

INTERPRETATIO INDIGENA. RE-INVENTING LOCAL CULTS IN A GLOBAL WORLD

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INTELLECTUAL GRAVITY OF *INTERPRETATIONES INDIGENAE*

THE aim of this paper is to explore the concept of *interpretatio* in the Roman West, notably in Gaul and Britain during the Principate. As Clifford Ando (this volume) has shown, Rome was hardly interested in local cults, apart from creating clear rules for provincial *ciuitates* by institutionalising civic cults with the aim to avoid civic strife.¹ Consequently, we should assume the persistence of pre-Roman, indigenous² cults which were undergoing gradual adaptations to suit contemporary societal and cultural understandings – a process that started in the Iron Age and continued throughout the Principate.³ If the Romans were largely uninterested in local cults, it must have been predominantly the local population who was responsible for changing the nature of their cults.⁴ It is they who chose a Latin name for their native deities or invested in Roman-style temple architecture⁵ or anthropomorphic sculptures. For these developments I want to use the term *interpretatio indigena*.⁶ This does not describe the ‘translation’ of Graeco-Roman theonyms into Celtic (which may at most appear in the case of some epithets),⁷ but it is used here to mean ‘indigenous interpretation’, i.e. the way

¹ Also cf. C. Ando, *Interpretatio Romana*, CPh 100, 2005, 41-51.

² ‘Indigenous’ and ‘native’ is used as shorthand to describe both local deities that go back to pre-Roman times as well as the conquered population.

³ Cf. R. Häussler, *The dynamics and contradictions of religious change in Gallia Narbonensis*, in R. Häussler - A.C. King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in Religion in the Roman West*, 1, (JRA Supplement 67), Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2007, 81-102.

⁴ G.F. Chiai - R. Häussler - C. Kunst, *Einführung*, this volume; cf. R. Häussler - A.C. King, *The formation of Romano-Celtic religion(s)*, in Idd. (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, 1, cit., 7-12. We also need to consider whether this was a gradual development or whether religious change reflects a profound rupture; in this case we need to look for factors why existing ideologies and cults might have lost their meaning to convince local people.

⁵ Also developing new forms, like the Romano-Celtic ‘Umgangstempel’; cf. A.C. King, *Romano-Celtic temples in Britain: Gallic influences or indigenous development?* in Häussler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, 1, cit., 13-18.

⁶ A term not attested in antiquity, unlike Tacitus’ *interpretatio Romana*.

⁷ After P. de Bernardo Stempel, we could call this a *translatio* (*Celtica/Latina*), e.g. the Latin (*matres*) *omnium gentium* is translated as Celtic (*matres*) *ollototae*, or vice versa: P. De Bernardo Stempel, *Continuity, translatio and identificatio in Romano-Celtic religion: the case of Britain*, in R. Häussler - A.C. King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation in Religion in the Roman West*, 2 (JRA Supplement 67, 2), Portsmouth, Rhode Island 2008, 67-82, esp. 78. But we have to be cautious not to generalise since similar epithets may develop independently in Celtic, Latin, Greek or Sanskrit to describe a weather god,

in which local people adopted and adapted, interpreted and re-interpreted those alien cults and religious features (media, sacrifices, ex-votos, etc.) which they had acquired from a different cultural and religious repertoire (e.g., Graeco-Roman theonyms and mythology) and how they employed and adapted new media (like epigraphy and sculpture) to represent their local cults and their existing religious understandings.

The result of these *interpretatio-indigena* processes is not just a mere one-to-one identification between (say) a native 'Taranis'⁸ and a Roman Jupiter, perhaps for obvious (e.g., both Taranis and Jupiter are weather/thunder gods) or superficial reasons (e.g., the same attribute, like the hammer in the case of Sucellos and Volcanus). Instead of a 'mindless' adoption of Graeco-Roman theonyms and deities, we are dealing with careful adaptations by local people to suit the local context. For example, the use of new media, like sculpture, required people to re-think their local cults. Obviously the local people had to reason first about the nature and function of their own cult in order to make appropriate decisions, like choosing a Latin theonym or a Graeco-Roman deity (we need to distinguish here: people might just choose the theonym because it resembled the indigenous name of the god). This implies that people must also have had at least a basic knowledge of Graeco-Roman cults and mythology. And on a very basic level, such awareness of Graeco-Roman mythology may already have been acquired in pre-Roman times (cf. second-century BC Hercules statuette at Glanum⁹ or the mid-fourth/third-century BC Hercules statuettes from a votive deposit at Borgosesia [Turin, Poggio di Montrigone] in Cisalpine Gaul).¹⁰

Consequently, the choices which people made also shows the diversity of the social agents' understandings and education. Among the major protagonists in this process, there are the local élites, some of which had a certain level of Classical education, having learned Latin and Greek by reading Vergil and Homer, and internalising – to some extent – Roman concepts of *humanitas*. These élites could of course tap into their personal patronage network, having the resources and contacts to employ good-quality sculptors, stone-cutters and architects. This may remind us of the case of the Gallic Arverni for whom Zenodorus – famous sculptor under Nero – created a colossal statue of 'Mercury' between A.D. 54 and 64.¹¹

fertility deity, war deity, mother goddess, etc.: cf. G.S. Olmsted, *The gods of the Celts and the Indo-Europeans*, Innsbruck 1994.

