), 4.scale (of a fish), 5.scale, rove (round piece of metal on which nails are clinched inside a boat), 6.film (layer).

MacBain's *Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic language* (1911) writes in section 23:

lan. a blade, sword, Irish *lann*, also "a scale, scale of a fish, disc" (Arg., M`A.): **lag-s-na*? Root *lag*, as in Early Irish *laigen*, lance, Welsh *llain*, blade, Latin *lanceo*, Greek *lógh*c, lance-point. Thurneysen (Zeit. 28) suggests **plad-s-na*, "broad thing"; Greek *plaqánc*, German *fladen*, flat cake, further Gaelic *leathann*, broad, etc. Old Irish *lann*, squama, is referred by Stokes to **lamna*, allied to Latin *lamina*, lamna; which would produce rather Old Irish **lamn*, Modern *lamhan*. Irish *lann*, gridiron, is doubtless allied to Old Irish *lann*.

While this etymology highlights the meaning of 'blade, sword', it also make us understand why scholars supported the meaning 'plain' in the toponym *Mediolanun* = 'in the middle of the plain'. As a matter of fact Mediolanum is not a translation of the Celtic toponym, but it looks only a Latinization of the original word, possibly Medhelanon. Unfortunately, Italian scholars usually rely on Latin and Greek, which can be very useful, but it may be a lazy way of working, especially since the original toponym was in Celtic. Nobody, however, even commented about the warlike overtones (cf. sword, lance, blade) of the word. Currently the meaning 'in the middle of the plain' has been contested by the fact that many of the about sixty place names 'Mediolanum', located especially in Western Europe, have not a centered location or are on hilltops. Attaching a modern political meaning to the latter translation, Cardinal Tettamazi and other Catholic intellectuals, translate it as 'land of the middle [point]', not in the sense of the Norse Midgard or Tolkien's Middle-earth, but in the sense of a (post-modern) multicultural meeting point.

Etymology 2:

from Proto-Indo-European **lendʰ-* ("land, heath"). Cognate with Welsh *llan*; and with Proto-Germanic **landan*, (English *land*). A.) Old Irish feminine noun *lann*: 1. floor, 2. enclosure, 3. church. B.) Old Irish masculine noun *lann*: 1. building, house, 2. land, plot, 3. plate. Scottish Gaelic feminine noun *lann*: 1. enclosure, 2. house, dwelling (for example: *obair-lann* – laboratory, *suain-lann* – dormitory), 3. church, 4. repository, 5. stud, boss (as on a shield), 6. gridiron, 7. scale (balance).

Macbain's Scottish Gaelic dictionary writes in section 23:

*Lann***.** an enclosure, land, Irish *lann*, Early Irish *land*, Welsh *llan*, Old Welsh *lann*, area, ecclesia, Breton *lann*: **landâ*; Teutonic *land*, English *land*. See *iodhlann*. *Iodhlann***:** a cornyard, Irish *iothlann*, granary, Old Irish *ithla*, g. *ithland*, area, Welsh *ydlan*, Old Welsh *itlann*, area: **(p)itu-landâ*, "corn-land"; Old Irish *ith* (g. *etho*), corn, Welsh, Cornish yd, Breton *ed*, it; Sanskrit *pitu*, nourishment, eating, Zend *pitu*, food. For further connections, See *ith*, eat. For -lann, See lann.

A.W.Moore (1890) writes about the Scottish Gaelic word *lann*:

Lann (Irish, Gaelic, and Welsh), *' an enclosure, a house, a church,' is not found in our dictionaries, and is not known colloquially, though we have the word* ullin *(*eithlann*, ' corn-house,' see p. 151). Dr. Joyce remarks that when it means ' house ' it is a purely Irish word ; but that in its ecclesiastical signification it was borrowed from the Welsh. It would seem, however, that its earliest meaning was simply an enclosure, and it is in this sense that it is probably found in the only name in which it occurs as a prefix in the Isle of Man—LANJAGHIN, ' Deacon's Enclosure,' or ' Joughin's Enclosure.' [(I) LANDMORE, (G) LANDIS.]*

Kruta (2003:346) makes a comparison between the Irish kingdom of Mide,where Tara, the seat of the Irish *Ard Ri* was located, and Milan, but Dillon and Chadwick (1968:160 fn. 10) note that O'Rahilly remarks that the name Mide is recent, while the ancient name is uncertain.

According to O'Rahilly (1946:154-70) Tuathal Techtmar (Ir. *tuathal*, ruler of all the people, from Gallo-Roman *teuto-valos* (?); *techtmar*, possessing wealth (?), legitimate (?), but Le Roux and Guyonvarc'c translate it Who Comes from Overseas), possibly historical but shadowy *ard rí* of 2nd-century Ireland known mostly from genealogy, pedigree, and pseudo-history, would have imposed his will upon Leinster, Connacht, Munster, and Ulster to construct his own kingdom of Mide. Although Mide certainly existed, Tuathal's association with it appears based on a misreading of etymology; the post-8th-century tradition describes him as making Mide [*mide*, middle, centre] from the 'neck' (*méide*) of each province. Mide also encompasses the territory around the hill of Uisnech,

perceived centre of Ireland, where Tuathal Techtmar was thought to have founded the annual *óenach* (fair), but probably did not. MacKillop (2004) refers that the text *Lebor Gabála* (Book of Invasions) offers a different explanation for Mide's prominence. According to the text the province is named for Mide, the druid of the invading Nemedians, who was the first to light a fire at Uisnech. During the seven years that this fire burned every other fire in Ireland was lit from it, which entitled Mide and his successors to a sack of grain and a pig from every house in the land.

Kruta (2003), however, mentions the fact that the so-called *oppida*, the Continental Celtic towns, were constituted of the ground set apart by a number of *pagi*, villages: it was a communal area where the 'capital' of the federated villages had their central institutions, both political, economical and religious, and where the elite lived. These *oppida* had fortifications of the motte-and-bailey type developed along a circular track, which had both military and symbolic meanings. Hence, the Gaulish *dunum*, Old Irish, Scottish Gaelic *dùn*, Welsh *din*, was also a market place (Scottish Gaelic *aonach* moor, market place, Irish *aonach*, fair, assembly, Old Irish *óinach*, *óenach*, fair, **oin-acos*, from *aon*, one, the idea being "uniting, re-union"), since we know that the organization of the town's internal space seems pre-ordinated since its foundation. According to Dillon and Chadwick (1968) the *óenach* was an annual assembly and fair; it was held near a sacred cemetery and it was presided by the *ri*. Actually, there were three Irish and Scottish ranks of kings: the *rí benn* (king of peaks), or *ri tuaithe* (king of a tribe) was most commonly a local petty king of a single *túath*; the *ri buiden* (king of bands), or *ruiri* (overking), was a regional king to whom several *rí benn* were subordinate; the 'king of over-kings', a *rí ruirech* was often a provincial (*rí cóicid*) or semi-provincial king to whom several *ruiri* were subordinate. Hence three types of *óenach*, according to the rank of the *ri*. The symmetrical pyramid structure of political authority depicted in the *Book of Rights* and similar texts was much looser than it may appear in the above description, since relations were personal and according to custom.

Kruta (2003:348) writes that not all the area inside the town was covered of buildings, but it included huge areas set aside for markets, fairs, new urban developments, and to give shelter to refuges from the countryside in case of war. The highest or most central area was reserved to political-religious functions, with specialized buildings, and the elite dwellings, usually separated from the other areas by a fence, a palisade or a wall. A good idea of a similar town is the most famous Emain Macha, name of both an 18 acre late Bronze Age hill-fort in Co. Armagh, capital of the Ulaid, and also the mythical capital of Ulster in the Ulster Cycle, royal seat of Conchobar mac Nessa, which is identified with the hill-fort. *"The hill-fort, also called Navan Fort [Mod Ir. An Eamhain], lies at Navan, 2 miles W of Armagh, Northern Ireland. An immense circular bank, now defaced, and ditch enclose a number of earth and stone works. At the summit rests a univallate tumulus, once a residential site subsequently used for ceremonial purposes. Excavation (1963–71) has established that the round house was begun c.700 BC and rebuilt nine times before 100 BC; the surrounding stockade was rebuilt six times. Emain Macha is probably identical with the Isamnion mentioned in Ptolemy's geography (2nd cent. AD). The survival of the skull of a Barbary ape at Emain Macha implies that the site was known far beyond Ireland. The residence was destroyed, or abandoned, when ravaged by the three Collas from rival areas in Ulster, some time before the advent of Christian evangelization, perhaps in the 5th century. Fergus Foga was the last king of Emain Macha. The abandoned hill-fort continued to be the site of an annual* feis *[feast] through medieval times. The Emain Macha of myth and legend is a far grander and more mysterious place than archaeological excavation supports. It contained the fabled palace of* Cráebruad *[Red Branch], giving us the once popular name for the Ulster Cycle, the 'Red Branch' Cycle; the name is echoed in the village of Creeveroe, Co. Armagh. Two queens named Macha are associated with the founding of the fortress. The less well-known is Macha (2), queen of Cimbáeth, whom she dominated and obliged to build a residence in her honour. She marked out the area with her brooch, thus the folk etymology of* emain *as* eo*, bodkin* + muin*, neck = brooch, as authorized by Geoffrey Keating (17th cent.). The better known is Macha (3), wife of Crunniuc mac Agnomain. At a fair in Ulster Crunniuc boasts that his wife could beat a horse-drawn chariot in a foot-race, even though she was pregnant and near to her delivery. Macha cries out to be released from the bargain. A messenger tells her the child will die unless she complies. She succeeds in winning the race, giving birth to twins, a boy and a girl, at the finishing line; some commentators gloss* emain *as 'twins' from this episode. For her humiliation and her*

birth pangs she curses the men of Ulster with comparable suffering unto nine generations; women, young boys, and Cúchulainn were exempted. Cráebruad *was the best-known of the three great halls at Emain Macha; it had nine rooms of red yew, partitioned by walls of bronze, surrounding Conchobar's apartment with silver ceiling and bronze pillars topped with gold. The second,* Cráebderg *[ruddy branch], contained the treasure-house as well as the heads of slain enemies. The third,* Téte Brec *[twinkling hoard], held the weapons and armour. Weapons were not to be brought into Emain Macha, and the grounds contained a hospital for sick and wounded warriors. Bainche was the architect or stonemason of Emain Macha; Bairdéne the doorkeeper. The 1960s' excavations prompted a large-scale scholarly and popular interest in the site."* (JAMES MacKILLOP. "Emain Macha." *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. 2004. Retrieved March 29, 2012 from Encyclopedia.com: http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O70-EmainMacha.html)

Returning to *lann*, it looks that *lann* meaning 'land; site; building' is pretty much archaic as an independent word, especially in Irish, but it is very much alive as an element in compounds. Mac Mathúna (1997) observes that *lann* in his primary sense of '(piece of) land, ground, plot' is even rarer than the post-Patrician monastic use of *lann* as a church appellation in toponyms. In the former meaning it occurs rarely outside archaic constructions and poetic, usually *dindshenchas*, meaning 'lore of places' onomastic text in early Irish literature, recounting the origins of place-names and traditions, where the semantic environment often seems either to be religious or to relate to cemeteries. Although they are known today from these written sources, the *dindsenchas* are clearly a product of the pre-literary tradition and are structured so as to be a mnemonic aid as well as a form of entertainment. This means that *lann* usually means 'place,' or 'enclosure' + a second element (before or after it) defining the use, the descriptive aspect, or the owner of the place. It is a common place name element in Brythonic languages such as Welsh, Cornish, Breton, Cumbric, and possibly Pictish. In Wales there are over 630 place names beginning with 'Llan.' In Cornwall and Brittany the element is usually spelled 'Lan' or 'Lann,' occasionally 'Laun.' For example, Llandewi 'Enclosure or Church of Saint David' (Wales), Lanivet (Lannived) 'Church-site at the pagan sacred place' (Cornwall). Viking Scotland was known as Lothlend, Laithlinn, Lochlainn, translated variously 'the place of lakes,' land of sea-loughs' or land 'shaggy, woolly, covered with or thick with long grass'.

Actually, the archaic meaning of *lann* as 'piece of land, plot' fits with the notion of 'enclosure', an area reserved to dwellings of the sacred kings, and as such similar to the Greek *temenos*. Speaking of the toponym of Tara, *Temair* in Irish, where the Feasting Hall (*Tech Midchuarta*, Mead Hall) of the *Ard Reogh* (High Kings) of Ireland banqueted, Mac Giolla Easpaig (2005:446–448) remarks: *"It is argued that the name Temair refers to a sacred enclosure and that, linguistically, the name derives from the Indo-European root**tem-*'to cut', a root that is found in the general lexicon of Irish in the appellatives* taman*, 'a trunk', and* tamhnach*, 'a clearing'. The Irish place name, Temair, is thus related to both Greek* temenos*, 'a sacred precinct', and Latin* templum*, 'a temple', in its etymology and signification, that is, it refers to a sacred space that has been cut off from the profane world.*" More about the Mead Hall later. However, Kruta's description of a Continental Celtic town fits the notion of sacred precinct, enclosure set apart for the use of the political-religious elite. Since smithing, especially when it involved swords, spears and armors, was an art with important religious aspects, it was also practiced in a special area within the royal precinct. There is the possibility that the homophones *lann* blade, sword, lance, and *lann*, enclosure, building underwent a semantic contamination.

I think that the *–lanum* element of *Mediolanum*, the Latin name of Milan means *lann* 'enclosure, place', akin to the Greek *temenos*, a sacred precinct, that is to say a space cut off from the profane world where the sacred kings lived. However, I think it takes the meaning of 'house, building, hall' when it is united to the first element *Medio-* which specified the use of the second element *–lann*. It is a place where the *ri* exercises his rule as legitimate sovereign. James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1922, *Ch. 6. Magicians as Kings*) describes well how the king and all his possessions were thought of as sacred: "*The belief that kings possess magical or supernatural powers by virtue of which they can fertilise the earth and confer other benefits on their subjects would seem to have been shared by the ancestors of all the Aryan races from India to Ireland, and it has left clear traces of itself in our own country down to modern times. Thus the ancient Hindoo law-book called The Laws of Manu describes as follows the effects of a good king's reign: "In that country where the king avoids*

taking the property of mortal sinners, men are born in due time and are long-lived. And the crops of the husbandmen spring up, each as it was sown, and the children die not, and no misshaped offspring is born." In Homeric Greece kings and chiefs were spoken of as sacred or divine; their houses, too, were divine and their chariots sacred; and it was thought that the reign of a good king caused the black earth to bring forth wheat and barley, the trees to be loaded with fruit, the flocks to multiply, and the sea to yield fish." And since his person as well as his properties are holy, they are tabooed in a sacred area, both for his own safety and that of his people. Since the king represents bodily his people and his land, the area where he lives can be considered coherent with the sense of '*lann'* as 'heartland', 'royal enclosure'.

The Hall of the Mead

Let's analyze the first element of the word Mediolanum, that is *medio-*, interpreted as 'middle' from Latin *medius*, Greek *mesos*, Proto-Celtic **medjo- *medi*, from Proto-Indo-European **medhyo-*. I believe that an alternative translation of *medio-* exists, which is better associated with–*lanum* as 'enclosure, plot', hence 'heartland, domain, sacred royal place', with the added religious flavor of its archaic meaning. I believe that *medio* is the Latinization of a Celtic Insubrian word akin to 'mead' a fermented beverage made of water, honey, malt and yeast. The English word mead (Old English *medu* from Proto-Germanic **meduz*) from the Proto-Indo-European base**medhu-* 'honey, sweet drink' (cf. Sanskrit *madhu* sweet, sweet drink, wine, honey, Greek *methy* wine, Old Church Slavonian *medu*, Lithuanian *medus* honey) is cognate to the Old Irish *mid*, Welsh *medd*, Breton *mez* Scottish Gaelic *meadh* (mead) from the Proto Celtic **medu-* (mead).

