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**Some Aspects of Celtic Religion in Gloucestershire and the
Cotswolds**

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Some Aspects of Celtic Religion in Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds

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THE area under discussion is most fortunate in the fact that it has two museums which contain so many objects relating to Romano-Celtic religious cults. Some of the objects are of unknown origin and are indeed rather crude portrayals, such as the stone idol in the Corinium Museum. The majority, however, are recognizable as belonging to the many Romano-Celtic cults and, by comparing these and others in the area to objects in Gaul and the Rhineland, and by referring to Irish mythology, it is possible to give an account of the religious beliefs held in the area during the Roman period.

Celtic religious belief seems to have centred round a tribal god and goddess whose functions were concerned with the important aspects of life—war, fertility, prosperity and death. Throughout Britain, and indeed the whole Celtic world, these divinities were worshipped in their different aspects until gradually a recognizable pantheon of individual deities emerged. The area shows this very clearly—all the cults are concerned with individual deities or objects, yet all have some common element centred on fertility or prosperity. The Romans did not distinguish the subtleties of Celtic religion. Caesar in his remarks on the customs of the Gauls mentions, when speaking of their religion, that the Gauls worshipped Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva regarding it in a purely Roman light.¹ Roman religious thought associated the classical gods with an equivalent Celtic deity—Mars could be linked with any Celtic godling who had war associated with him in one of his aspects. The result was a fusion of Roman gods and Celtic godlings and the continuance of Celtic religious ideas under the Roman tolerance.

At least one of the Celtic cults achieved official recognition. The Corinium Museum contains the stone base recording the restoration of the giant column by Septimius, governor of Britannia Prima.²

¹ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, vi, 17.

² *Arch.*, xix (1917-18), p. 188, fig. 15.

The large capital found at Watermoor and decorated with foliage from which peer figures of native deities, most likely is the top of a similar column.¹ The huge giant columns had as their dominant feature a statue of a horseman rising above a figure who is struggling out of the earth. Sometimes the horseman is replaced by a standing figure who has his foot on the head of the earth-giant. This cult was common in Eastern Gaul and the Rhineland² and the conception of the cult may be purely Celtic or be a Romano-Celtic one. If the latter, the column and the capital symbolize the Roman Empire. The figure of the horseman (or the knight), who often wears Roman armour, personifies the Emperor. The giant is thus the barbarian world trampled by the might of Rome—a similar subject being found on legionary tombstones as on the one in the Gloucester Museum.³ Some of the columns, such as the one from Cirencester, were dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and it would seem that the knight is akin to Jupiter, and a merging of the personalities of Jupiter and the Emperor. The Cirencester inscription dates it to the reign of Julian, A.D. 360–364, and, as it was erected by the governor, would most probably be crowned with figures representing Romano-Celtic beliefs.

The Watermoor column, with its capital so imbued with Celtic feeling, may have been crowned with figures representing the plastic expression of the purely Celtic belief. Some of the columns in Gaul had a figure who bore a wheel and is thought to be a projection of the god, Teutates. The Celtic representation is possibly a part of Celtic Mythology to account for the creation of the world and the existence of gods and men. The giant, as the power of evil, emerges from the Otherworld to be defeated by the knight, the power of good. A variation on this theme is the forces of darkness overcome by the power of light. The wheel carried by the knight probably represents the sun and very often the giant's legs end in serpents' tails which symbolize the chthonic element. On some of the Gallic monuments the figures are not Vanquisher and Vanquished but two elements complementary to each other; the knight does not crush the giant but is supported by him. This could represent the alternation of light and dark, the myth of day and night. The Celts had a complex mythology which, unfortunately, is now lost. It is interesting that Cirencester has produced

¹ *Arch.*, xix (1917-18), pp. 191-3, pls. 9 and 10. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 165, pls. 97-100, no. 95.

² P. Lambrechts, *Contributions à l'étude des Divinités Celtiques* (1942), pp. 81-98. F. Benoit, *Latomus* (1949), pp. 263 ff.; Id., *Les Mythes de l'outre Tombe* (1949).