⁸ If Taranis ever existed. It could just be an epithet for a weather god, the 'thundering' god, like Jupiter *Tonans*.

⁹ Cf. A. Roth Congès, *La fortune éphémère de Glanum: du religieux à l'économique*, « Gallia » 54, 1997, 157-202.

¹⁰ Cf. G. Patrizia Tabone, *I bronzetti a figura umana etruschi e italici a nord del Po. Diffusione dei modelli ed elaborazioni locali in età arcaica*, Tesi di Dottorato di Ricerca in Archeologia (Etruscologia), Università di Roma "La Sapienza", Roma 1996.

¹¹ Plin. *nat.* xxxiv 45-47; cf. A. Hofeneder, *Mercurius Arvernus. Überlegungen zu Plin. nat. hist. 34, 45-47*, in Häußler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, 2, cit., 103-118; G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman. The origins of provincial civilization in Gaul*, Cambridge 1998, 216.

THE COMPLEXITY OF INTERPRETATIONES INDIGENAE

Élites could not just introduce new gods if their meaning, name, attributes, function, rituals and anthropomorphic and iconographic representations were not understood or accepted by sub-élite people. The latter were not merely passive recipients of élite innovations. Instead, we should envisage rather complex processes – interactions between rather heterogeneous élites and sub-élite groups – which resulted in an enormous creativity in the early Principate. On the one hand, there are the local élites across the Roman West and their perceptions and understandings. Many of these people had economic, social and political interests that increasingly went beyond the local community or *civitas*, which makes it difficult to consider a consensus on religious decisions among these local landowners and decurions.¹²

But sub-élite classes also had very diverse experiences of local cults, depending on their status and context. In a civic cult, people could actively participate in collective rituals and experience the performances of local magistrates and priests; local festivals were an ideal place to re-enact traditions and create a local identity, but also to communicate new concepts. Some sub-élite people were also active in local cults, for example as *seuiri Augustales* or as members of one of the many local ‘guilds’ (*collegia*); in addition, they also emulated élite behaviour, trying to display their status by financing altars and statues. And similar to élites, many local traders and craftsmen had social and economic interests beyond their community, not to mention soldiers in the Roman legions and auxiliary units. Together with the migrants who moved to the cities to start a new life, a large part of the population had a very diverse knowledge of other cults and religious understandings, allowing them to challenge the ‘civic cults’ they experienced locally, perhaps creating their own variations of cults, perhaps even ‘mocking’ the public images and rituals and create ‘creole’¹³ versions of them. We also should consider conscious rejections. It is interesting to see how many sanctuaries have not yielded a single inscription, both in ‘highly Romanised’ Gallia Narbonensis and of course in Roman Britain where we find hardly an overlap between the distribution pattern

¹² According to the *lex coloniae Genetivae*, for example, the decurions decide on the civic cults and public festivals of their *colonia*. For discussion cf. R. Häussler, *Beyond ‘Polis Religion’ and sacerdotes publici in Southern Gaul*, in J.H. Richardson - F. Santangelo (Eds.), *Priests and State in the Roman World*, Stuttgart 2011, 391-428 with further bibliography.

¹³ The post-colonial term ‘creolisation’ is used here to describe processes of ‘hybridisation’ and ‘cross-fertilisation’ between different ‘cultures’: local people and communities select specific elements from another (alien; dominant) cultural repertoire and endow these with new and different meanings and usages. By merging these various adopted and imported cultural features in a creative process with local (indigenous) traditions, completely new forms and cultures (and religions) are created. For the term’s usage in post-colonial studies, cf. *creolization* in B. Ashford - G. Griffiths - H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, London-New York 2007², 51-52, with further literature; for its application to the Roman period, cf. J. Webster, *Creolizing the Roman Provinces*, *AJA* 105, 2001, 209-225.

of inscribed dedications and Romano-Celtic temples.¹⁴ Similar processes of *interpretatio* may also have taken place at cult places where votive inscriptions were absent; writing became very important in many Romano-British cult places, notably for *defixiones*, but we also find 'writing' at anepigraphic cult places, like Wood Eaton and Lydney which have yielded dozens of individual bronze letters that do not make up a proper word: the power of writing? Language and art present new ideas to think about existing cults and religious concepts, but these media were not used uniformly in the Roman West. We also should not forget that subaltern classes could have also rejected the proposed 'élite culture' with its 'civic cults' (or the 'army culture' with its official cults), creating more 'creolised'¹⁵ cults with specific images, names, representations and myths.