In his *From Honey to Ashes* (*Du miel aux cendres*, 1960) Claude Lévi-Strauss makes a case for the invention of mead as a marker of the passage from nature to culture. Mead, also called honey wine, was the drink related to poetical wisdom, the gods and the Mead Hall, that is the great feasting hall of the Celtic, Germanic and Slavic heroic traditions. Therefore, if we put together *Medio-*/mead and *–lanum/llan*/hall (conceptually akin to the Old English word *heall* meaning of 'place covered by a roof, spacious roofed residence, temple, law-court', Scottish Gaelic *talla* a hall, Irish *alla*, Middle Irish *all*), with religious-political overtones, I think we can translate both Mediolanum 'Place/Hall of Mead'. Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux (2000[1990]:290) translate *medio* as 'middle' or 'center' and *-lanum /-lanon* as 'full' 'abounding' from the Celtic **lano-*, with the meaning of 'sacred center' or 'center of perfection', hence 'central sanctuary'. Considering the late Celtic word *llann*, Welsh *llan*, 'church', Guyonvarc'h and Le Roux believe that *Mediolanon* can be considered a synonym of *Medionemeton*, 'central sanctuary', or better 'central grove' perhaps similar to Barr Hill or Croy Hill on the Antonine Wall in Strathclyde. According to these scholars the Celtic idea of the center, analogous to the Greek *omphalos*, is connected with the notion of 'supreme sovereignty' and the idea of 'King of the World', not an individual but a community, in this case the Bituriges, located at the geographical center of the Gaul, currently the small town of Chateaumeillant, once also named Mediolanum, like the Milan/Mediolanum in the Cisalpine Gaul . Following these French scholars, a number of Italian writers, such as Fumagalli (2008) and Lembi (2006) believe that Milan was a central sanctuary and that in the map of the city one can still 'read' a number of elliptical areas anciently defined by ditches whose aim was to delimitate the urban space in a sacred way. The ditches supposedly had to distinguish the 'within' from the 'without' as well as to protect the sacred space from floodings. One ellipsis corresponds to the Ambrosian Library/San Sepolcro area. Others relying on archaeo-astronomical hypotheses identify a second ellipsis centered on La Scala Square, that may have hosted a Celtic sanctuary, that is the central sanctuary of the Insubres. Currently there is no archaeological evidence whatsoever to support these hypotheses.

Medio-(lanum)	Proto-Indo-European	Sanskrit	Greek	Proto-. Germanic	Old Norse	German	Danish	Old Frisian, Dutch
	**medhu-*	*Madhu*	*methy*	**meduz*	*Mjöðr*	*Met*	*Mjød*	*Mede*
Mead	honey, sweet intoxicating drink	sweet drink, honey, wine, intoxicating drink	wine		Mead	Mead	Mead	Mead

Old English	English	Welsh	Old Irish	Breton	Old Church Slavonic	Lithuan
Medu	*mead*	*medd*	*mid*	*mez*	*medu*	*medus*
Mead	Mead	Mead	Mead	Mead	Mead	Mead

Manfredi (in Kruta and Manfredi 1999:54) also remarks that it is likely that Milan (*Mediolan[i]um*) was the Celtic version of the Roman *mundus* and the Greek *omphalos*, and that this was also true for similar toponyms, such as *Mediolanun Santonum*/Saintes and *Mediolanum Aulercorum*/Evreux. Most well documented Celtic omphaloses, however, are not a 'town' or a fortress such as Tara, Emain Macha, or Tintagel, but a geographical feature. The centres of a culture, by analogy with the *omphalos* (navel) stone at Delphi in ancient Greece, were Kermaria of Brittany, Pumlumon of Wales, Uisnech of Ireland, and, more figuratively, the Tynwald of the Isle of Man.

- *Kermaria* (Breton *kêr*, house; Maria, the Virgin Mary) was an early settlement site near Pont l'Abbé, southern Finistère, western Brittany, site of a standing stone of Gaulish origin. Some commentators have suggested this was the omphalos of Brittany or Armorica.
- *Pumlumon* (or Plinlimmon, Welsh *pum*, five; *lumon*, maybe 'peaks' or 'beacons' ?) is a mountain in central Wales, 10 miles W of Llanidloes, whose springs provide the sources of the Severn and Wye rivers.
- *Tynwald*, Tynwald Hill, Cronk-y-Keillown, is a man-made circular mound a few feet high near St John's Church, 3 miles from Peel, presumed to be as near as possible to the centre of the Isle of Man; by tradition, earth was brought from every parish on the island to construct Tynwald. From earliest memory it has been a place for public ceremonials.
- *Uisnech* is a hill in Co. Westmeath, 12 miles W of Mullingar. Long thought of as the centre, navel, or omphalos of Ireland, Uisnech contains a stone (*Ail na Mírenn*, stone of divisions) marked with lines showing where the borders of the five provinces (Connacht, Leinster, Ulster, and Munster considered as two) met; most of the hill was thought to be in the Connacht portion. As a ceremonial site Uisnech is second only to Emain Macha in Ulster. Although not very high, the top of Uisnech can be seen from great distances, which partially explains its continued use for the burning of ritual fires. In *Lebor Gabála*

(Book of Invasions), the Nemedian druid Mide (eponym of Meath) is credited with lighting the first fire there. Excavations in the early 20th century revealed huge beds of ash. Literary and oral evidence testifies that Uisnech was a favoured site for Beltaine fires and druidical ceremonies, especially the driving of cattle. The legendary Tuathal Techtmar (1st–2nd cent. AD) was thought to have founded the annual fair or *óenach*, one of three great festivals of Ireland, along with Tailtiu and Tara (MacKillop 2004).

The Latin *mundus* is also a stone like the *omphalos*: the *lapis manalis* or stone of the Manes (ancestors) covered a gate to Hades, abode of the dead. Actually, sources refer to three monuments in the upper Forum (Capitoline side) that commemorated in one way or another the center of Rome, whether conceived as a community or as a geographical center of the empire: the *Mundus*, the *Milliarium Aureum* (The Golden Milestone), and the *Umbilicus Romae* (The Navel of Rome). Although these sacred stones are controversial among scholars as to their real meaning and location, in my opinion neither of them, nor the Greek *omphalos* seem to correspond to the Celtic notion of a 'town'.

I believe that the Greek notion of *kosmos* can better describe Celtic notions about a sacred king in the Mead Hall. While it is true that *kosmos* does in some instances correlate to 'world' as the inhabited world, the standard ancient Greek term for 'the inhabited world' is *oikoumenh*. *Kósmos*, literally, something ordered, is an ordered system, an orderly arrangement, the act of marshaling troops in Homer's *Ilyad*, with an important secondary sense of 'ornaments of a woman's dress, decoration,' as well as a meaning of celebrating funerary rituals. Pythagoras was possibly the first to apply this word to 'the universe,' perhaps originally meaning 'the starry firmament,' but later it was extended to the whole physical world, including the earth. The Homeric *kosmos* is divided into a diurnal and nocturnal world: a human habitation and one which lies beyond the sun's orbit and contains the heroes and the dead (Marinatos 2009). And a seventh-century BC text from Crete tells us about an official whose title was *Kosmos*. The text comes from a stone written in bustrophedic style from Dreros, a small ancient city in eastern Crete, which is perhaps best known among contemporary classicists as the place where the earliest surviving Greek law on stone was carved. Specifically, a *Kosmos* is the highest executive official whose publicly appointed role was to establish and maintain political order (Cartledge 2009:41). The *Kosmos* was the chief magistrate and judge in Dreros and the law puts a limitation to the repeating of his office before an interval of ten years. Later, the Kosmos was the most ubiquitous public official of the Classical and Hellenistic Cretan city-states.

I believe that the Homeric and Celtic notions are similar and draw from a common Indo-European cultural origin, although they gave different cultural solutions. Further about that later, when I will discuss the Proto-Indo European root **med*.

Bellovesus and Segovesus

I think that the legend of the foundation of Milan, related to the so-called 'half-woolly sow' we mentioned before, is the founding myth of a Celtic town similar to that of Rome and that it was connected with the town's ruling household and its legitimation ideology. According to Livy a great king named Ambicatus started the process that ended with the foundation of Milan. Livy, whose source may be the Greek writer Timagenes who authored a lost *History of the Gauls*, calls Ambicatus a king of the Bituriges, 'kings of the world' (from *bitu*, world, and *riges*, kings, cf. Latin *reges*) as their name seem to suggest, who ruled over the Celts in central Gaul in the days of Tarquinius Priscus (the fifth century BCE). *Bitu*, however, also means 'time, eternity'. The name Ambicatus, from the Celtic words **ambi-* 'around' and **catus* 'battle', means Who Wages Battle Around, or Who Wages Battle Everywhere (The Proto-Celtic words come from the list made by the Centre for Advanced & Celtic Studies,

University of Wales http://www.wales.ac.uk/en/CentreforAdvancedWelshCelticStudies/IntroductiontotheCentre.aspx). Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h (2000:281) translate Who Fights on Both Sides. It looks the name of a war god as well as the divine ancestor of the chiefly household ruling a people whose proud name may mean Kings of the World or Kings of Time/Eternity. Le Roux and Guyonvarc'h make a lot of the Bituriges' tribal name in their very interesting book *Les Druides* (1986, Italian edition [1990] 2000), but Celtic tribes often vaunted boastful names: the Boi are the Terrible Ones, the Insubres, the Fierce Ones, the Aedui the Blazing/Furious Ones, the Caletes the Tough or the Brave Ones, the Caturiges the Kings of Battle, the Remes the First Ones (Kruta 2003:79).

According to an interesting Proto-Indo-European custom connected with fosterage, Ambicatus sent his nephews, not his own sons, to colonize new lands. They were his sister's sons Segovesus and Bellovesus. The first element of Bellovesus's name, *Bello-* may come from Beli, the great god of the Gaulish Belgae, whose name comes from the Proto-Celtic root **belg-* meaning 'to swell', particularly with anger/battle fury/etc.. The Belgae lived on the west bank of the Rhine, in the 3rd century BC, and later also in Britain, and possibly even Ireland, and gave their name to present day's Belgium. Beli Mawr or Beli the Great was the Welsh Death God, father of the Welsh pantheon and all the noble Welsh lineages. *Belu*, to kill in Welsh, comes from the Proto-Celtic **belatu*, death.

But Bel may also come from Bel or Belenus, The Bright One, the great god of the Light and the Sun, whose festival, Beltane or Beltaine (Bel's Fires) on May 1st was the beginning of summer, when herders led their cattle to the high pastures and the war leaders started their expeditions. Bel's symbols were the horse and the Sun Wheel, and his name comes from the Celtic word **belo*, 'bright, shining', and also 'divine'. I believe that this interpretation is not set in opposition to the meaning of *Bello-* as the Leader, the Killer, the Warrior Chief. In fact there is a definite relationship between Sun and Death in Indo-European thought: Homeric Apollo is definitely deadly in his wrath; while one of his epithets is Phoebus, the Shining one, others are the Archer and the Far-shooter. He is a god who could bring ill-health and deadly plague. The relationship between sun and death was also recognized by the Romans, who identified Bel/Belenus with Apollo. The second part of the word, *-vesus* is from *vassus*, a Latinized word from the Celtic noun *gwas*, 'lad, servant,' and during the feudal period 'vassal,' from the adjective *gwassawl*, 'who serves.' Hence, Bellovesus means Bel's or Beli's servant. Consequently, Segovesus means servant of the god 'Sego' akin to the early Irish name Nia Segamoin (servant of Segomo). According to Koch (2006), Sego, meaning 'strong', is an element common to many names of the ancient Celts. In Celtic mythology there is a Continental Gaulish god of war and victory named Segomo (Victor, Mighty One), that looks more a title than an actual name and exists as an epithet for both Gaulish Mars and Hercules. The god was commonly associated to birds such as the eagle and the hawk, and the Proto-Celtic root **sego-* means actually 'bird of prey, eagle, hawk.' Hence, Segovesus may be translated as 'servant of the god who strikes the enemy like a bird of prey,' and therefore the Victor, the Mighty One.

Name	Meaning
Ambicatus	*ambi* (everywhere, around)-*catus* (battle): Who Wages Battle Around/Everywhere
Bellovesus	•Bel (The Bright One, solar god) - *vesus* (servant, from *gwas*, lad, servant): Bel's Servant •Beli (supreme god), Beli Mawr (Welsh death god, ancestor of Welsh kings), *belu* Welsh (kill) from Proto-Celtic **belatu*, death: The (lethal) Conqueror's Servant
Segovesus	•*Sego-* name element (strong). Segomo, a Celtic war god. - *vesus* (servant, from *gwas*, lad, servant): The Strong One's Servant. •Proto-Celtic **sego-* (victory, bird of prey, eagle, hawk) - *vesus* (servant, from *gwas*, lad, servant): The Victorious God's Servant, Servant of the God Who Strikes (the enemy) Like a Bird of Prey.

According to Livy the two brothers led a group of followers from a number of tribes, but they divided and

Bellovesus came to Northern Italy, defeated the Etruscans, and stopped in an area inhabited by the Insubres, a people who had the same name of a village (*pagus*) of the Aedui tribe, which were part of his motley army. He interpreted the name as a good omen and stopped here to found Milan. Livy also mentions an interesting detail about the relationship between Bellovesus's people and the Phocéan Greek town of Marseille, and adds that after the foundation of Milan Bellovesus let the Cenoman Celts pass through his territory and settle at Brescia and Verona. But, according to Pliny the Elder, the Celts who founded Milan were the Insubres, not a coalition of peoples led by the Bituriges. In some way Strabo and Poliby support Pliny saying that once the Insubres had only one village, which had later become an important city, Mediolanum. Possibly the Insubrian princely household in Milan wanted to stress a mythological relationship with the powerful Bituriges. Michael Grant (1958) interestingly remarks that, although Bellovesus has an army, he does not conquer the Insubres, and later he allows the Cenomans to settle as his neighbors. Putting together archaeological evidence and classical historians, we can portray a picture of long standing relations between Celtic-speaking Golasecca IIIA Proto-Insubrians and Transalpinan Gaulish Bituriges. Long-distance trade objects from Golasecca Culture were found at Avaricum/Bourges, which still was the capital of the Bituriges at Ceasar's times (Kruta 2003:152). Hence we can hypothize that, as it was customarily done, Bellovesus at the head of a heterogeneous tribal group, had had in advance the permission to settle in Lombardy, and possibly he had offered to help Massilia as mercenaries to be allowed to pass through their country. The same happened with the Cenomans who were allowed to pass through Insubrian lands and settle at Brescia and Verona.

Jan de Vries (1961 [1981, 208]) mentions an interesting legend (in Grenier 1945) that connects Bellovesus, Segovesus, and the crows, prophetic birds, to the foundation of Lugdunum/Lyon (but it does not say anything about all the other Lugdunums). Albeit not all mytographers agree, the crow is an attribute of the god Lug: according to the myth, Lyon/Lugdunum (Gaulish: Lugodunon) was founded by Segovesus and Bellovesus, who got their victory with the help of the crows. So we have the very same brothers who founded Milan who also founded Lyon and possibly even Bibrax/ Laon, and all the other towns named Lugdunum. Livy's story mentions the fact that one of the brothers, Segovesus, sees a ram as an omen and goes northward to the Hercynian Forest (Hercynia Silva). Julius Pokorny (1959) lists Hercynian as being derived from Proto-Celtic **perkʷu-* "oak". Julius Caesar (*De Bello Gallico* 6.28) speaks of three fabulous animals living here, a bovine unicorn, the hornless moose and the auroch, whose silver plated horns the Celts use as banquet drinking vessels.