³ *Trans. BGAS*, LV (1933), p. 89; LXXVII (1958), p. 32. J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 158, pl. 87, no. 82. J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 6, 11-12.

two columns which may have shown both the Roman and the Celtic conceptions of this cult, the Celtic one, according to the dating of the capital, being a century earlier. There is evidence of this cult in the Cambridge region and at Chichester, Great Chesterford and Irechester. It points to the interplay of religious ideas between Gaul and this country which would be produced by the movements of officials and traders.

Traders in the Cotswolds would have as their trading centres Gloucester and Cirencester and it is not surprising that at both these places votive reliefs to Mercury and Rosmerta have been found.¹ The Gallic companion of Mercury is not mentioned by name but at Gloucester she is represented with the god, and the goddess, Fortuna, who has the attributes of a rudder, a globe and a cornucopia. Another relief shows a very fine representation of the god, and his consort who holds a staff and pours a libation into a wooden bucket. Yet a third tablet, broken at the bottom, shows in the upper part the god holding his caduceus and his companion who is holding some kind of bag that may be the equivalent of Mercury's purse. This companion could be his mother, Maia, but Mercury and Rosmerta are frequently represented in Eastern Gaul and the figure on the first relief carries an object which resembles a caduceus and recalls the scene on the giant column at Mainz where the goddess is identified as Rosmerta.²

A relief at Cirencester represents Mercury and Rosmerta and a tablet at Bath seems to show the two deities.³ Bath was a meeting point for traders from the Cotswolds and elsewhere and as the cult of Mercury was favoured by traders because of the god's function as a god of travellers and commerce, all these reliefs were probably votive offerings given at the conclusion of successful transactions.

The cult of the god, Cernunnos, was present at Cirencester. On a relief in the Corinium Museum the horned god is shown with curled hair, grasping in each hand a large serpent whose head bears ram's horns. The tails of the serpents merge into the legs of the deity. This is a most interesting relief for it combines the worship of the god with that of the ram-headed serpent. Cernunnos was one of the most ancient of the Gaulish gods and in several places in Gaul his worship was associated with that of the ram-headed serpent.⁴ On the Gundestrup

¹ J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 22, 24-7. *Trans. BGAS*, LVI (1934), p. 80, pl. x.

² Espérandieu, VII, 5889, p. 379; X, p. 95.

³ *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, p. 285.

⁴ P. Lambrechts, *Contributions à l'étude des Divinités Celtiques* (1942), pp. 21 ff. P. Bober, *American Journal of Archaeology*, LV (1951), pp. 13-57.

cauldron the God holds a serpent in his left hand and in another scene the serpent accompanies a procession of warriors who watch a huge god (possibly Teutates, certainly not Cernunnos) plunge his victim into a cauldron of water. The ram-headed serpent must therefore be considered as a god in its own right. The serpent made a great impression on the ancient world. It was associated with cults of healing and thus had the power of life; it could produce instant death and was thus connected with the dead. A crude altar from Lypiatt Park had a coiled serpent carved round it;¹ this had a thick head and the suggestion of horns. This resembled the serpent on the Mavilly altar where it accompanied several other deities, some connected with healing.² Serpents were carved on a tall stone at Maryport which is a phallic totem.³ This makes the serpent part of a fertility cult and this cult was present in other aspects in the Cotswold region.

The worship of Cernunnos was a very ancient one. His characteristics are horns, a torque and a squatting position. The earliest representations of him show him with stag's horns. He appears with these on a rock painting at Val Camonica dated to the mid-4th century B.C. and on the Gundestrup cauldron. Later the cult appears to have been widened and the horns—symbol of plenty and fertility—may be those of bulls as well as stags. Dr Ross has shown that the cult had other manifestations and she points to the numerous horned heads and horned gods who appear in Gaul and Britain.⁴ Reliefs at Netherby and Maryport link the horned god with Mars, reliefs at Great Chesters and Little Chesters link him with Mercury and reliefs at Carlisle with Silvanus. A small male head with curled hair and horns in the Corinium Museum may be part of this extension of the cult. There is only one other relief which is similar to the Cirencester one. This is at Meigle in Scotland but as the designs resemble the zoomorphic patterning this may be as late as the 7th century A.D. On this stone the deity sits between two animals, a boar(?) and a wolf. In this guise he appears to be ruler over the animals. In the Cotswold area it is apparent that he is worshipped in his aspect of fertility and abundance; the fact that he merges with the serpent emphasizes the chthonic element. It is interesting that the more sophisticated beliefs of Celtic religion were present in this region.