LOCAL CULTS AND GLOBAL DISCOURSE

All this has important consequences. On the one hand, the increasing interaction leads to an unprecedented religious diversity in the Principate. The individual had a much wider choice for his/her private and public devotions – and also a wider choice on how to represent his/her devotions in public. But the majority of people also seem to follow very strict conventions and expectations on what inscriptions, altars, sculptures and other votive objects are meant to look like. Hence our task to look out for the unconventional, the break from the norm. From this large repertoire people created their religious identity by a process of bricolage: people used media, objects, icons, theonyms, epithets and elements that were readily available, thus creating ever more varieties and re-creations of local deities. The more different the religious repertoires and understandings are, the more creative the cultural process, for example by catalysing the creation of iconographic and anthropomorphic representations which were previously unknown.

People across all strata of society participated in an imperial (e.g., on Rome's superiority and benevolent rule) and a global discourse.¹⁶ Both discourses are important to understand what motivates the choices of the individual. The imperial discourse can be a powerful medium since most people participate in it,¹⁷ for example in the imperial cult, but some people also internalised the values communicated by it, such as *humanitas*. By contrast, the global discourse operates on a more subconscious level and was hardly controlled by Rome. In an empire, where ethnic and political boundaries ceased to be meaningful, together with increasing

¹⁴ R. Häussler, *Fusion and resistance in native religions in Gallia Narbonensis and Britain*, «Veleia» 18-19, 2001-2002, 151-187.

¹⁵ For creolisation, cf. Webster, *Creolizing the Roman Provinces*, cit.; Ashford - Griffiths - Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, cit., 51-52.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g., R. Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity, and Empire*, London-New York 2005; for colonial discourse in 19th-20th century colonial encounters, cf. *globalisation*, in Ashford - Griffiths - Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, cit., 100-104, with further bibliography.

¹⁷ Cf. *colonial discourse, colonial patronage*, in Ashford - Griffiths - Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, cit., 36-39.

migration, intensive trade and socioeconomic interdependencies, cultural expressions will increasingly resemble each other. But this does not create a homogeneous culture since – similar to modern encounters – globalisation also creates processes of particularisation, the so-called ‘glocalisation’.¹⁸ In other words, the repertoire to choose from became increasingly similar across the Roman West (with important variations), but people used it to express their local identity and to create specific identities for local cults. Latin does not seem to provide the necessary repertoire for all these local identities which may be one explanation why we find so many Celtic theonyms/epithets on perfectly Latin inscriptions. A Celtic theonym does not indicate a (pre-Roman, native) ‘Celtic god’, but it can also be a creation of the Principate, as in the case of the *Matres Almahae*,¹⁹ expressing a particular form of *matres* regarding location, community and function.

As we have discussed in the Introduction (cf. Chiai - Häussler - Kunst, this volume), *interpretatio* was an important mechanism to overcome the enormous cultural differences in the Roman empire. From a Roman perspective, the few attestations of *interpretatio Romana* show how a Roman politician, like Caesar or Tacitus, tried to make sense of ‘barbarian’ or ‘provincial’ deities in Gaul, Germany and elsewhere by identifying them with the Greek and Roman pantheon.²⁰ But how much did Caesar know about indigenous deities when he compares them with Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva and Dispatet? And how do his generalising *interpretationes* fit his statement about the cultural diversity in Gaul?²¹ Are these nothing more than simplified remarks aimed at an ignorant audience in Rome?

The situation is very different in a provincial context. These ‘associations’ between ‘indigenous’ and ‘Roman’ deities are far from superficial. Besides the intellectual process that led people to chose a particular Graeco-Roman deity, these *interpretationes* also initiated long-term processes²² that would fundamentally change the nature and function of the local deity after a certain time. The single act of adopting a Latin theonym or a Graeco-Roman anthropomorphic representation might have just been a personal decision of a private worshipper who fulfilled his/her vow to a deity. But after local worshippers had been faced with

¹⁸ Cf. *glocalisation*, in Ashford - Griffiths - Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, cit., 104-106.