In any case, is it possible that these myths may conceal a perceived mythical relation between elites and towns? According to Plutarch, the city of Lugdunum was founded by two brothers, Atépomaros (a solar god whose name means The Great Horse, worshipped by the Bituriges) and Momoros (which is a druid whose name means 'Swan', a bird related with the night sun) who saw some crows flying over the hill, hence Momoros interpreted that as a good omen from the god Lug, after whom they named the town.

In sum, we have a number of foundation myths that reproduce the ancient pattern of Indo-European sovereignty with two kings, one a sacred king related to the most esoteric part of the government of a town or a nation and a warrior king connected with the military aspects. They exist also in the myth of the foundation of Rome, and are represented well by the two kings of Sparta during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Their models were the Divine Twins. Kristiansen and Larsson (2005) showed that the institution of the twin kings originates from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) institutions, and spread through Minoan-Mycenaean-Carpathian routes to central Europe and beyond, to Scandinavia during the Bronze Age. Thus, a Bronze Age founding myth lasted enough to be mentioned by Livy and other classical writers, but the place or places delegated to the management of sovereignty had changed. Typical Bronze Age settlement patterns were raised sites beside rivers or low-lying open spaces on terraces besides rivers as well as fortified sites on hilltops. The 'core' of the settlement could be located between two streams or on a river bend. It was a *lann* or enclosure, the precinct where the elite buildings were situated. Here there were the elite houses, the stables of the most precious animals, the shops of the most

skilled artisans (often members of the aristocracy), as well as the Mead Hall; it was literally the heart/hearth of the community, who lived in the sparse farms nearby. It was the place where political decisions were taken, justice administered, victories celebrated, guests honored, and where the dramatic events sung by the bards took place. When the classic historians were writing their books mead had been substituted by wine, possibly the name of the Mead Hall or Meeting Hall, where the sacred drink was drunk to ratify oaths, had partly changed its meaning , and the community has acquired a more urban flavor. Possibly the current name of the city, Milan, is closer to the original name than we may think, *Mid-lann*=Milan (and also Melano, Medelana), without the interference of the Greek and Latin versions.

The God Lug

Many etymologies have been proposed for the Celtic god Lug/ Lugus: principally The Bright One and The Shining One, epithets that emphasize his solar nature. He was also called 'the son of the Sun,' but the solar connection, supported by the Victorian linguists, has been nuanced by the relation with the Welsh word for moon (*lleuad*) probably derived from the reconstructed proto-Celtic word **lug-rā*. This word is related to the PIE root **leug-* (blackness, dimness, darkness) thus the moon is 'dim light' and Welsh *'goleu'* means 'banisher of darkness'. Also Lugus may be related to the Proto-Celtic root **lug-* (oath) which is linked both to pledging and deception, or the proto-Celtic root **lug-* (to deceive). A number of linguists, among them Koch (1991: 252), believe that this god was originally and etymologically the god of Oaths (**lugiom* in Celtic). Therefore, we have a picture of Lugh as a traveler between realms, a deity of communication and oaths and a dweller in the shadows. He is also fit-in with a role as a psychopomp. However, the Middle Welsh word *llug* means 'bright' so there might have been a proto-Celtic root with the component **lug-* which actually meant 'light' (like the Greek *leukòs*, from PIE **leuk*, **luk*). The Old Irish god *Lùg* was also called *Lewy Làmfata* (Long Arm or Long Hand, meaning 'skilled with a spear or a sling') *Ildánach* ('skilled in many arts'), *Samhildánach* ('equally skilled in many arts'), *Macnia* ('boy hero'), and *Lonnbeimnech* ('fierce striker' or perhaps 'sword-shouter'). Hence Alexei Kondratiev (1997) believes he was also an ancient lighting god. His Welsh counterpart is Lleu Llaw Gyffes, The Bright One with the Strong Hand. He was a Gallo-Roman war god who also protected merchants, travelers and thieves, and was called *Mercurius Artaios*, Mercury Bear, and *Mercurius Moccus*, Mercury Swine, animals symbols of the sacred kings. As a protector of royal sovereignty and one of the most important gods of the Celtic pantheon, Lugh was assimilated to Jupiter/Zeus, but also to Mars/Ares as a war god, and Apollo as a solar god. In Cisalpine Gaul (northern Italy) he was worshipped with the name of Belenus and represented with a crown of sun rays. Julius Cesar (*De Bello Gallico* 6.17) says that "the god the Gauls worship most is Mercury; he is a protector of the travelers and the merchants and to him are dedicated most statues. After him they worship Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva". Therefore, according to Julius Cesar, Lugh/Mercury was the Gaulish principal god.

The etymological debate about the meaning of Lugh and the light, whether solar or lunar, whether bright or dim, and the god's connection with two animals, the bear and the swine may be explained with the daylight (summer) and the nocturnal (winter) aspects of the Indo-European gods. Other Gaulish epithets of Mercury give us other clues: he is *Mercurius Teutates*, Father of the Tribes (an epithet also attributed to Mars), *Defensor* and *Finitimus*, that is a god who protects the lands and the borders of the tribe, also waging war to its foes. As such he is a tribal god.

For the Proto-Indo-European peoples the swine (Gaulish *moccos*, Irish *muc*, Welsh *moch*, Breton *moc'h*) is the symbol of wisdom, because he eats acorns and hazelnuts, fruits of sacred trees, the oak and the hazel, associated to the esoteric sciences. In particular, according to the Dumezilian tripartition of Indo-European society, the swine was the symbol of the priestly class. In the Irish and Welsh mythologies, the swine is often a druidic disguise of the hero.

The bear, Gaulish *artos*, is the symbol of strength and royal sovereignty because the bear eats the honey

produced by the bees, which is connected to the notion of immortality through its relation with mead. In fact the gods were thought to drink or ate a special mead, some identify with the 'nectar' of the Greek-Roman deities, which keeps them eternally young. Moreover, since the bear has seasonal habits related to his hibernation, the bear is well fit to represent both the notion of royal duality (the twin kings) and that of cosmic duality. Because of his strength and quasi-human aspect the bear was venerated all over the world. In Europe from antiquity to the Middle Ages the bear, not the lion, was the symbol of the king (Pastoureau 2011)

Celtic deities	Irish epithets	Roman-Celtic epithets	Roman Gods	Characteristics	Aspects
Lug	Lugh, the Sun god's son	Mercurius Artaios, Mercury-Bear orso	Mercury	Irish god, priestly and military, protects merchants, travelers and thieves.	Caesar: god of all crafts, shows the journey, protects trade
	Lugh, the bright one	Mercurius Moccus, Mercury-Swine	Jupiter – Zeus	Chief Celtic god, sovereignty god	The swine is symbol of wisdom, related to esoteric sciences
	Làmfata , Long Hand, Arm (spear)	Mercurius Teutates, Father of the Tribe	Mars – Ares	War god	Lug-Mercury-Hermes : a psychopomp, protects medicine
	Esus, the best	Mercurius *Defensor* Defensor	Apollo-Belenus	Solar god (Cisalpine Gaul Belenus)	Lug-Mercury god of contracts and oaths
	Samildanach, god of thousand arts	Mercurius *Finitimus* Protector of boundaries		In Welsh and Irish myth related to sovereignty and oracles	Sovereignty related to contract. Contract between gods and humans, the basis of law

In his role of protector of travelers and trade this Gaulish Mercury, Lugh, similar to his Greek homologue Hermes, protects contracts and oaths. Transformed from a Vedic wind god into a Celtic 'solar' god, Lugh/ Mercury/Hermes has a dark side as a psychopomp, who accompanies the souls of the Dead to the Other World, and is also a protector of medicine, symbolized by a hazelnut wand with two serpents, the *caduceus*. In the Irish and Welsh mythologies this god is related to sovereignty and oracles, and assimilated to the Germanic Odin/Wotan; hence the presence of the crows, oracular birds connected with the Celtic Mercury of Lyon. The dual aspect of this god, both 'solar' and 'dark,' is not contradictory, but it responds to characteristic originated in the PIE culture. Moreover, the 'contract/oath' aspect is related to the notion of 'sovereignty': together they

mean both a contract between gods and humans, and the basis of the law, as well as the human authority originated by the law.

Going back to the founding myth of Milan, Bellovesus sees a good omen, a white sow under a hawthorn tree. The hawthorn is a plant sacred to the Goddess Belisama, identified by the Romas as Minerva, whose temple is supposedly under the Dome of Milan. Belisama, whose name means Splendor of Summer or Brilliance of Summer, was Belenus's wife; Bel/Belenus (the Bright One) was identified with the Roman Apollo, but also, as we have seen, with Mercury/Lugh.

The feast of Lughnasadh (Old Irish: *Lugnasad*, ; Irish: *Lúnasa*; Scottish Gaelic: *Lùnastal*; Manx: *Luanistyn*) is a traditional Gaelic holiday celebrated on 1 August. It is interesting because it puts together the aspects of summer, death as well as oaths. In Irish mythology, the Lughnasadh festival is said to have been begun by the god Lugh, as a funeral feast and games commemorating his foster-mother, Tailtiu, who died of exhaustion after clearing the plains of Ireland for agriculture. Historically, the *Aenach Tailteann* gathering for the festival was a time for contests of strength and skill and a favored time for contracting marriages and winter lodgings. A peace was declared at the festival, and religious celebrations were also held.

The Goddess Belisama, Ceridwen and the White Sow

Belisama is the goddess of all types of fire (the sun and the moon included), she is a healer and a patron of arts like Minerva. Among these arts weaving is prominent, not only as an honored occupation for aristocratic women and a rich gift, but also as a metaphor of human life, woven by the goddesses of Destiny, and poetic ability. I believe that this connection between weaving and Bellovesus's fatal/final destination is represented metaphorically by the curious chimerical half-woolly sow .

Belisama is also identified with Brig (the Exalted One, the Supreme One) or Brigit/Brighid, later Christianized in Saint Brighid. In Celtic religion and Irish mythology, Brigit or Brighid is the daughter of the Dagda and one of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Belisama/Brig seems the summer aspect of the Proto-Indoeuropean goddess of the seasons, the sun and the moon. In her winter aspect in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man she is called *Cailleach Bheur* (pronounced *coy-lck* or *call-y'ach*), the Old One, the Old Hag or the Veiled One. From the Latinized form of her name comes Caledonia, the old name of Scotland. She is often portrayed as an old hag with a blue face, the Goddess of Winter, that is the Goddess in her destructive aspect, who raises on October 31 at Samhain, brings storms and snow until April 30, when she turns into stone and yields to Brig/Belisama at Beltane.

Let's consider now two Sow goddesses, Henwen and Cerridwen. Henwen is a Cymric (Welsh) goddess known from the Welsh Triads, and her name literally means 'Old White'. She is the deity who brought abundance to the land by giving birth to an assortment of 'litters' throughout England. For example, she left a litter of bees in one spot, wheat in another, barley in another, eagles in another, etc. But she did not produce dogs, pigs, or other animals thought to be the sole possession of the Otherworld inhabitants. Henwen looks a 'summer' goddess, but she also gives birth to a monster, the Palug's Cat. Henwen or Hen Wen, the sow, was the animal form of Cerridwen, the goddess of inspiration and keeper of a magic cauldron.

The feminine Welsh termination *wen* in Cerridwen (Caridwen, Ceriswen) literally means 'white' but in the names of deities it usually connotes 'sacred'. Thus her name probably means 'Blessed Poet' or 'Blessed of the Verse'. In later folklore Cerridwen became the Hag figure with some of her attributes similar to the Irish and Scottish Cailleach. This may have been because she was seen as a sorcerer and therefore became demonized. In local folklore the wheat-straw was considered sacred to Cerridwen and used for the process of divination. Miranda

Green (1996:68-9) highlights the relationship between supernatural women and the concept of the Cauldron of Regeneration in Welsh myth. In the *Book of Taliesin*, a Welsh thirteenth-century manuscript, a supernatural female, Ceridwen, described as a sorceress or a witch, owner of the Cauldron of Inspiration and Knowledge, has two children, a daughter, Crearwy (Light, Beautiful) and a son, Afagddu (Dark, Ugly). She decides to brew a potion intended to make her son wise. The potion has to boil for a year, so she instructs a young lad, Gwion, to watch over the vessel. Three drops of the liquid splash on the servant's hand and he licks the scalded finger. All the knowledge goes to Gwion, so Ceridwen is furious (also because the cauldron had burst), and chases the lad. Both change forms, until Ceridwen becomes a hen, and changes her servant into a grain of corn and swallows it. After nine months she gives birth to Taliesin, who is so beautiful that she does not kill him, but sets him adrift in a coracle, later recovered by a nobleman of the King's court. Taliesin became the greatest poet and satirist in the land as well as the genuine incarnation of druidism according to his peers. Green remarks that the acquisition of knowledge of Gwion/Taliesin has strong links with the Irish myth of Finn, who gained wisdom from licking his burnt finger that had touched the roasting flesh of the Salmon of Knowledge. As Green notes, Ceridwen is described as the Old One, a Hag of Creation, a witch. She is the Keeper of the Cauldron and its potion; she is akin to the hags of Irish myth, who were goddesses of sovereignty and who shape-shift into beautiful young women or into animals. As such, Ceridwen is both a creator and an initiator and the story of Gwion can be considered an initiation at a deeper level. More important of all, according to Green, is the cauldron itself, described as a vessel of knowledge, but which is also the cauldron of rebirth that appears in the *Tale of Branwen* and in Irish myth. In a sense Ceridwen is the cauldron, swallowing Gwion, and causing him to be reborn as Taliesin. The act is also a metaphor, since the grain of corn eaten by the witch-hen can be seen as the seed buried in the womb of the earth for regeneration. Green also notes that there is a connection between the cauldron and lakes: Ceridwen dwells in the area of Bala covered by the Lake of Tegid and the Irish cauldron in the *Tale of Branwen* also comes from a lake. This connection is confirmed by abundant archaeological evidence for the ritual deposition of cauldrons in lakes and marches during the last millennium BC. The dualism of Ceridwen as a goddess associated with life, death and regeneration is symbolized by her children who may represent day and night, light and dark, the sky and the underworld, summer and winter. She is a descendant of the great goddess of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, akin to Minerva and Belisama/Brig.