¹ *Trans. BGAS*, LX (1938), p. 305, fig. 27.

² Espérandieu, III, 2067, 2072.

³ *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, xv (1915), p. 148, no. 55.

⁴ A. Ross, *Archaeologia Aeliana* (4), xxxix (1961), pp. 63–85. Meigle, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, LXIII (1928), p. 196.

The cult of the Genii Cucullati is attested by two reliefs in the Gloucester Museum found with several others in a well at Lower Slaughter and dated to A.D. 150–250.¹ One of these had figures on it which were merely sketched out with no attempt to give depth and this same technique was used on a relief of these deities in the Corinium Museum. Further reliefs have been found at Cirencester, Daglingworth and Wycomb near Andoversford. Professor Toynbee has described the cult of these cloaked spirits, the name of this cult coming from the garment they are wearing.² The cucullus or hood-topped cloak was worn throughout the Greek, Roman and Celtic lands, its use to ward off the sun or rain being suitable to all parts of Europe. It is mentioned by Juvenal and Martial, the latter claiming that it is of Gaulish origin, and its use in practice is clearly shown in the small bronze figure of a ploughman from Piercebridge, County Durham.³ It was worn by the lower classes but it was also a religious garment being distinctive of the Graeco-Roman god, Telesphoros, a late arrival into the classical pantheon, of Clooad, the child companion of Aesculapius, and of this group of Celtic godlings; these last appear on reliefs, such as are present in the Cotswold region and along Hadrian's Wall, or as terracotta figurines, an example being found at Reculver, or as bronze and amber figurines as occurs in the Rhineland. They are often depicted as a triad such as is seen on the reliefs at Cirencester and Lower Slaughter, the triplicative aspect representing the powers of the deities in their most intense or superlative form. These powers are of healing and fertility. At Daglingworth one of the reliefs shows them with a goddess who appears to be called Cuda and two of the godlings (the third one is probably broken off) stand by the side of a goddess on a relief from Cirencester. In these cases the Genii are associated with a Mother Goddess, the emphasis being on powers of fertility and plenty. The figures are clean-shaven and youthful. The original centre of this cult was most likely in the Rhineland where a large number of figurines have been found. Most of the reliefs and figurines in Britain have been found either on military sites which had a vicus attached to them or in

¹ *J.R.S.*, XLVIII (1958), pp. 49 ff., pls. viii and ix. J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 34 and 36.

² *Collection Latomus*, xxviii (1957), pp. 456–69. See also W. Deonna, *De Téséphore au moine bourru* (1955).

³ Martial, *Epigrams*, xi, 98.10. Juvenal, *Satires*, vol. 6, pp. 117–18. Piercebridge: J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 149, pl. 60, no. 54; *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain in the British Museum* (1951), p. 54, pl. 16, no. 13. There are some interesting bronze figurines in the Rheinisches Landesmuseum at Trier showing the use of this garment and in the same museum a well-preserved wall painting depicts a villa in the land of the Treveri. The figure to the left in the front of the villa wears a cloak. J. Roubier and M. Pobé, *Art in Roman Gaul* (1961), pl. 167. It appears to be still in use. I saw an old woman wearing one in the Tyrol region of Austria in 1960.

areas, like the Cotswolds, which were trading centres, and the obvious assumption is that their worship was brought here by traders or by slaves and retainers attached to the wealthier classes. A relief at Housesteads was dated, by the coin hoard found with it, to A.D. 220–229 and the figurine from Reculver to the 2nd century A.D. These dates, together with the Lower Slaughter evidence, suggest that it was active in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.; and if it is true that these deities continued into the Medieval period in the form of goblins and dwarfs, then it would seem that the cult was active in some form during the remainder of the Roman period. The deities form part of the vast cult practised by the Celts connected with the growth of the crops and the fertility of the soil.

It is not surprising amidst all the wealth of fertility cults to find present that of the Mother Goddesses. The cult was brought to Britain from the Rhineland and from Gaul where it was very popular. In time native British deities were added to it. Haverfield suggested that they originated in Germany;¹ Collingwood in Cisalpine Gaul.² Cirencester has a single figure of a Mother Goddess holding three apples, which is probably a native goddess who has become linked to the cult, and two reliefs of a triad of Mother Goddesses. On one of them, the three are seated in their stiff attitudes, wearing tunics and cloaks, their hair arranged in a matronly fashion round the head. Two of them carry trays of fruit, possibly apples, symbols of fertility, and one had a tray of loaves linking the fertility with the growth of the crops. Professor Toynbee pointed out that the folds of the cloaks hang in Greek zig-zag folds between each pair of legs and 'are worked into the shape of a water-beast, of which the head, narrow body and spreading fish-tail are clearly discernible: this recalls the Syrian fertility and Mother Goddess, Atargatis Derkéto whose symbol is a fish'.³ It might also be worth mentioning that the serpents who accompany Cernunnos very often have their extremities ending in fish tails and there may be a link here. A smaller relief in the Corinium Museum shows the goddesses in a similar attitude.⁴ The well-known relief from the same museum showing the three, seated in a semi-circle, with three children playing about them was suggested as being inspired by the Terra Mater group on the Ara Pacis Augustae in Rome or by Celtic monuments on the

¹ *Archaeologia Aeliana* (2), xv (1892), pp. 314 ff.

² R. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myers, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (1935), p. 268.

³ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 155, pl. 84, no. 73. *Archaeologia*, Lxiv, fig. 8.

⁴ *Archaeologia*, xix, pp. 182–3, fig. 9.

Danube devoted to the cult of the Deae Nutrices Augustales,¹ but Professor Toynbee thinks that, though its classical spirit and its resemblance to the Ara Pacis Augustae do recall a copy book model, in its spontaneity it is a 'bold, original, and unified design'.² Cirencester was indeed fortunate in the fact that it seems to have developed a remarkable school of carvers and sculptors who were not afraid to unite Celtic and Roman ideas and techniques. One of these men, Sulinus, dedicated an altar to the Suleviae, yet another aspect of the Mother Goddesses, the name being sometimes associated with them and sometimes on its own. Sulinus has identified himself as a sculptor on an altar he dedicated at Bath. Did he wander round Britain looking for commissions or did he go to Bath for a cure from his home in or near Cirencester?

Because there were so many cults of fertility in the area and the occupations were presumably those which mainly related to the cult of the soil it is not unlikely that there are traces of the cult of the phallus. The large phallus in the Corinium Museum, with its four glans, is of excellent workmanship and could itself have been set on a tall pillar to increase, figuratively, the potency. Professor Hawkes has drawn attention to the phallic object from Broadway, 3.3 inches long, made from a bar of oolite limestone with a crude face and a projecting nose at one end.³ Many phallic objects were demonized by adding a limb of an animal or bird⁴ but the portrayal of a human face is less usual. The barbaric nature of the face suggests native Celtic religion and the drilled eyes recall similar drilled eyes on the small reliefs from Chedworth and thus appear to be a native trait. The object was paralleled by one from Eype, near Bridport in Dorset. This also had a human face scratched onto it and, in addition, a series of rings interlaced, where the neck should have been. These are probably representing torques, symbols of power and fertility amongst the Celts.

The phallic cult in Britain was a very old one. There were signs of it in the Neolithic period, as witnessed by discoveries at Grimes Graves, the Trundle, and Windmill Hill. In Brittany the various lechs and bactyls were associated with Iron Age burials as if the Celts had adopted phallic beliefs in association with the cult of the dead. Hawkes suggests that the practice of making such phallic bactyls may have been brought into the Cotswolds from Brittany by Iron Age immigrants

¹ Haverfield, *Archaeologia*, xix, pp. 183-4, fig. 10. *J.R.S.*, II (1912), pp. 140-2, fig. 13. Rostovtzeff, *Archaeologia*, xix, p. 204.

² J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), pp. 154-5, pl. 76, no. 72.

³ *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, xxiii (1946), pp. 66-71, pl. i, fig. 2.