In sum, when Bellovesus sees the white sow, he receives an investiture from the Goddess of Sovereignty. It is possible that the myth of the foundation of Milan dates back to the Bronze Age, went on being told among the Iron Age Celts of Lombardy, and was correctly mentioned by Livy. Milan/Mediolanun/Medhelanon was what archaeologists call 'a place of power', and close to the area where Belisama's temple was situated. I think there was also the area dedicated to the rituals of sovereign legitimation and political/military decision. Here the Mead Hall, the royal palace of the sacred king, heir of Bellovesus, was located. Kruta (1999, 2003), together with most Italian archaeologists, believe that the Insubres, the Celts who founded Milan, were the descentants of indigenous Bronze Age Celtic populations. The first was known as Canegrate Culture, developed from the recent Bronze Age (ca. 1300-1200 BC) until the Iron Age, in the Pianura Padana areas of what are now western Lombardy, eastern Piedmont and Canton Ticino, and later as Golasecca Culture (9th - 4th century BC). De Marinis (1991) points out that the Golasecca Culture was created by the most ancient Celtic peoples in Italy, the Insubres, Laevi, Lepontii, Oromobii (or Orumbovii). According to Kruta (2003), Bellovesus was a leader of a more recent Celtic expansion. Classical texts tell us that the Insubrian towns such as Acerrae and Mediolanun were important fortified sites; Polybius mentions the federal sanctuary dedicated to a war goddess identified as Atena, actually Belisama, where weapons, war banners and symbols of the Insubres were kept when in peace, but he does not mention its location. From the excavation made during the underground works it looks the the Insubrian settlement was large about twelve hectares, which is not very much, in comparison with the Bronze Age *terramara* Fondo Paviani at Legnago, Verona, more than twenty-hectares large. Mori (1999) writes that the twelve-hectares settlement of the Golasecca IIIA period (500-350 BC) was obtained by connecting the fifth-

century findings. It consists of the area around the Forum, currently the Ambrosiana Library, between the squares Pio XI and S. Sepolcro, and the area between Meravigli street, Piazza del Duomo, and Valpetrosa street. But between the second half of the second century BC and the beginning of the first century BC, Mediolanum develops into a eighty-hectares town.

Kruta (2003:301) says that the excavations brought to light a fourth-third-century BC ditch filled during the second half of the second century BC., when the Celtic *oppidum* was transformed into a Romanized town. Kruta believes the the small ditch marked an internal subdivision of the oppidum, "maybe a sanctuary or another important public area." Among the remains a 'Padanian dracma' , that is a dracma minted locally, was found. Can we suppose that this area was the site of the Mead Hall? It is very likely.

I believe that the translation of Mediolanun as Medionemeton or 'central sanctuary' (in the sense of a temple-like monument in the woods) is not convincing, and that one has to distinguish between the Mead Hall as the palace where sovereignty was made explicit towards the outside, and the *nemeton*, where the roots of sovereignty were darker, more secret, looking towards the inside, according to the principles of dual kinship. Hence, the *medhelanon* or *mid-lann* is the area with the buildings which constituted, strictly speaking, the royal palace where the *-rix* lived with the relatives belonging to the main lineage and the court, while the *nemeton* proper is the sanctuary in a forest clearing. Of course, both constituted a complex around which the ideology of sacred kingship and sovereignty in general was hinged. It is the Prot-Indo-European **reg*, and the Latin *rex*, Irish *ri*, Gaulish *–rix*, whose mission, according to Benveniste (1976:295), is not ruling but setting the rules, what is 'right' morally as well as ritually. The PIE *rex* is connected with the Latin *regere*, and the phrase *regere fines*, tracing the border, a deed made by founders of cities such as Romulus and by the Highest Priest drawing the border of a sacred area. This deed was made by the *rex*, thus it is only 'right' that Bellovesus, the founder of a city, is the 'servant' of a god, Bel/Lugh/Mercury, who is the protector of borders, which divide the inside from the outside, Us from Them.

The *ri* is also connected to the Greek *medon*, the ruler and the notion of measure. He is tha man who knows the *médea*, the ways (cf. Latin *modi*) to reestablish the order in the universe, in a sick body (*medicus*) as well as in the political relationships, that is peace and war. The *medon* is a 'moderator chief', who can heal the body politic, he rules and reigns. The Celtic root **med* originates the abstract noun *mess* (**med-tu*), Latine *judicium*, judgment, in the sense that the king restores to the norm a problem by means of the correct ritual. In this sense he holds the sovereign authority (Benveniste 1976:377-83). I will elaborate these notions later.

Irish Banquet Halls and Supernatural Dwellings

James MacKillop, in his A *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (2004) reports an interesting Old Irish word, *bruiden* (Irish *bruidhean*, Scottish Gaelic *bruighean*), whose old and modern forms may have a different meaning. A *Bruiden*, pl. *bruidne*, can be a hostel, a great banquet hall, a house or an aristocratic palace, which may or may not be an underworld, fairy dwelling. Another Old Irish word, *bruiden*, almost certainly identical to the already mentioned one, means 'fight, quarrel or contest'. The modern Irish word *bruidhean*, pl. *bruidnea* and the Scottish *bruighean* are often used to indicate a dwelling of the fairies, but can also mean 'hostel, castle or royal dwelling'. In modern Irish *Bruig* (*bruigh*, *brug*, *brugh*, *brú*) means 'house/farmhouse, dwelling, region, district, cultivated land', but it is used in myths and fairy tales in close association with the world of spirits and fairies. In oral traditional stories it usually describes the interior of a fairy mound or the *sídhe*, a residence where a number of fairies live.

We should mention the *Brug na Bóinne, na Bóinde, maic Ind Óc*, from the Irish word *Brú*. The term *Brú* means: a) bank of a river, b) hostel, c) womb; of the river Boyne. It is the otherworldly residence first of Boand and of the

Dagda but later, more importantly, of Angus Óg, Irish god of youth and poetry. This residence is usually identified with the great passage-grave of Newgrange, dating from 3200 to 2600 BC, but may include the nearby passage-graves of Dowth and Knowth, in Co. Meath. All three are in the Boyne valley. MacKillop (2004) says that *Brug na Bóinne* offers hospitality to countless guests in hundreds of Irish stories. At times it is synonymous with the power and/or generosity of the god Angus Óg, because it provided endless supplies of ale, three trees that were always in fruit, and two pigs, one of which was living, the other cooked and ready to eat. In variant texts the great hero Lug Lámfhota is sometimes described as buried here.

Here I will introduce the word 'guest', in order to understand who was welcome and in what terms, since the area for the guests was part of the royal compound. The PIE word **ghostis* means 'stranger, foreigner' and also 'guest', a person one has an obligation to reciprocate hospitality. The Latin language still makes the difference between a stranger who is a friend and a stranger who is an enemy, using the words *hostis*, 'foreigner, enemy,' and *hospes*, 'guest' from *hosti-potis*, 'who gives and receives hospitality, originally 'lord of strangers/foreigners'. This meaning is kept in the Greek word *xenos* and in the German languages (*gast*, German for 'foreigner' and for 'guest,' *host*, English for 'army' (archaic) and for 'who receives guests'). During the Bronze and Iron Ages, and possibly before, the rules of hospitality were extremely strong and were applied to both people and gods, according the rules of the gift and counter-gift illustrated by Marcel Mauss (1925).

In the Irish sagas there are five or six *bruidne*, baquet halls or halls for the guest, such as Forgall Manach's *bruiden* near Lusk, north of Dublin, Da Réo's one at Bréifne, and the one owned by Da Choca or Choga at Breenmore Hill near Athlone, Co. Westmeath. In the story *Scéla Mucce meic Da Thó* (The story of Mac Dathó's Pig) we have a description of a *bruiden*: "*There was a famous king of Leinster. Mac Dathó was his name. He had a hound; the hound defended the whole of Leinster. The hound's name was Ailbe, and Ireland was full of its fame. Messengers came from Ailill and Medb asking for the hound. Moreover at the same time there came also messengers from Conchobar Mac Nessa to ask for the same hound. They were all made welcome and brought to him in the hall. That is one of the six halls that were in Ireland at that time, the others being the hall of Da Derga in the territory of Cualu, and the hall of Forgall Manach, and the hall of Mac Dareo in Brefne, and the hall of Da Choca in the west of Meath, and the hall of Blai the landowner in Ulster. There were seven doors in that hall, and seven passages through it, and seven hearths in it, and seven cauldrons, and an ox and a salted pig in each cauldron. Every man who came along the passage used to thrust the flesh-fork into a cauldron, and whatever he brought out at the first catch was his portion. If he did not obtain anything at the first attempt he did not have another.*" (Gantz 1981:180)) In Irish myth the number seven often meant 'many', but as a figure, it represents the sum of the four quarters of the Celtic year and the three reigns of the Cosmos, the earth, the sky and the sea. Seven was a powerful and magical symbol and, like the numbers three and five, it occurs frequently in Celtic myths.

In the *Story of Mac Dathó's Pig* and in *Fled Bricrenn* (The Feast of Bricriu) we can see a very ancient tradition at work: the Champion's Portion (Old Irish *curadmìr*). Bricriu of the Evil Tongue, the trickster, promises the hero's portion of his feast in his new *bruiden* in Tara to three different champions, Lóegaire Buadach, Conall Cernach, and Cú Chulainn. A violent dispute over precedence ensues, which leads to a series of contests.

The Champion's Portion

The *Curadmír* or Champion's Portion was an ancient custom referred to in early Irish literature, whereby the warrior acknowledged as the bravest present at a feast was given precedence and awarded the choicest cut of meat. This was often disputed violently. The custom appears most often in the legends of the Ulster Cycle. Classical writers such as Athenaeus, quoting Greek historian and geographer Posidonius, says that it was the custom among the (continental) Celts the bravest men claimed for the hind quarter of pork, and disputes were settled by single combat to the death. This custom was also mentioned by Diodorus Siculus.

Bricriu wanted a new house to host his guest's similar, but more splendid, of the Ard Ri Conchobar's Palace known as the Red Branch in Emain Macha. "*Bricriu Poison-tongue held a great feast for Chonchobar Mac Nessa and for all the Ulstermen. The Preparation of the feast took a whole year. For the entertainment of the guests a spacious house was built by him. He erected it at Dun Rudraige after the likeness of the Red Branch in Emain Macha. Yet it surpassed the buildings of that period entirely for material, for artistic design, and for the beauty of architecture-its pillars and frontings splendid and costly, its carving and lintel-work famed for magnificence. The house was made in this fashion: on the plan of Tara's Mead-Hall, having nine compartments from fire to wall, each fronting of bronze thirty feet high, overlaid with gold. IN the fore part of the palace a royal couch was erected for Conchobar high above those of the whole house. It was set with carbuncles and other precious stones which shone with a luster of gold and silver, radiant with every hew, making night like day. Around it were placed the twelve couches of the twelve tribes of Ulster. The nature of the workmanship was on a par with the material of the edifice. It took a wagon team to carry each beam and the strength of seven Ulstermen to fix each pole, while thirty of the chief artificers of Erin were employed on its erection and arrangement. Then a balcony was made by Bricriu on a level with the couch of Conchobar and as high as those of the heroes of valor. The decorations of its fittings were magnificent. Windows of glass were placed on each side of it, and one of these was above Bricriu's couch, so that he could view the hall from his seat, as he knew the Ulstermen would not allow him within. When Bricriu had finished building the hall and the balcony, supplying it with both quilts and blankets, beds and pillows, providing meat and drink, so that nothing was lacking, neither furnishings nor food, he straightway went to Emain Mach to meet Conchobar and the nobles of Ulster.*" (Henderson 1999:2)

Bricriu's new *bruiden* was made on the plan of Tara's Tech Midchuarta (the Mead-Hall, from Old Irish *mid*, mead) that is the Feasting Hall of the royal palace in Temair (Tara).

Tara's Mead Hall and the *temenos*

Mac Giolla Easpaig (2009) has worked on the place name of Tara, the anglicized name of Temair (Teamhair, Temuir), six miles southeast of Navan, Co. Meath. The Hill of Tara is a low-lying ridge situated in rolling fertile land about 30 km north-west of Dublin. The site contains a significant number of archaeological monuments from the prehistoric period associated with the ancient high kingship of Ireland. The king of Tara was regarded, symbolically at least, as king of the whole country. Mac Giolla Easpaig explains that the Irish name for Tara is Teamhair, or Temair in medieval orthography; the English form of the name is a reflex of the Irish genitive, *Teamhra*. "*The better known explanation derives Temair from the name of a mythological woman called Tea, who is buried on the summit of the hill. … According to the story, Tea was the daughter of the mythological deity Lugaid and the wife of the equally mythological Erimon who died and was buried at Tara. … As with most of the etymologies found in the* Dindshenchas *the above explanation is absolutely far-fetched and is lacking any linguistic basis. … The name Temair is the subject of two recent in-depth studies as part of an overall reassessment of the significance of the historical site of Tara. The first study shows that far from being an uniquely attested name, Temair is the basis of over 20 other extant place names in the country (Ó Muraíle 2005). In the second contribution, the present writer demonstrates that most of the places named Temair had mythological or pre-Christian religious significance similar to that associated with Tara in County Meath. It is argued that the name Temair refers to a sacred enclosure and that, linguistically, the name derives from the Indo-European root**tem-*'to cut', a root that is found in the general lexicon of Irish in the appellatives* taman*, 'a trunk', and* tamhnach*, 'a clearing'. The Irish place name, Temair, is thus related to both Greek* temenos*, 'a sacred precinct', and Latin* templum*, 'a temple', in its etymology and signification, that is, it refers to a sacred space that has been cut off from the profane world (*Mac Giolla Easpaig 2005, pp. 446–448*).*"

The Greek word *temenos* (plural *temène*) comes from the verb *témno*, 'to cut' represented a stretch of land requisitioned and given to chiefs or kings to build their royal palace, or reserved for the cult of a deity or the construction of a sanctuary. Examples of *temène* were the areas of the Pythian Games at Delphi in honor of the god Apollo, the Nile Valley in Egypt, and the Acropolis of Athens. As we can see these *temène* involve both royal palaces and temples as well as cemeteries and areas for sacred games. Therefore they involve both political buildings and temples, all of them considered sacred areas divided from the secular areas where the commoners

dwelled and worked. Within the sacred precinct there were altars as well as the royal treasure, famous weapons, war standards and symbols as well as the Banquet Hall or Mead Hall where the champions vied for the Portion in the Cauldron.

In modern Irish *Teamhair* means 'the eminent hill or fort; dark hill'. In *Cormac's Glossary* (10th-century), and in *LL* (12th century) the opinion is expressed that the Irish word *'temair* (Mod. Ir. *teamhair*) means any high place, eminence, hill from which a view can be had. and that it is borrowed from a Greek word *temoro'*. The Greek origin is rejected by the modern scholar Vendryes (LÉIA s.v. *temair*), although the noun *teamhair* was clearly understood by Irish scribes and glossators in the medieval period to mean a conspicuous or eminent height, a view subsequently shared by a number of scholars. We must not forget that many gods and goddesses have epithets meaning 'highest, supreme', hence it is the eminence of either a deity or a place to deserve the metaphorical attribute of 'high'. The Irish over-king's title was Ard Ri, where *ard* means both literally high, steep, and figuratively high, holding the highest authority (at least in theory, within the terms of Iron Age/early medieval kingship). Authority is usually seen as 'high': for example, in English 'high in the instep' is a slang term meaning overly proud or arrogant,' from on high' is something coming from someone in a position of authority, someone who is 'high and mighty' behaves as if he is more important than other people, etc.

However, Wagner (1979 in Hughes, 1992), in his discussion of the identification of the Earth-goddess with sacred hills and the dual function of life and death, took Teamair to mean 'the dark one', stating: "*It is almost certain that the root tem- (cf. Old Irish* temel *'darkness') from which we can derive Temair, is also contained in the name of the river Themes [modern Thames, London] cf. Sanskrit* tamasa- *'dark-coloured'. Thus Temair would appear to derive from a root* tem- *'dark', possibly a reference to the inner hill, although there is no significant height in the townland of Tara. However, there is a conspicuous ring fort named Tara Fort and this may be the feature from which the townland is named.*" On a hill half a mile south of Tara, Tara Fort is also known as Rath Maeve, Medb's Fortress. This is an important high-banked defensive fort for the Royal City and it is about 250 meters in diameter.