⁴ An interesting one, possibly Roman, comes from Wroxeter. A bronze phallic ornament has a phallus as one end and a clenched hand at the other with a thumb protruding between the first and third finger—thus increasing the symbolism and hence the potency. *Wroxeter Report* (1912), p. 29, pl. x, no. 7.

and gives an example of such a bactyl from Barnwood, Gloucestershire. The Romans also followed the cult of the phallus and Roman influence in the area would mean its continuance. The Celts preferred to refer to the phallus indirectly or symbolically; perhaps they thought its potency would be reduced if it was directly represented. Two reliefs of the Genii Cucullati from Cirencester show these figures holding round objects. These could be eggs, a symbol of fertility, and in themselves suggestive of a phallic shape. One of these reliefs has a single genius holding the object with both hands. He is standing by a Mother Goddess who carries a basket of fruits to repeat the fertility symbolism. Thus the two deities represent the male and female aspect. The two reliefs at Wycomb show the same feature. On one, a figure stands on either side of a hooded deity each carrying a round object, and on the other, one figure carrying a similar object stands beside the genius. The third figure has been broken off but this is obviously a triad with the triplicity deliberately enhancing the potency. All these reliefs are crudely carved and this reflects the native background of the cult. The fact that the Genii Cucullati hold phallic objects implies a connection between the cult of fertility and the cult of the dead. In the Rhineland, figurines of these deities have been found in graves invoking protection for the dead.

There are several representations of the Celtic Mars in the Cotswolds. Three altars from Kings Stanley show Mars in typical warrior dress. Other altars figuring him were found at Bisley and Lypiatt Park. A relief from Bisley and now in the Gloucester Museum shows him in the guise of Romulus Mars.¹ Although he is dressed as a warrior he has, by his side, an altar on which a double cornucopia rests. This emphasizes the fact that in this area the Celtic Mars was worshipped in his function as a fertility god; Professor Toynbee says 'in his capacity as a god of agriculture conquering sterility in crops and vanquisher of death and sickness in the case of man'. The museum has a counterpart to this altar carved by the same sculptor, whose name, Iuventinus, appears on the Romulus-Mars tablet. This is a genius with a cornucopia, once more emphasizing fertility and prosperity.² One of the Lower Slaughter reliefs shows a group of three war gods who are only partly assimilated to Mars. They wear a kind of kilted tunic and carry spears and round bossed shields. They have no helmets but thick curls fall on their shoulders.

¹ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 152, pl. 65, no. 63. J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 27, 29-30.

² J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 28, 30.

The triplicated repetition could refer to prowess in battle or to the fertility.

Chedworth has produced two small altars. One of these, which has a crudely carved figure, is dedicated to Mars Lenus.¹ He is represented elsewhere in Britain at Caerwent where he is equated to 'Oculus Vellaunus and the divinity of the Emperor'. The inscription was on a pedestal to which were still attached a pair of human feet and the webbed feet of a water bird.² This was possibly a goose which sometimes accompanied Mars. Mars Lenus was a Rhineland god whose worship centred on Trier. On one inscription at Pommern-an-Mosel the implication is that he is a god of healing, for it thanks the god for answering a prayer for the cure of a terrible disease. It is possible that he was regarded in this light in Britain. The Chedworth altar had five dots drilled into it and the same design was found on the second altar which again showed the Celtic Mars with a crudely drawn spear and shield on the side.³ This may be linked to an altar which was found at Custom Scrubbs, Bisley, but is now lost.⁴ Here Mars was equated with Olludius. Heichelheim suggested that Olludius was a typical South Gallic god and that his name meant 'mighty tree' or 'mighty lord of the gods'. Both names would fit the two functions of Mars. The name Olludius is also found at Antibes in Gaul⁵ and the god could be a local one whose cult was brought to the Cotswold region by a trader or a slave; the cult of Mars Lenus probably arrived in a similar fashion.

It would be interesting to know more about the goddess, Cuda, whose name appears at Daglingworth and nowhere else. It can be assumed that she is a fertility or an underworld goddess from her connection with the Genii Cucullati.⁶ The unknown goddess, on the tablet in the Gloucester Museum, who holds a cornucopia and appears to touch an altar or a tree trunk may have had similar functions but the stone is too badly weathered to provide any details.⁷ The fertility cults are emphasized again in part of a Venus figurine made of pipe-clay, in the Corinium Museum. Many of these figurines have been found in the civilian areas of Britain; they represent a Celtic version of the Roman Venus and are ex-voto or good luck offerings from women. Figurines at Springhead (Kent), Dover, Stanwix and Bath were found near to the baths or to water and may indicate a connection with a water cult. In fact the figurines might represent the personification of

¹ This figure was thought to be Sucellus but *J.R.S.*, xxxix (1949), p. 114 gave the inscription of E N M giving LEN. MARTI.

² *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xv (Nov. 1952), pp. 84 ff.

³ *Trans. BGAS*, lx (1938), p. 301, fig. 9.

⁴ *CIL*, vii, p. 73. *Arch. J.*, ii (1846), p. 45.

⁵ *CIL*, xii, pp. 166, 167.

⁶ *J.R.S.*, xli (1951), p. 140, no. 1.

⁷ J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 35-6.

water in a form akin to the nymphs. The splendid head of the river god from Cirencester represents the remains of a reclining river god.¹ It is in a similar pose to the head from London which probably symbolized the River Thames. The Cirencester carving, which is far more vital and alive, may have been intended to deify the River Churn. In the Cotswold region, with its many pleasant rivers and streams, there must have been ample worship of water divinities, if the pattern seen in the rest of Britain is followed.² Perhaps further discoveries will help to shed light on this. Other discoveries might help to decide if there was a bird cult in the region. The Celts regarded birds as a means of predicting the future and as symbols of good luck.³ There appears to be a bird cult in Gaul⁴ and in Irish mythology the gods take the form of birds when they show themselves to men. The divine birds of the Tuatha de Danann went about in couples with their beaks linked by a chain of silver; Lug announced his coming before the birth of Cucullain with a flock of such birds.⁵ The birds are thus regarded as the messengers of the gods. They are also connected with the Underworld. The souls of the dead could take on the form of a bird in order to reach the Otherworld (the Celtic Afterlife); or the birds themselves may symbolize that particular journey.⁶ The evidence for the cult in Britain is tentative but is not unimpressive.⁷ Two of the reliefs from Lower Slaughter give some evidence. One of the slabs showing the Genii Cucullati has a rosette on it symbolizing life beyond the grave, and also two birds, which, in this context, could symbolize the journey to the Afterlife. Another relief shows a seated figure, nude above the waist. On the left is a bird, possibly the companion of the god. It does not appear to be a goose, eagle or cock which were the companions of classical deities and it does seem that this may be a Celtic deity who represented a bird cult, similar to that found in Gaul.

Another cult which may be present in this region is the Celtic cult of the head, which was common throughout Gaul and Britain. The Celtic custom of head hunting, where the human head was venerated⁸ gave place under Roman rule to the veneration of the stone

¹ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), pp. 138-9, pl. 37, no. 31.

² J. P. Alcock, 'Celtic water cults in Roman Britain', *The Archaeological Journal*, cxxii (1965), pp. 1-12.

³ Diodorus v, 31.

⁴ *Revue Archéologique* (1948), pp. 224 ff.

⁵ E. Hull, *The Irish Mythological Cycle*, p. 110.

⁶ This is the symbolism of the Roquepertuse temple in southern Gaul where the sculptured form of a huge bird is on the lintel, poised as if for flight. J. Roubier and M. Pobé, *Art in Roman Gaul* (1961), pl. 28.

⁷ J. P. Alcock, *Celtic Religion in Roman Britain*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London (1962), pp. 121-6.

⁸ Diodorus v, 29, 5; Strabo iv, 4, 5.

head.¹ The Gaulish temples of Entremont and Roquepertuse show that the veneration of both could exist side by side for stone heads are carved beside niches in which the human head was placed. There are no such elaborate traces of the cult in Britain but stone heads which were used as cult objects or antefixes are numerous. The head in the Gloucester Museum, dated to the 1st century, with its Celtic features and bulging eyes² was possibly such an object for the neck ends in a flat surface as if it was placed against a wall or set on to a column. The antefix in the same museum has a face placed before a classical palmette but the moustached lip and shaggy hair indicate a Celtic sculptor, someone who, whilst having training on Roman lines, yet took his inspiration from Celtic religious beliefs.³ The head from Chipping Norton in the Corinium Museum may be part of the same cult.