P. W. Joyce (1906) described the remains of the Mead Hall in Tara: "*On the northern slope of the hill are the remains of the Banqueting-Hall, the only structure in Tara not round or oval. It consists of two parallel mounds, the remnants of the side walls of the old Hall, which, as it now stands, is 759 feet long by 46 feet wide; but it was originally both longer and broader. It is described in the old documents as having twelve (or fourteen) doors: and this description is fully corroborated by the present appearance of the ruin, in which six door-openings are clearly marked in each side wall. Probably there was also a door at each end: but all traces of these are gone. The whole site of the Hall was occupied by a great timber building, 45 feet high or more, ornamented, carved, and painted in colours. Within this the Feis or Convention of Tara held its meetings, which will be found described in chap. xxv., sect. 1, farther on. Here also were held the banquets from which the Hall was named Tech Midchuarta [Meecoorta], the 'mead-circling house'; and there was an elaborate subdivision of the inner space, with the compartments railed or partitioned off, to accommodate the guests according to rank and dignity. For, as will be seen in next chapter, they were very particular in seating the great company in the exact order of dignity and priority. From this Hall, moreover, the banqueting-halls of other great houses commonly received the name of Tech Midchuarta.*"

Speaking of Tara, MacKillop (2004) writes: "*The 'Banqueting Hall' [Ir.* tech midchuarta, teach miodhchuarta*]. Rectangular earthwork, 750 by 90 feet, which does not match the descriptions of the five-sided banqueting hall in medieval literature. Recent scholarship favours an entrance-way for horses and chariots.*"

Mead or Middle?

The Old Irish *tech midchúarta*, or sometimes simply the *midchúairt*, comes from *mid+cùairt*. The noun, (m.and f.) is *midchùairt*, genitive *midchuarta*. Synonyms are *tech n·óil, óltech* (banquet hall, drinking hall, from *tech* (house)+ *óil/ól*

(drink), *fletech,* from *feis*, pl. *feiseanna*, gathering, festival + *tech*, house.

Old Irish *tech* comes from the Proto-Celtic **tego*-, from Proto-Indo-European **teg-os* (cover, roof). The masculine noun *tech* means 'house'. Synonyms are *lann*, *dom, attrab, treb, tegdais* (home, house, dwelling). Descendants: Modern Irish *teach*, Manx *çhagh, thie*, Scottish Gaelic *taigh* (house, dwelling).

Old Irish *Tech Midchuarta* and Late Medieval Irish *Teach Miodhchuarta*, literally means 'the house where the mead went around', i.e. 'the mead (*miodh*) circling (*chuarta*) house (*teach*)' or 'the circular house of the (mead-) feast.' This name is possibly the interpretation of a toponym by an Old Irish writer to describe the function of the prehistorical structure - which is actually rectangular - unearthed at the sacral site of Tara, where religious ceremonies were undoubtedly held as shown by the archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, a celebration known as *Feis Temro* ('Feast of Tara'), was held at Tara, which was the centre of the cult of sacred kingship presided over by Medb. Known in Irish literature as *banais ríghe* ('wedding-feast of kingship'), with *banais* or *ban-fheis*, literally signifying 'sleeping with a woman', this feast was celebrated by each king during his reign and symbolized his union with the goddess of sovereignty, who embodied the territory over which he ruled. Hence there is a link between this feast and the goddess of mead-intoxication and the name of the banqueting hall of Tara, which directly refers to mead. The celebration was mostly a drinking feast, celebrating the king, in which sacred mead must have played an important role in contacting the otherworld - as mead was ritually drunk at the funerary ceremony of the Prince of Hochdorf. Hochdorf is the name of the grave and rural residence of a princely Iron Age (Late Hallstatt period to early La Tène, ca 530-400 BC) chieftain, whose seat of power (or *fürstensitz*) was at nearby Hohen Asperg. The three sites (grave, residence and *fürstensitz*) are all located within about 15 kilometers of Stuttgart, on a small tributary stream to the middle ranges of the Neckar River of southwestern Germany.

Scholars do not agree about the meaning of *tech midchuarta*. They translate it:

1.'mid-court', central court or hall in a dwelling, generally used for banquets

2. 'drinking hall'/'feasting hall'

3. 'mead hall, 'the house's mead circuit,' 'mead-court,' 'house of the circle/circling/circuit/passing around of mead'

The DIL (*Dictionary of the Irish Language: Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials*) identifies the first element as "*mid* = middle" rather than "*mid* =mead", although both are common words in Old Irish. Moreover, "*cúairt*" is interpreted as "*cuirt* = court", a borrowing from Latin *co(ho)rs, co(ho)rtis*, which does not seem to occur widely in Old Irish. As we can see, there is a problem with *mid*, similar to that of the first element of the toponym Mediolanum/Medhelanum/Milan: most translate *medio/medhe* as 'middle' and do not even consider the alternative 'mead' which I support.

I believe that one can find a solution in the Proto-Indo-European term **med* 'measure, rule.' I will turn to the PIE root **med*- shortly. First I am going to consider the meaning of circling in ancient ideology. Lonigan (1996:63) reports that Sanas Cormaic, a ninth-century Old-Irish Glossary compilator, defines *a/inne* as *cu/airt*. The usual meaning of '[*f*]*áinne'* is 'ring', and this entry in Sanas Cormaic is the only instance of '[*f*]*áinne*' supposedly meaning 'circuit' (or 'cycle', the writer is making a connection with the cycle of the year). The Old Irish noun *cúairt* means circle, ring, circuit, circumference, circuit, tour, visitation, journey. Manx *keayrt* 1.circuit 2.sojourn, visit, stay 3.visitation 4.occasion. Scottish Gaelic *cuairt* 1.circle, orb, circumference 2.orbit 3.circuit 4.expedition, journey, pilgrimage, excursion 5.walk, visitation, round, ramble. MacBain's Scottish Gaelic dictionary gives *cuairt* from the Scottish Gaelic *cruinn* round, Irish, Old Irish *cruind*, Welsh *crwn*, Breton *krenn*, from PIE **krundi*-s; root *kuro*-, circle, turn, as in *car*, turn, twist, Latin *curvus*; Greek, Old Greek *kurtós*, bent, Old Greek *korw/nc*, ring, Latin *corona*, English crown. The form *crundi*- from *kur* is related to the Latin *rotundus* from

rota.

Holy circuits can be found in traditions all over the world. Circling can be both figurative and literal: the radiance circling round the sun, kings circling round their territory, founding monks circling the area that will become a monastery, or pilgrims circling round a well. In Celtic feasts people were seated according to hierarchical circles, of which the inner circle around the king was the most important and exclusive. But what is important for a ritual is the way the circling is done: it is a sunwise circling, and it is a paradigm of the 'right' way of doing things.

Enright (1995) in his *Lady with a Mead Cup* illustrates how ritual consumption of mead was very important and it was passed round in a sunwise circle. As Frazer (1922) points out, speaking of the sacred king, "*His person is considered, if we may express it so, as the dynamical centre of the universe, from which lines of force radiate to all quarters of the heaven; so that any motion of his—the turning of his head, the lifting of his hand—instantaneously affects and may seriously disturb some part of nature. He is the point of support on which hangs the balance of the world, and the slightest irregularity on his part may overthrow the delicate equipoise.*" If the king is the 'dynamical centre of the universe', it is obvious that he must tour it, circle it sunwise, according to the cycle of the seasons, and nature in general, or better, re-producing and re-creating the correct order of the seasons. The Irish *ri* and the latin *rex* give us back the notion of Indo-European royalty: Benveniste (1976:295-6) remarks that the Indo-European *rex* is much more religious than political. His mission is not to rule, but to establish the rules, determine what is, properly speaking, '*rectus'*. *Rectus* comes from a tool , the *regula*, the ruler or rule, a straight-edged strip, as of wood or metal, for drawing straight lines and measuring lengths. Hence the straight line represents the rule, and morally it represents what is right, not crooked, therefore dishonorable, wrong. The Italic, Celtic, and Indian archaic king is more a priest than a king as we understand him. The presence of the old word for tribal king, **reg-* (*reg-*), only in the extreme east (Indian *rajah*) and the extreme west (Latin *rex*, Celtic *–rix*, Irish *ri*) virtually guarantees its presence in the earliest Indo-European society.

Hence, the Celtic *ri* represents what is the Old Greek *medon*, Μέδων, a Homeric name/attribute usually translated 'the chief, the ruler, the one who governs', we have already mentioned before. *Medon* comes from the PIE root **med*, a root notable for the diversity of its derivatives, which means "to take the appropriate measures." Reflexes range in meaning from "rule," through "measure" (*modicum*, from Latin), to "physician" (Latin *medicus*). The notions of government and sovereignty are represented in the derivatives. Benveniste (1976:376-83), in discussing the PIE root *med-* and the notion of measure, stresses the fact that the different derivatives involve a notion of authority and sovereign decision. That is, one takes the appropriate measures, in a ritual sense, to restore a perturbed organism, either a human body, a celestial one or a kingdom, to normality, to restore the normal order of the things. The sick body is not 'healed,' but the disease is 'dealt with according to the rules'. The Latin *medicus*, *medical* (adj.) from Latin *mederi* to heal,' originally means 'know the best course for,' and it is related conceptually to the Greek *medomai* be mindful of, Avestan *vi-mad-* physician, Latin *meditari* think or reflect on, consider, Irish *miduir* judge, Greek *medein* to rule, Old English *metan* to measure out.

The Celtic derivatives of the PIE root **med* illustrate the idea of 'ordered harmony' (MacBain's Dictionary, sec. 26):

1. Scottish Gaelic *meidh* a balance, Irish *meadh*, Old Irish *med*, d. *meid*, Welsh *medd*, centre of motion: **medâ*, root *med*, mete; hence *meidhis*, a measure, instalment.

2. Scottish Gaelic *meas* judgment, opinion, respect, Irish *meas*, Old Irish *mess*, **messu-*, judgment, Irish *miduir* judge, root *med*; further root *mê*, measure, English metre, meter, etc.

Benveniste (1976:365, 369) explains that the judgment involved here, in the Celtic words, as well as in some Italic

and Greek ones, is not 'justice' as we understand it, but a judgment according to formulas (Greek *dikai*), that is traditional codes made of collections of oracles, strongly articulated around kinship and tribal relations. These formulaic law codes are orally transmitted and the judge must keep them safe and apply them. The judge is 'who delivers the rule'.

It is interesting that in the semantic field of **med-* 'measure', the daughter languages have words meaning 'time,' 'season,' 'mealtime,' 'table', 'meter,' 'diameter,' etc. (cf. Old English: *mæl/mal/mel* measure; time, occasion, meter; Icelandic: *mál* time, mealtime, season; Old Norse *mjǫtuðr* dispenser of fate; Latin *mensa* table, Medieval Latin *commensalis* adj from banquet/eating together). There is a famous symbol that puts together the notions of time, season, measure/judgment as well as mealtime and table: it is the Round Table at Arthur's Tintagel. The cosmic symbolism of the Round Table can be seen in the poems of the Arthurian Cycle. Walter (2005:70-72) remarks that the Round Table suggests the calendrical rotation of the sun as well as the sun's circuit, since the ancients believed that it was the sun that circled around the earth and not the other way round. The king, like an earthly sun, was obliged to make a sunwise circuit around the various capitals of his domain, obeying all sorts of prohibitions and obligations. The king is what the Welsh *medd*, centre of motion, implies. In addition, the Sankrit noun *melanam*, assembly, gathering of people, and the verb *melanam*, to meet, suggest similar notions about the time when the king appeared at great gatherings in particular days and feasts.

At the end of this discussion, we can see that there is a cluster of meanings that overlap, all of them involving the concepts of sovereignty, sacred king, and cosmic center. We know that, when words or phrases occupy either adjacent or overlapping semantic fields, they may begin to interfere with each other in the sense that one contaminates the other, thereby changing usage such that the contaminated version supplants the earlier one. Change of meaning also occurs when two words sound alike. Because the words are so similar, often the meaning of one becomes attached to the other. This linguistic phenomenon may explain why the first element of words such as Mediolanum and Midchuarta are translated 'middle', and Meath, a county in Ireland where Tara was located was called Mide in the Middle Ages. Following the *Lebor Gabála* (Book of Invasions), a better translation of the name of the druid of the Nemedians, Mide, may be The Ruler (cf. Greek *Medon*). According to this version, the druid Mide, an eponym for the province of Mide (Meath), is the one who lights the first fire in Ireland, which lasts for seven years and from which every other fire is lit. Hence the toponym Mide may mean The Place The Rule Comes From.

There are a number Proto-Indo-European roots in Pokorny's Master PIE Etyma (http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/ielex/PokornyMaster-X.html) that are homophones:
702-3 2. *me-* IE *medhi-* by, with, amidst, around. Semantic Fields: Near (adj.); Circle
703-4 3. *me-*, *m-e-t-* IE 1. *med-* to measure
705-6 1. *med-* IE *menot* to mete, allot; medicate, rule
706 2. *med-* IE to swell
706-7 *medhi-, medhio-* IE 2. *me-* middle
707 *médhu* IE mead, honey
731-32 *menot*, genitive *meneses*, from which *menes-*, *mens-*, *mes-*, *men-* IE 3. *me-* month; moon

I believe that we can put some of these *med* roots together:

- *me-*: *medhi-* by, with, amidst, around, and *medhi-, medhio-* middle.

me-: menot, genitive *meneses*, from which *menes-*, *mens-*, *mes-*, *men-* month; moon. It can be considered within the semantic field of no.1 for its cyclical meaning, and a member of the semantical field no. 2. for its meaning of portion of time. (cf. Sanskrit *mânsa*, time, Latin *mensa*, from the *focaccia*, a flat, plate-like bread on which the

portion offered to the gods was put, Late Latin *missus* course at dinner, lit. placing, putting (on a table, etc.), from *mittere* to put, place, from Latin *mittere* to send, let go, same *med* (no.2) root as *metiri*, to measure).

> •*me-*, *m-e-t-* : *med-* to measure and *med- menot* to mete, allot; medicate, rule. Boundary, limit. Of course, a moderator (an arbitrator, who makes things in the correct mode) is also a mediator, a negotiator who acts as a link between (divine and human) parties, a middleman (*med* no. 1). A most important link to do this is mead.
>
> • *med-* to swell and *médhu* mead, honey, since the boiling mixture to produce mead swells. Figuratively, to be or become filled or puffed up, as with pride, arrogance, or anger. To rise from within (a warrior's furor, a poet's verse, a prophet's oracle, a hangover), sexual arousing.

As we have already seen, there is a conceptual relationship between the notion of measure and portion, and the Greek notion of *kosmos* κόσμος =order, good order, orderly arrangement, with several main senses rooted in those notions. The verb *kosmein* meant generally 'to dispose, prepare,' but especially 'to order and arrange (troops for battle), to set (an army) in array;' also 'to establish (a government or regime);' 'to deck, adorn, equip, dress' (especially of women). Cosmos (*kosmos*) comes from the PIE word **kens* ' to announce with authority, to proclaim, speak formally.' Hence, *Kósmos* is an ordered system, an orderly arrangement, and the word is also a title in Crete: the *Kosmos* was the chief magistrate and judge, the most ubiquitous public official of the Cretan city-states. The Sanskrit verb *samsati* means 'to recite, to repeat or utter aloud' (something rehearsed or memorized), especially before an audience, but also to list or enumerate.' According to Pokorny's Lexicon comes from the PIE word **kens*. The Latin derivatives from the PIE word **kens* are very interesting: *censeo*, *censere* 'to assess, tax,' *censor* 'censor,' *census* 'census,' *recenseo*, *recensere* 'to review,' *recensio*, *recensionis* 'enumeration.'

A personal name of a Homeric character, the Trojan prophetess Kassandra, Κασσάνδρα, priestess of Apollo, also derives from the PIE word **kens*, and it is usually translated 'the Fateful' or 'She who entangles men,' or "She who selects men'. As such, she seems as fateful as the fateful mead in the Welsh poem *Y Gododdin*, or the goddess of sovereignty Medb (Mead). Whatever the precise translation of the Trojan prophetess's name, she looks the local version, or the human representative of a Fate goddess. Therefore, it is conceptually related to Homeric Moira, one of the Fates, from Greek *Moira*, literally 'share, fate,' related to *moros* 'fate, destiny, doom,' *meros* 'part, lot,' *meiresthai* 'to receive one's share.' But it is also related to the Latin *meritum* 'desert, reward, merit,' from *meritus*, from the verb *merere*, *meriri* 'to earn, deserve, acquire, gain,' from PIE root **(s)mer-* 'to allot, assign' (cf. the already mentioned Greek *meros*, *moros*, Hittite *mark* 'to divide' a sacrifice). The second element of the word *Curadmír*, the Champion's Portion also comes from PIE root **(s)mer-* : Old Irish *curad* (genitive of *caur*), 'of a hero, champion, warrior'; *mír*, 'morsel, ration, portion.' By the way, Poseidonius, through Strabo, made comparisons between the costumes of the Celts and those of Homeric Greeks in the *Iliad*. This means that this writer, albeit unwittingly, had observed common cultural traits coming from a common cultural-linguistic ancestry.

If the king is at the center of the cosmic order, the center of motion, actually he is responsible of the cosmic order by his circling around Mide, Ireland, Cymru, Alba, Britanny or other Celtic domains, then his seat is the center of the world, it is the sacred precinct where he eats and especially drinks a sacred drink, mead, from the cup of sovereignty. The cups or the horns full of mead were similar to the gold cup and the nine drinking horns, not to mention the enormous round bronze 500-litre cauldron of Western Greek manufacture and decorated with three lions, that had been filled with mead, in the grave of the Halstatt prince of Hochdorf. The drinking vessels must go around according to a sunwise circuit, and those who accept the cup of mead in the Mead Hall also accept their obligations to the king. As two lines of the Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* say: '*For wine-*

feast and mead-feast/They swore to wreak havoc' (LIX). Curiously, several Germanic derivative words from *med* (middle) mean 'blade, sword'. As I already said, the conceptual overlapping of the notions such as order, measure, portion, lot, fate, doom, prophecy, swelling warlike fury, drunk poetry, oath, allegiance, mead, sovereignty, circling, circuit, ring, table, season, sun wheel, etc., explains why it is so complicated to disentangle the different meanings and roots. The Proto-Celtic words derived from **med* are in fact: *med-je*, *med-jo* 'measure,' *medjo-* 'middle,' *medo-* 'power,' *medu* 'mead,' *medwo* 'drunk,' *mess* (from **med-tu*), 'judgment,' and *messu* 'acorn.' We may also add **med-e/o-* (?) 'be able,'**med-e/o-* (?) 'say,' **med-e/o-* (?) 'sin' (from the list published by the Centre for Advanced Welsh & Celtic Studies, University of Wales).

Medb, the Mead Goddess, Wife to Many Kings

Since its most ancient history Tara was an important center sacred to Medb Lethderg (Ir., 'red-side, half-red'), goddess of sovereignty at Tara and queen of Leinster. Although portrayed as a separate character from Medb of Connacht, she is her double and is probably older; Medb of Connacht, Cu Cuchulainn's nemesis in the Cycle of Ulster, may well be an emanation from Medb Lethderg. Daughter of Conán of Cualu (Dublin/Wicklow), she was the wife of nine successive kings of Ireland, including the father of Conn Cétchathach (of the Hundred Battles), Cormac mac Art (the son of Art, the Bear), who could not be considered a king until he had slept with her, and Art mac Cuinn (Art [the Bear] the son of Conn) (MacKillop 2004). The older spelling is Medb (but she is also called Maeve, Maev, /mæðv/ in Irish, /mev/ in English). The name means She Who Intoxicates, Inebriation, or Mead.

From the earliest Irish history Tara was an important centre of religious ceremony, sacred to Medb, then considered a goddess, or to her double, Medb Lethderg. A burial site as early as the second millennium BC. connected with the seats of the Bronze Age chiefdoms, later Tara was the seat of kings who were also over-kings (the *ard riogh,* High Kings) of the region and heads of the Uí Néill federation, and thus the most powerful leaders in all Ireland. The English word 'king' is an inadequate translation of the Old Irish *rí* (cf. Latin *rex*), which denotes the leader of a *tuath*, the basic territorial unit of early Irish society. The Irish *ard rí* (high king), inaugurated at the *feis temhra* at Tara, was not a national sovereign. The notion of a ruler of the whole island, often attested in early literature, was the work of native historians and commentators supporting the Uí Néill dynasty.

The Making and Unmaking of a King

About Celtic kingship MacKillop (2004) writes: "*A king could be selected from a family group of four generations, the* derbfhine*, and he must pass a ritual test. Any member of the* derbfhine *might serve, not only the eldest son of the previous ruler. A first set of rituals tested a candidate's fitness, e.g. a royal chariot ride in which he must prove a worthy passenger; a royal mantle that must be the right size; two stones, a hand's distance apart, must open sufficiently wide to give passage to the candidate; and, lastly, the stone of Fál must voice its assent. The second means of selection was the bull feast or bull sleep [Ir.* tarbfheis*] in which a bull was killed and a selected man ate its flesh and drank its broth; he then lay down to sleep, while four druids chanted an incantation over him, which would allow him to envision whoever was destined to be king. These two methods of selection are most associated with the kingship of Tara, but informed opinion asserts they were also employed elsewhere. Celtic sacral kings were often insulated from the perils of the profane world and often found their conduct severely regulated by binding prohibitions (cf. Ir.* geis*). Why the king should be so bound is not clear; it may be that he was being forced to avoid circumstances and behaviours that were thought harmful to previous kings, but some taboos appear somewhat capricious. … The proscriptions appear to support his sacral status, as do comparable restrictions placed upon the Roman priest of Jupiter known as flamen Dialis; to violate them brings a clear*

portent of the end both of the kingship and of the king's life. The qualities of a rightful king ensure peace, prosperity, and security of the kingdom's borders. As such these qualities are not simply admirable but necessary. In Old Irish these qualities were listed as fir flaithemhan *[Ir., truth of the ruler]. At the same time, kings found to be deficient in character or conduct bring misfortune to their people … Worse than the deficient king is the usurper, whose reign is thought to bring famine and drought. … According to custom a sacral king is a young husband and his kingdom is his bride. A king's inauguration was known as the* banais ríghe *[wedding feast of kingship], during which the king is ritually united with the sovereignty over the territory he will rule. At Tara this ritual was known as* feis temrach. *The ceremony appears to have comprised two main elements: (a) the libation offered by the bride to her husband, and (b) the coition. Whatever the exact nature of this ceremony, the elements of intoxication and sexuality are unmistakably present. In reporting the inauguration of a king it was said that he was wedded to (literally 'slept with') his kingdom. Both elements are present in the characterization of one of the most powerful queens of Old Irish literature, Medb [she who intoxicates]. The power of the king to bring his barren kingdom to fruitfulness is thought to parallel, according to many commentators, the transformation of the sovereignty goddess from an ugly old hag into a beautiful, nubile maiden.*" Seen from the point of view of the sacred king and his obligations not only the name of Tara achieves a meaning if we put all the explanations together, but also the name of Milan/Medhelanon as the Place of the Mead or Mead Hall acquires a more nuanced meaning, as the seat of the sacred king of the Insubres.

There is also another very important *bruiden* which helps explain the concept of sovereignty. It is the *bruiden* belonging to Da Derga (the Red God), among the men of Cualu, Leinster, usually located along the river Dodder in Dublin county, but also identified with the ruins at Stackallan Bridge, Co. Meath in the Valley of the Boyne. *Togail Bruidne Dá Derga* (The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel) is an Irish tale nominally a part of the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology, since the settings and characters are in Leinster. It survives in three Old and Middle Irish recensions. It recounts the birth, life, and death of Conaire Mór (Connor the Great), a legendary High King of Ireland, who is killed at Da Derga's hostel by his enemies when he breaks his *geasa* (taboos a sacred king must obey). After Conaire Mór has already broken several of his taboos, he travels south along the coast of Ireland, he is advised to stay the night at Da Derga's Hostel, but as he approaches it, he sees three men dressed in red riding red horses arriving before him. Unfortunately, this was the last of his *geasa* to be broken. His three foster-brothers exiled to Alba (Britain) for their crimes, had made alliance with the king of the Britons, Ingcél Cáech, and they were marauding across Ireland with a large band of followers. They attack Da Derga's Hostel. The hostel (*bruiden*), in many ways is a magical dwelling, usually described as having seven doorways, although some texts describe nine. Ingcél spies upon the hostel, describing the residents to his companions, and predicts which will survive. Three times the invaders set the hostel on fire, and three times the flames are extinguished. Many in the hostel are killed, the first being Lomna the fool, as he himself had predicted, but the defenders, including Conaire, slay many of the attackers. Conaire asks for a drink, but all the water has been used to put out the fires. When all the available water is consumed Conaire dies of thirst, and two of the marauders decapitate him. At the end of the story Conaire's severed head thanks Mac Cécht for searching all of Ireland to find water to slake his thirst. Conaire arrives at the *bruiden* on November 1st, the Day of Samhain, and the owner, Da Derga does nothing to help the High King. In some texts the name of the *bruiden*'s owner is da Derga, the Red God, others call him Ua Dergae, the Red Goddess's Nephew. In the Celtic myth the red color always signals the presence of the supernatural and especially the Otherworldly. The Red Goddess may be either Medb or Flaith, goddesses of sovereignty, who cause the death of the king who broke the taboos (*geasa*) connected with the role bestowed to him by the Goddess of the Land, personified by a prophetic old hag Conaire turns out in the story. This hag is Cailleach Bhéirre, the Irish sovereignty figure, whose Scottish Gaelic counterpart is Cailleach Beinne Bric. As the allegorical sovereignty figure, she appears to a knight or hero as an ugly old woman asking to be loved. When she receives love, she becomes a beautiful young maiden. She asks Conaire for love but he refuses her and turns her out, his final mistake. As we have already seen before, speaking of the Welsh Ceridwen, the Keeper of the Cauldron, Cailleach Bhéirre is related to Cailleach Bheur the Scottish Gaelic genteel old lady or the winter's hag.

The Drinking Cup and The Sacred Marriage

The personification of the power and authority of a kingdom as a woman to be won sexually pre-dates literature written in any Celtic language. Flaith (Old Irish *flaith*, 'prince, princess, chief of a cadet lineage') derives from the Proto-Celtic **wlati-* 'sovereignty'. In a story titled *Baile in Scáil* (The Phantom's Frenzy), Conn Cétchathach encounters Sovereignty: he sets out from Tara, but he finds himself in an otherworldly chamber. Seated upon a throne is Lug Lámfhota, who embodies sacral kingship, while nearby on a crystal chair is a beautiful girl, his consort (the goddess Ériu). She asks who should serve the red ale (Irish *derg-fhlaith*), making a pun on ale (*laith*) and sovereignty (*flaith*). Lug answers by naming all Conn's successors in the kingship. Here the sexual contact is only symbolic as Conn is offered the drink in a golden cup, whose implications are clear (MacKillop 2004). MacKillop (2004) remarks that other female personalities from early Irish literature also carry associations with sovereignty, often linked with specific territory. Mór Muman embodies the sovereignty of Munster just as Medb Lethderg personifies it at Tara. Macha, Medb, and the Mórrígan all have associations with sovereignty in older Irish literature, while the Cailleach Bhéire is the foremost sovereignty figure from later and oral tradition. The color blue implies sovereignty, redoubled in the name Gormfhlaith (blue sovereignty). Branwen (white or sacred raven) is the only Welsh figure to have sovereignty affiliations.

Here I am more interested in Medb: Medb is the Old Irish form of Irish *Meadhbh* (pr. Meav), sometimes anglicized as Maeve, Maev (pr. Meiv). Medb means 'she who intoxicates' and is related to the Greek. *methu*, wine; Latin *medus*, mead; Breton *mezv* and Welsh *meddw*, drunk, from the PIE word **medhu*, mead. She is the warrior-queen of Connacht, leading figure in the Ulster Cycle, and the apotheosis of several forces and antecedents, including goddesses of territory, fertility, and sovereignty. Like a Gaulish mother-goddess, Medb is often portrayed with creatures, a bird and a squirrel, on her shoulder. By literary convention she is pale, long-faced, with long flowing hair, wearing a red cloak and carrying a spear that may be flaming. Like Macha, the triple Horse goddess, Medb can run faster than any horse, and the sight of her is enough to deprive men of two-thirds of their strength. Medb dominates men, both by the force of her personality and by her sexuality, and translators called her 'Medb of the friendly thighs.' Although her fortress is always named as Cruachain (Co. Roscommon), Medb is usually seen elsewhere, at Tara, where she was called Medb Lethderg (Medb of the Red Side; MacKillop 2004). The hierogamy, the sacred marriage between the king and the land, was symbolized by the cup full of the red liquid offered by the goddess to the king to drink and by the public coitus. We have seen in a story that a king is offered *dergfhlaith* or *dergflaith* (red sovereignty) the red sovereignty or 'red ale' by the goddess Eriu. This red liquid was ale in the latter case, but was mead in the case of Medb. Later it was probably substituted by wine among the continental Celts, but its tradition lasted until the medieval Cycles of Arthur and the Grail.

The motif of the hierogamy, from the Greek *heros gamos*, holy marriage, a sexual ritual that plays out a marriage between a god and a goddess, is very ancient and can be found at the roots of PIE culture, from Ireland to India, as well as in the Near East, and elsewhere. An Iron Age representation of the ritual involving the offering of the cup and the coitus comes from the art of the *situlae*. Typically Iron Age *situlae* are bronze, as in the types of libation vessels found as grave goods in the Hallstatt region of Central and Southeast Europe, and the areas of the Raeti, the Venetics, and the Etruscans. The body of the king is as important as the function, actually it is the physical embodiment of an abstraction, the concept of sovereignty. The body of the king as a metaphor of the body politic is a very old notion: the body of the king radiates power – also physically – because it is a source of power, because it is 'sovereign', that is 'above' and beyond the law which radiates from the king. Sovereign comes from the late Latin adjective *superanus*, 'chief, principal', Latin *sursum*, from *super*, 'above, over, on the top (of), beyond, besides, in addition to,' from PIE **uper* 'over' (Gaulish *ver-*, Old Irish *for*, Greek *hyper*, Old English *ofer*, 'over'). The king is the source of the rule and the law and outside of that, and because of this he is 'sacred', an ambiguous term which means both 'consecrated to a deity' and 'cursed'.