The deities of the Cotswold area were worshipped, for the most part, in small shrines suggesting a homely religion. There is only one site which appears to be that of a Romano-Celtic temple. This is at Chedworth, 700 yards east of the villa, where a structure was built on a shelf which had been cut out of the hill side above the River Coln.⁴ The area 41 feet by 39 feet 9 inches in comparison with that of other Romano-Celtic temples indicates that this is the area of the temple and not just the cella. One of the temples at Colchester was the same size and the temple at Jordans Hill, Dorset measured 40 feet by 39 feet. The walls had a thickness of 5 feet. This seems very thick for the outer walls of the portico—the average thickness for these walls is about 2½ feet—although another temple at Colchester did have walls 4 feet 4 inches thick. It is possible that the thick walls were to prevent any slip down the slope. These walls were pricked for plaster implying some degree of care and comfort. It is possible that the two altars of the Celtic Mars now in the villa came from this temple and it was dedicated to the worship of an agricultural god. The temple might also be linked with a water cult, overlooking as it does the water of the River Coln, part of the head water of the Thames. The other religious

¹ For a description of the cult of the head, P. Lambrechts, *L'exaltation de la tête dans la pensée et dans l'art des Celts* (1954). F. Benoit, "Dieux-têtes?", *Latomus* (1955), pp. 291 ff. For the cult in Britain, A. Ross, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, xc1 (1957-58), pp. 10-43. J. P. Alcock, *Surrey Archaeological Society*, LX (1963), pp. 45-9.

² J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 125, pl. 8, no. 7. J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 14-16.

³ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, 2nd ed. (1963), p. 165, pl. 103, no. 96. J. F. Rhodes, *Catalogue of Romano-British Sculptures in the Gloucester City Museum* (1964), pp. 19-21.

⁴ *Trans. BGAS*, LII, pp. 255 ff. *J.R.S.*, xiv (1924), p. 231. Mr St Clair Baddeley suggested it was a Romano-Celtic temple and the site has been marked as such on the Third Edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain.

sites seem to have consisted of small shrines. The evidence for them is conjectural but the large number of objects from the well at Lower Slaughter suggests the complete contents of a shrine. A shrine of the Genii Cucullati probably existed at Daglingworth and one to Mars at Custom Scrubbs; the altars at Kings Stanley and Kingsholm imply that there were other shrines to the Celtic Mars in those places. Professor Toynbee has suggested that a shrine to Mercury and Rosmerta stood near the city walls at Gloucester. A shrine to the Mother goddesses seems to have existed at Cirencester and many more of the deities known to have been worshipped in that time were housed in shrines. The shrine was the home of the god and a small structure was all that was required. Celtic religion seems to have been an intensely personal religion and the shrines may have been cared for as lovingly as the Austrian and southern German wayside shrines to the Virgin are today. Small shrines suggest that the Romano-Celtic worshipper felt that the particular deity visited the shrine once in a while to collect an offering or in answer to invocation. There must also be a place in which or on which a libation could be made and thus a small altar or a votive object might be admirably housed under a thatched roof or a rough stone-built shrine. If Gildas' words are true that Britain in the 6th century A.D. was filled with the ruins of these shrines 'their walls inside and out filled with bristling idols of savage mien', the Cotswold area would seem to have been no different from the rest of Britain.

This account of Romano-Celtic cults does not exhaust the possibilities that other divinities were worshipped. New evidence may be discovered which would provide more information on the deities and their worship. The region has revealed the complex religious beliefs of the Romano-British people, and the worship, both of indigenous deities and those brought over from Gaul and the Rhineland. There seems to be a very close religious connection between northern Gaul and the civil region of south-west Britain, especially in the Gloucestershire area, and it is highly probable that this is because the region attracted traders who brought the worship of such gods with them. The fusion of Roman and Celtic thought is clearly visible but it is obvious that Celtic customs continued throughout the Roman period with the emphasis heavily on fertility and propitiation. Conditions of life were uncertain and it was necessary to obtain the goodwill of the deities to obtain a good harvest or to ensure an untroubled passage to the Afterlife. The evidence from Gloucestershire is of great value in assisting us to elucidate the complexities of Romano-Celtic religious life and practice.