In his very influential *The Golden Bough* (1922), James Frazer shows how the idea of sacred royalty embodied in the king is rooted in antiquity. The body of the king must obey a number of taboos, special rules similar to those other people who are related to blood must obey: a woman menstruated or after childbirth (symbol of the biological power of life), a warrior or a priest who killed an enemy (blood of death) or a sacrificial victim (blood of death to renew life). The body of the king is considered the dynamic center of the universe and the course of nature from crops to cattle, from bad weather to victory in war are related to his body and the respect of taboos, like the *geasa* of Irish mythology. As Frazer writes: "*Sometimes, however, the course of nature, while regarded as dependent on the king, is supposed to be partly independent of his will. His person is considered, if we may express it so, as the dynamical centre of the universe, from which lines of force radiate to all quarters of the heaven; so that any motion of his—the turning of his head, the lifting of his hand—instantaneously affects and may seriously disturb some part of nature. He is the point of support on which hangs the balance of the world, and the slightest irregularity on his part may overthrow the delicate equipoise*." (Fraser 1922. *The Golden Bough. Ch. 17. The Burden of Royalty. Section 1. Royal and Priestly Taboos*.). … "*the fertility of men, of cattle, and of the crops is believed to depend sympathetically on the generative power of the king, so that the complete failure of that power in him would involve a corresponding failure in men, animals, and plants, and would thereby entail at no distant date the entire extinction of all life, whether human, animal, or vegetable.*" (Fraser 1922. *The Golden Bough. Ch. 24. The Killing of the Divine King. Section 2. Kings killed when their Strength fails*.)

Hence there are a number of early Iron Age bronze vessels (*situlae*) and belt buckles that show ceremonies that can be interpreted as scenes of legitimation of the sacred king and his ability to govern bringing wealth and prosperity. Biba Teržan (2001) analyzed some iconographic motives of the so-called Art of the Situlae, that is plowing, the sacrifice of animals and the *simplegma* or ritual coitus in the *situlae* of Sanzeno and Montebelluna (Italy) and Nesactium (Croatia) and the belt buckles of Brezje and Sticna (Slovenia). These objects were manufactured by the Raeti, the Venetics and the Proto-Celts of the Lower Carniola Halstatt groups, influenced by the Etruscans. They show how far these cultural practices and cultural traits were widespread. On the figural friezes of the bronze vessels from Sanzeno, Montebelluna and Nesactium the scenes are arranged in such a manner that they are connected to one another or one above the other, so that they symbolic connection is apparent immediately. Canonized scenes of a *ieros gamos* or ritual coitus are connected with scenes depicting the plowing of the land, a metaphor for fertility; sometimes there are elks and rabbits, that are also symbols of fertility, or hunting scenes (a very ancient motif hinting at a coitus since the Paleolithic), and groups of warriors, another metaphor for abundance and power, both literally and metaphorically.

Halstatt art of the Lower Carniola introduces further motifs: the bronze belt buckle from tomb 1 of mound 1 in Brezje shows a coitus repeated more than once, together with a vessel that can be seen as a *lebes gamos*, a female wedding vessel in contemporary Greece, as the central motif. The marriage scene can be interpreted, in my opinion, as a ritual of renewal of the king's strength as well as the land after a number of years (possibly nineteen a sacred Celtic number, when there is the astronomic union between the Sun and the Moon, or maybe every nine years as in Norse Uppsala?). A bronze belt buckle from Sticna depicting a procession of fifteen men and one woman accompanied by zoomorphic figures seems, according to Teržan, to depict a ritual which belongs in the category of the 'rites of passage', and symbolizes a metaphorical burial ceremony with a sacrifice and a holy marriage in its partition into two parts, and therefore an allegory for belief in the renewal of the life cycle.

The Perfect Hostess and the Good Guest

In a later epoch, the story of the foundation of Massalia (Marseilles) told by Athenaeus of Naucratis, a Greek writer who lived between the first and the second century B.C., reminds us that the holy marriage was a common custom in Gaul. According to Athenaeus's story, reported by Aristotle, some Phocaean merchants arrived among

the Segobriges (meaning High and Mighty) Gauls just when the wedding feast for the nuptials of Petta, the king's daughter, were going to be celebrated. The Greeks were invited to join the festivities. Petta appeared only at the end of the feast and, as it was the custom, she carried a full goblet that was destined to be drunk only by her preferred choice for husband among a number of suitors (one cannot help but remember Homeric Penelope's suitors).To the surprise of all, Petta stopped in front of the Greek Euxenos and offered the cup to him. The king took this totally unexpected gesture as a sign from the gods, accepted his daughter's choice and then, as a wedding present, gave the couple the land around the gulf where the Greeks had landed. The name of the Greek groom is Euxenos, literally the Good Guest or the Good Foreigner, a name which hints at the beginning of an alliance based on hospitality and gift economy. Hence, Petta chooses Good Guest by means of the offering of a cup full of wine, a scene which also appears, for example, in the bronze vessel from Vace (Slovenia) as well as in the Irish myths. Petta represents the goddess of the land also in her name, because it means 'a portion of land' in Old Irish, Scottish Pict and Welsh, and in fact the Phocean Greeks are allowed to found their colony.

In MacBain's Dictionary *Pit-* is a prefix in farm and townland names in Pictland, meaning 'farm, portion;' Old Gaelic *pet*, *pett*, Gaelic *pette*, a Pictish word allied to Welsh *peth*, Gaelic *cuid*. *Cuid* means 'share, part,' Irish *cuid*, Gaelic *coda*, Old Irish *cuit*, Welsh *peth*, part, thing, affair, matter, Cornish *peth*, Breton *pez*, **qezdi-*, **qozdi-*; *qes*, *qos*, seemingly from the Gaelic pronoun root *qo*, *qe* (Cf. Latin *quotidie*, *quota*, Breton *ped*, how much).

Can we suppose there is a pun between the woman's name and the cup? Actually, there is a relationship between Pictish *pet*, Scottish Gaelic *pìos*[1] a piece, Irish *píosa*[1], and the Scottish Gaelic word *pìos*[2] 'cup,' Irish *píosa*[2] 'cup.'

Pìos[1], *píosa*[1]come from Transalpine Gaulish **petsi*, Proto-Celtic **kwezdi-*, Celtic root **pett*, Brythonic **petsā*, allied to Gaelic *cuit*, part, portion, English *piece*, French *pièce*, Vulgar Latin **pettia*, Low Latin *petium, pecium* 'broken piece, fragment, piece of land,' [from Gaulish **petsi*,]. Scottish Gaelic *pios*[1] can be *pece*, *pes(e*, *pec*; *pess(e* and other graphical variations, and it actually means a piece, portion, etc., also a goblet, a cup, a space of time, part, sample, fragment, measure of cloth, piece of ordinance, a number of parchment leaves, head of cattle, etc. In general, it means: a. A part separated, detached or broken off from a whole; a fragment (of something), a bit. b. A detached or detachable component part (of something). It can be seen in many Scottish place-names, such as Pitlochry, containing *pet* or *pit* in the sense of portion of land. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that 'piece' is cognate with Welsh *peth* in the sense of a thing, an affair, a matter and Old Irish *cuit*, meaning a portion or share.

In Justin (2nd century AD ?) following Pompeius Trogus a 1st-century Gallo-Roman writer from tribe of the Vocontii in Gallia Narbonens, the name of the bride is not Petta, but Gyptis or Cyptis, possibly from an unattestated Gaulish cognate of Gaulish **petsi*, Proto-Celtic **kwezdi-* meaning 'part, portion, piece of land'. As such, this word is a synonym of the word *lann*, meaning a piece of land reserved for a purpose, possibly without the religious overtones of the latter, I analysed before.

Macbain suggests that the Scottish Gaelic word *pìos*[2] and Irish *píosa*[2] 'cup,' come from Latin *pyxis*, Greek πυξίς (from πύξος/*puksos*, "boxwood"), a small box or small round container used by the ancient Greeks and Romans). However, it is conceptually, if not linguistically, related to Latin *cupa* 'cask, vat, vessel, tun, barrel,' to Greek *kybos*, *kyphòs*, 'vase', box, container, ark, *kype* 'cargo ship, cup' (cf. Old Norse *hufr* 'hull of a ship,' Old English *hyf* 'hive'), *kypellon* 'small cup, goblet-like drinking vessel, tub,' from PIE root **keup-* 'to bend, turn,"cave, hollow,' 'round container, bowl,' 'cup, vessel' (cf. Skt. *kupah* 'hollow, pit, cave').

If the supposition about the pun between 'piece of land' and 'cup, drinking vessel,' similar to the Irish pun we mentioned before between 'sovereignty' and 'ale,' is correct, the name of the woman, Petta, means Land/Cup.

Petta after the wedding changes her name into Aristoxénè, usually translated The Perfect Hostess or the Best of

Hostesses. Strabo wrote in a different version that before the Phocaeans sailed to Gaul, they were told by an oracle to take a guide from Artemis of Ephesus ; and accordingly they went to Ephesus to ask the goddess how they should obey the oracular order. The goddess appeared to Aristarche, one of the women of noblest rank in Ephesus, in a dream, and bade her join the expedition, and take with her a statue from the temple. Aristarche went with the adventurers, who built a temple to Artemis, and made Aristarche the priestess. One cannot help but remark that the names Aristoxénè and Aristarche look very similar. Aristoxénè is composed of Aristo- from Greek *aristos* best (originally "most fitting, from PIE **ar-isto-*, superlative form of **ar-* to fit together; and *xenos* a guest, stranger, foreigner). In the name Aristarche the first part means 'the best', and *arche* is from the Greek *arke*, first (verb *archein*, to govern, to order, rule, to be the first, noun *archon*, lord, ruler). So the former is the Best Hostess which gives the cup, and the latter is the Best Ruler: in both cases they are the embodiment of Sovereignty.

Justin, in his summary of Pompeius Trogus's lost *Historiae Philippicae* calls the bride Gyptis or Cyptis, as we have seen, and groom Protis, while Athaeneus writes that Protis (the First One) is Euxenos and Petta/Aristixénè' son. Livy's story (5.34) of the Phocaeans landing on the site of Massalia at the time of Bellovesus and his Celts being on the way to invade Italy, is interesting because it connects Marseilles and Milan mythologically, and possibly also politically.

The Fatal Mead

Finally, I will mention a detail found in Claudio Beretta (2003:27): this Italian linguist states he does not believes it reliable the story of the famous captain Medo, who reputedly built the first center of Milan, to which another famous captain named Olano added more land. Mediolanum, the Latin name of Milan would be the sum of the names of the two captains. This episode would refer to the Etruscan period and, according to Beretta, would originated in the 7th century B.C. Beretta also makes more hypotheses using the Latin and German languages, but it is curious that he never uses any Celtic language, when the town was founded by a Celtic people who made it their capital. Is a Celtic language missing because of ideological reasons? Very likely.

Who followed my meandering can easily see that the story mentioned by Beretta couches in the name of Milan the twin kings of the archaic Indo-European peoples, who are named by means of a metonymy which alludes to their respective functions. In fact Medo is the mead in the cup of the priest-king who founds Milan with a holy ritual, and Olano is the Land of the Nation (cf. Welsh *llan*), metonymically represented by the sacred precinct, and aggrandized by the warrior-king. As Bettina Arnold (1999) remarks, in Ireland the words 'ale' and 'mead' were components of personal names. This tradition, therefore, both supports and completes the myth about Bellovesus and the sow.

Drinking huge quantities of alcoholic beverages, Koch (2006:616) reminds us, was considered a heroic behavior. For example, a great portion of the ancient Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* is dedicated to the glory of the mead feasts in the halls of the royal palace of Din Eidyn (Edinburg) during the year before the battle of Catraeth, about 600 A.D., when the men of the Brythonic kingdom of Gododdin and their allies fell against the Angles of Deira and Bernicia. The warrior chief who is able to keep his warriors drunk for a year demonstrated his leadership this way. In fact, this is a means to impose an obligation: the king finances a generous feast and, this way, puts an obligation on the warriors who accept the feasting. These warriors and the leaders of the war bands accept with joy, although they well know they will die in battle, defeated by the superior number of their enemies (XXXI). *Men went to Catraeth, mead-nourished band*,(IX); *Men launched the assault, nourished as one/A year over mead, grand their design.*(XXXII) Mead means doom: '*Since I drank, I crossed the border, sad fate*' (XX). Mead means death: '*Men went to Catraeth, keen their war-band./Pale mead their portion, it was poison*'(VIII). Mead means sacrifice: *Though by candles' light*

we drank bright mead,/Though good was its taste, long detested (XV) '*Because of wine-feast and mead-feast they left us,/Mail-coated men, I know death's anguish* (LX). Mead is an oath:' *For wine-feast and mead-feast /They swore to wreak havoc*' (LIX). But mead also means a thirst for fame to quench: '*Because of wine-feast and mead-feast they charged, /Men famed in fighting, heedless of life*' (LXI). The bond of obligation meant by mead is forcefully stated by the poet: '*Mead they drank, yellow, sweet, ensnaring.*' (XI) (transl. Clancy 1970).

Returning to the etymology of Milan and its variants, I believe that also the town names Melano and Medelana have the same etymology and also mean the Place of the Mead, Mead Hall, the areas of the royal compound where the Mead Hall was located.

A Road Beaten By Many Horses

I do not believe that Mandolossa (Brescia), which appears in Fumagalli's list, is related to the name of Milan and its meaning. Mandolossa (written in the ancient sources also Mandolacia, Mendolacia and Mandolotiu) is a hamlet in the province of Brescia and its territory is divided among the communes of Brescia, Gussago and Roncadelle. Gambari and Tecchiati (2004:238), in their article about the special status of the horse and the dog in the prehistory and proto-history, notice how the Celtic languages make a difference among the various equine species, confirming the importance of the horse culture among the Celts. In fact, to the general word *epos* (Latin *equus*) they also have *marcos* for horse, a term we can find in Pausania and in place names such as Marcallo (Milan). *Mandus* exists also in Latin as *mannus*, 'small horse, pony', and it was probably used also in Italy as a pack horse. These scholars (2004:240, n. 55) add in a footnote: "*Also the Celtic word* mantalon*, 'path, road', which produces place names such as Mantala, town of the Allobroges in the* Itinerarium Ravennate*, comes from this root. From* mandus *or* mantalon *may come place names such as Mandello (Novara and Milan), Mandella (hamlet near Ospedaletto Lodigiano), Mandalossa (Mandalocia, hamlet and stream near Brescia) Mendosio (near Abbiategrasso, Mandoz in 1273) .*" Actually, according to Tristram (2007:5), *marcos* has the specific meaning of 'saddle horse.'

John Koch, in his monumental *Encyclopedia of Celtic Culture* (2006:199) analyzes the meaning of the name of the Viromandui Gaulls, and interprets it as composed by *viro*, Celtic from 'man,' from Proto-Indo-European **viHro*, Latin *vir*) and *mandu*, pony, hence 'pony stallions' or '[men] virile in owning ponies' or 'male ponies.' *Mandu* is *men* in Middle Irish, *mynnin* Middle Welsh, and *men* in Breton, and means 'young animal'. The second element also occurs in a number of different personal names, such as Catamanus/Catamandus, a fourth-century B.C. Gaulish king, and a common name in Roman Britain meaning 'battle pony'. Gamkrelidze, and Ivanov (1995) consider this word a *Wanderwort*, a vagabond term which wanders around other languages. It originated, according to these scholars, during the Bronze Age from the Altaic **mórV*, horse, related to horsemanship, and spread throughout Europe with it. But the Proto-Celtic term **mantalo*, from which *mantalon* comes, means 'dirt road'. Pierre-Yves Lambert in his *La langue gauloise* (1995) translates Mandubii, the name of the tribe living in the region of Alesia, 'those who beat the road', and states that *mandu-* has two possible explanations: either it is connected with the Latin noun *mannus*, small horse, pony, or verbs meaning 'tread on, trample on' like the Welsh **mathru* and the tribal name Viromandui (which gives the place name Vermandois). Lambert argues that Viromandui means 'those who trample on men,' hence he gives a meaning different from Koch's.

Mantale (old name: Mantala), a place close to Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny, department Savoie, region Rhône-Alpes, France, reflects a Gaulish appellative *mantalo-* 'path, road' (*'the stamped'), derived from the IE root **men-* 'to step, trade over, press'.

Therefore, Proto-Celtic **mantalo-* with the male ending *–os* can explain the place name Mandalossa, a hamlet

west of Brescia. Today it is near highway intersections and railways, and maybe it has been an important place since antiquity, because of the Mandolossa stream. In my opinion Brixia (Brescia) probably controlled Mandolossa and a bridge or a wade on the stream with the same name. It was a road 'beaten', literally, by the convoys of merchants with their pack horses, and/or armed horsemen, according to the ebb and flow of politics and trade.

Nectain, Nectan, Necht

Fumagalli makes a serious mistake when, speaking of a Latin memorial stone with the inscription *Neptuno/Viribus*, he says that the Celts called Nectain their holy clearings, and that the Romans did not understand this word well and in the end confused it with the name of the sea god. Actually, the Romans were very religious and it was unlikely they made this mistake. In fact *nectain* is the name of a god known as Nectain, Nechtan, Nectan or Necht: he is a very old PIE deity and one of the aspects of the PIE *Dius Pater*. As such he is the lord of sea storms, god of the waters, he travels on a horse-drawn chariot, or appears under the form of a horse; in the Aegean archaic tradition he appears as Poseidon, the Roman Neptune. In Roman Britannia he is Nodens, represented as a god on a chariot drawn by four horses, brandishing a club in his right hand. He is also a solar god and a healer, because he is the patron of hot springs and baths. As a healer patron of hot springs he is known as Apollo in Roman Gaul. In some monuments he is connected to fish and, in particular, to a big salmon. Nodens - later known in Wales as Nudd or Lludd Llaw Ereint (the Silver-Handed) and in Ireland as Nuadu (also the Silver-Handed) - was the Celtic God of Healing, and the son of Belenos, the Sun God, and Anu, his wife. Dumezil connects him with the Norse god Tyr, who lost his hand in the mouth of the Wolf Fenris. A late heir may be the Fisher King of the Grail Cycle.

In the Irish myths the water god Nechtan is married to Boann, the White or Divine Cow. On Nechtan's hill there was a well, Segais, that was the source of all knowledge, to which only Nechtan and his three cup-bearers had access. In that well it swam the Salmon of Wisdom. Boann found her way to the well and its waters rose from the ground and chased her, becoming the River Boyne. Nechtan's Well of Wisdom was situated under nine hazel trees, the nuts of which imparted wisdom. Nechtan's name is related to Neptune; both gods seem to go back to the Proto-Indo-European god *Népo:t*, whose name means 'close relative of the waters,' and who rules the firey waters which grant wisdom, that is sacred alcohol, essentially. In the Celtic world springs are also a passage between this world and the Otherworld. In Wales Necht is the god of royal sovereignty and it often appears in the genealogies of the royal families (MacKillop 2004). This god was so important that it was easily adopted by Christian religion, as the story of St. Nectan shows well.

Saint Nectan or Saint Nectan of Hartland, was a fifth-century holy man who lived in the English county of Devon, where the prominent Church of Saint Nectan, Hartland is dedicated to him. According to his hagiographers, Nectan settled by a spring (now St Nectan's Well) at Stoke, in the then dense forest of Hartland. Here he lived as a hermit. He is also associated with St Nectan's Glen and Waterfall (or Kieve) at Trethevy, near Tintagel, in Cornwall, where it is claimed he spent some time. Anyway, at Hartland, Nectan lived in a remote valley where he helped a swineherd recover his lost pigs and in turn was given a gift of two cows. Nectan's cows were stolen and after finding them he attempted to convert the robbers. In return the robbers cut off his head. Nectan picked his head up and walked back to his well before collapsing and dying. Tradition also says that wherever Nectan's blood fell, foxgloves grew. After Nectan's death, a considerable cult grew up around his shrine and this continued to be popular throughout the Middle Ages, supported both by Saxon kings and Norman lords.

Therefore, *nectain* does not mean 'clearing', but it is the name of a god connected to springs, thermal waters and

healing. Hence he is linked to druidic knowledge, a fact that still lives in the detail of Saint Nectan's story about the swineherd (the pig is sacred to the druids). As such the inscription correctly connects Neptune to Nechtain, as gods of the waters; in the *interpretatio romana*, however, Nectain is also associated to Apollo as a healing god patron of hot springs. The inscription found at Gussago, a town near Brescia, probably sees a place, such as an oracular well, dedicated to the local version of the Celtic god Nodens/Nectain/Nechtan, which was called Neptune by the Romans.

According to Mazza (1986) the toponym Gussago comes from the Latin personal name Acutius to which the suffix –*acus* was added =Acutianus. The name Acutius appears on four Roman stone slabs discovered in the province of Brescia. Documents dated tenth century mention a Guxagum, while documents from the tenth to the thirteenth century call the village Gixiago, Gussiacho and Gussiago. In the fourteenth century the toponym is Guxago. While the slabs may mention the name of a Gallo-Roman man dedicating them, I do not think the origin of the toponym proposed by Mazza is very convincing, since the village pre-exists the Gallo-Roman man, however rich and important, who dedicated the slabs. Archaeological evidence shows that the village existed well before the Romans, thus it obviously had a name. The name was Celtic, and usually old names stick in common parlance, especially if the Romans did not substituted the population, but only the higher layers of the administrative cadres. While I cannot be sure, I propose to start from the Celtic language: from a Proto-Celtic noun **gustu* force, danger, (Old Irish *gus* strength, vigor), + **ag-* (**āg-*) fear or from the verb **ag-e/o-* drive , hence Fearful/Dreadful Force (maybe a personal name) or Dangerous Drive (possibly referred to chariot or horse races). Another possibility is **gus-* choose +**āgu-* fight , hence Chooses the Fight, referred to the title of a god or the name of a war leader. These names look more consistent with a people, the Insubres, whose name meant The Fierce Ones (Kruta 2003:79).

Conclusion

The most common etymologies of the name of the capital of Lombardy, Milan, are 'land in the middle of the plain' and 'central sanctuary'. They come from the Latin *Mediolanum* and Celtic (supposedly *Medhelanon*) names of the city, and are extended to a number of other toponyms in Italy and France. Both etymologies interpret the first element of the toponym, *Medio-* or *Medhe-* , as coming from the Proto-Celtic **medjo-*, *medi*, meaning 'middle'. They differ about the meaning of the second element of the name, -*lanum* or –*lanon*, since the supporters of the former hypothesis say that it means 'land', while the supporters of the latter maintain it means 'holy clearing, sanctuary' and can be considered a synonym of the Celtic word *nemeton*, sanctuary in the woods.

While I believe that the Latin toponym is the Latinization of the Celtic one, I do not agree with the above mentioned hypotheses: many Mediolanum/Medhelanon towns in France either are not located in a plain but on a hilltop, or are not in a central position. Moreover, I do believe that one has to distinguish between the *nemeton* proper, a temple-like area in the forest, and the chiefly or royal compound, which was also a sacred precinct, an area set apart for the use of kings and their courts within the ideology of sacred kinship. In addition, the 'central' or 'in the middle' location is not literal, but symbolical, hence this meaning can be added to others even if the place is not literally central. In my opinion the first part of the toponym, *Medio-/Medhe-*, may be related more profitably to 'mead', the sacred alcoholic drink, a brew of honey, water and yeast. The second element of the toponym, that is *lanum/lanon*, means 'land, enclosure, house', with the religious overtones of the 'sacred royal precinct', that is the 'heart of the nation'. Put together the two elements of the toponym may mean 'Place of Mead' or Mead Hall.

In order to support my hypothesis, I explored the legend of the foundation of Milan, and the ancient literature of the Celtic Fringe. I discovered that the legend of the foundation of Milan has several elements in common

with the founding myths of Lyon (Lugdunum), and Marseilles (Massalia), while a curious chimera, a so-called 'half-woolly sow', may hint not only at the mythical ancestors of Milan through the Gallo-Roman of Laon/Lugdunum (once Bibrax) in the country of the Remi, but also at a possible connection between the two cities from antiquity to the Middle Ages. The key element was the reputation of both cities as textiles centers, but also the fact that weaving was a most important art under the protection of the great goddess Belisama, a continental deity better known among the insular Celts as Brig or Brighid. This goddess, however, is often thought of as the mate of Lug (Lugh), eponymous of a number of towns such as Lyon and Laon, in some way related to Milan, and the most important Gaulish god according to Julius Caesar. The god Lug was called Belenos or Bel by the Cisalpine Celts, a solar god, the mythical founder of Milan, Bellovesus, was named from. Since the good omen seen by Bellovesus, possibly the mythical ancestor of the Insubrian Celts' royal household, was a white sow under a hawthorn bush/tree (a plant sacred to Belisama), I started exploring Celtic mythology. The white sow is the animal aspect of a most important goddess, called Ceridwen in Welsh, the Keeper of the Cauldron of Wisdom and Poetry, and Cailleach (The Old Hag or the Veiled One) in Irish and Scottish myths, the Winter aspect of Belisama (Bright Summer). Not only Ceridwen is related to the druidic aspects of Celtic culture, but she is also a goddess of Sovereignty.

One of the most important goddesses of Sovereignty that can be found in Irish myths and toponyms is queen Medb, whose epithets are 'of the Red Side' or 'the Red Goddess'. Medb's name means She Who Intoxicates, Intoxication, Inebriation, or Mead: she is the essence of mead. Actually Medb/Mead is the pivot around which my hypothesis revolves, because I believe mead is connected with a number of continental Gaulish toponyms, such as Milan, Melano, and Medelana, etc., as well as other Gaulish '*Mediolanum'* place names, by means of both a ritual of royal enthronement and the name of a building, the Mead Hall. In this context I found it interesting an Irish word, *bruiden*, pl. *bruidne*, which denotes a building that may or may not be a supernatural dwelling; it is described in some Irish texts such as *The Story of Mac Datho's Pig*, *The Feast of Bricriu*, and *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*. It is a Banqueting Hall or Mead Hall, and the most important of the five or six mentioned by the Irish texts is *Tech Midchuarta*, the Mead Hall of Temair, the seat of the Ard Ri, the High King (Anglicized as Tara).

Tech Midchuarta is not only a place and a building, but also a paradigm: in fact many Irish Mead Halls are named after it. I noted that some scholars translated the Mid element in Midchuarta *mid*=middle, and others *mid*=mead. I believe this is a case of semantic contamination of terms coming from homophone roots, a fact that may occur when the semantic fields overlap or are adjacent. As a matter of fact all the terms whose roots come from the Proto-Indo-European root *med*, describe some fundamental aspect of the archaic Indo-European notion of sacred kingship. The archaic king is more a priest than a warrior, or better he is a priest-warrior: he is, bodily, the center of motion, and his actions govern the ordered sequence of the seasons, day and night, the fertility of people, animals and plants, etc. He is a living 'ruler', that is the one who rules by ordering the right measure (another PIE *med* root), the correct ritual performance; he is sovereign because he is above and beyond the law, as well as the source of the law and its custodian. A law which is 'right' because it sticks to the traditional code of religious prescriptions. The king is 'sacred,' a word which means both 'holy' and 'cursed,' he lives separate from the lay people and must respect a number of severe obligations and prohibitions.

Hence, in a semantic field of *med*, the king is the center of motion, like the central axis around which the world revolves; in this sense his seat is 'central', or the symbolic centre of a circle, even if it is not a geographical one, as it is in the case of Tara, in Ireland or Tintagel, in Cornwall. Within this semantic field, the king is the mediator, the middleman, between the worlds, earthly and otherworldly, sacred and profane. As a mediator (*med*=middle) he is also a moderator (*med*=measure), one who acts in the correct mode, and he sets the boundary, the limit, between the worlds, between kingdoms. In another semantic field of *med* (=amidst, around), the king moves aroud, circling around the country sunwise, and all his actions must follow a sunwise circuit. He is the earthly sun

before the Copernican revolution. In a way, he is the ruler of space, measure of time, but he is also the follower of the rule, the correct course of things; the semantic field of *med* here is the measure, and the portion, even the Champion's Portion. At the king's table people sit according to hierarchical preminence, in the Mead Hall people drinks mead circling the cup or the drinking horn sunwise. The offering and the acceptance of mead creates a bond, a sacred obligation between the warrior and his chief. Mead, the intoxicating drink, can be considered the bond between humans and the divine, it grants oracular powers and the gift of poetry, it binds the chief, the king, and the war band to death, and it accompanies the chief to his grave, like the Prince of Hochdorf. This obligation, in this case between the king, the drinking cup/mead, and the land, is represented in the Celtic poems, in the Greek founding myth of Marseilles, and in the art of the bronze *situlae* (vessels), by the woman offering a vessel or a cup to a man, by the Hag offering to make love with a hero, by Madb 'of the friendly tights', by the *ieros gamos* performed by a couple in the bronze friezes of the situlae and belt buckles.

The riddle was used as an instructional tool in the Welsh and Irish law schools. "*The riddle is a fascinating genre of wisdom literature because it forces the listener or reader to reinterpret words to solve it. In most examples, the riddle is a set of utterances that pose a question to the listener. It creates two groups of people: the initiated and the uninitiated. Those initiated into the circle of people who know the answer use it to identify other initiates. The essence of the riddle lies in the mystery of the answer. Answering the riddle allows the unknower to become, in a way, initiated, with their intellectual acumen tested and proved by the mental challenge*." (Yocum 2010:5)

In some way the toponym Milan (Mid-lann/Mediolanum) may be considered a solution of a riddle: the Mead Hall is the Place the Rule Comes From as well as The Place Where Mead Legitimizes the Sovereign. It is both a riddle having a veiled meaning, and a pun between Mead/*Medhu*/*Mid* and Mide/*Med-* (balance, center of motion, rule). Contrary to the English proverb about sober judges, linguistic analysis brings me to suppose that, in PIE and Celtic times, the drunker the ruler, the better. It is in an intoxicated state, that is in an altered state of consciousness, that the sacred king conveys the sacred knowledge from the gods to the people. He is the ruler of rules established in the Otherworld.

In conclusion, I think that the various toponyms like Milan, Melano, Medelana, which come from the Celtic **Medhu*/*Mid-lann* (Latin *Mediolanum*), indicate the area of the city where the Celtic *rix* and his court lived, the sacred precinct called *temenos* by the Greeks. The core of the fortified royal compound was a building, *bruiden* in Old Irish, where the king displayed his rank and legitimatcy, and where he hosted people related to him according to a code of honor obligations. The Sanskrit words *melanam*, assembly, gathering of people, and the verb *melanam*, to meet, are related to it. An intoxicating drink, mead, was the substance binding the deities and the humans, the king and the land, the chief and the war band, the guests and the hosts, the living and the dead. I think that Insubrian Celtic **Medhu*/*Mid-lann* corresponds to Old Irish *Tech Mid[chuarta]*, and means 'House of the Circle/Passing Around of Mead,' 'Mead Court,' or 'Mead Hall,' 'Mead Place.' In the vein of the ancient riddles, it also means [Sacred] Central Place, Center of the Rule, Center of Harmonious Balance. Since the Mead Hall is the place where Celtic social relationships were legitimated, it was also the heart of the nation, its symbolic center, where the sacred king, the mediator (from middle) between gods and people, sacred and profane, lived. In the cosmic order of the things the *ri* was close to the Greek notion of *kosmos*. He is the earthly sun, the center of the motion; he may be seen as the cosmic chariot's wheel axle similar to that of Anaximander's metaphor. The *ri* is married to the land: he represents the body politic, the body of the nation, and Mead Hall/Milan is a metonym for the head of it.

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