¹⁹ As in the case of *Almahae*, it is not always possible to distinguish between a deonomastic, toponymic epithet/theonym (e.g., the *Matres of Almis*) or an epithet that reflects the character of the deity (e.g. the ‘nourishing’ *matres*), cf. discussion by P. De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten der Narbonensis im Vergleich*, in M. Hainzmann (Hrsg.), *Auf den Spuren keltischer Götterverehrung. Akten des 5. F.E.R.C.AN.-Workshop, Graz 9.-12. Oktober 2003, Wien 2007*, 67-79; R. Häussler, *Pouvoir et religion dans un paysage «gallo-romain». Les cités d’Apta Iulia et Aquae Sextiae*, in R. Häussler (Éd.), *Romanisation et épigraphie. Études interdisciplinaires sur l’acculturation et l’identité dans l’Empire romain*, (Archéologie et Histoire Romaine, 17), Montagnac 2008, 155-248.

²⁰ Cf. Ando, *Interpretatio*, cit.; Hainzmann, this volume.

²¹ Caes. Gall. 1 1-2: *Gallia est omnis diuisa in partes tres [...]. Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se differunt.*

²² For the long-term processes initiated by cultural adoptions cf. already R. Thurnwald, *The Psychology of Acculturation*, «American Anthropologist» 34, 1932, 557-569.

written and visual codifications in stone for several generations, their understanding of the local deity may have changed significantly, taking on several characteristics of the corresponding Graeco-Roman deity. People might have thought of a local deity as (say) 'Mercury' or 'Minerva' and also incorporated elements from Graeco-Roman mythology, knowledge of which spread throughout the provinces not only by education, but also by theatre performances. At the same time, people still re-enacted and re-defined the particular local meaning of a cult, associated with 'traditional' rituals and sacrifices.²³ In this way, local cults were not only re-invigorated, but in the course of time new local cults developed that were neither 'Roman' nor 'native'. They were above all *local* cults, expressing a local identity, but inserted in a 'dominant'²⁴ and 'global' discourse and a supra-regional mythical narrative. These discourses are responsible in creating a common (religious) *lingua franca* that makes even the most diverse cults across the Roman empire understandable as a local variant of a Graeco-Roman cult, just like the various Alpine deities, like Poeninus at the Great St. Bernard, were becoming more and more subsumed under the name 'Jupiter'.²⁵

TRANS-CULTURAL TRANSLATABILITY

This leads us to the problem of translatability. Though there are certain parallels between the various different religious 'systems', we should not overestimate the importance of Indo-European religions and cultures:²⁶ we can usually expect a weather god, war god and fertility deities, like mother goddesses, and perhaps a healing god as well as semi-gods, like Herakles and Smertrios, but we should not reduce these concepts to the lowest common denominators. This does not mean that the various 'weather gods', for example, had the same functions, attributes, mythologies or required rituals and sacrifices. Elements of the Hittite Teššup, for example, entered into the cult of 'Baal' at Doliche, which became known – by 'interpretatio' – as Jupiter Dolichenus in the Roman empire and who was quite different from the Roman state god Jupiter. We also have to seek out the diversity of the various Indo-European mother goddesses. Although they were usually represented as triads, the *matres* and *matronae* in the Keltiké²⁷ are fundamentally differ-

²³ Cf. A.C. King, *Animal remains from temples in Roman Britain*, «Britannia» 36, 2005, 329-369 who shows how people continued to sacrifice sheep/goat in a ritual context, as in the Iron Age, although these animals became rare in contemporary settlement sites in the Principate. Or cf. the presence of horse bones or the large consumption of cattle in Britanno-Roman sanctuaries, such as Folly Lane, Verulamium: cf. King, *Animal remains*, cit.; R. Niblett, *The Excavation of a Ceremonial Site at Folly Lane, Verulamium*, («Britannia» Monograph Series 14), London 1999.

²⁴ Roman, i.e. focus on Rome's superiority and Rome's *pietas* and *religio*.

²⁵ Cf. D. Acolat, *Prophylaxie et syncrétisme, quelques témoignages de cultes d'altitude en Gaule romaine*, in Haeußler (Éd.), *Romanisation et épigraphie*, cit., 111-126.

²⁶ For a comparative study on parallels among Indo-European religion (Celtic, Greek, Indian), cf. Olmsted, *The gods of the Celts*, cit.

²⁷ On 'Celtic' mother goddesses, cf. e.g. G. Bauchhenß - G. Neumann (Hrsg.), *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* (Beihefte BJ 41), Köln 1987. But are mother goddesses attested in the late pre-

ent from the Greek *moirai* and the Roman *fatas*.²⁸ And with regard to the general distinction between 'celestial' and 'chthonic' deities, we should also bear in mind evidence from the Keltiké for the tripartite distinction of the world.²⁹ In addition to the differences in divine concepts, there are also differences in media and cult practices that needed to be overcome in the Roman period, notably in Gaul accused by Caesar to be «extremely devoted to superstitious rites» (*Gall.* vi 16).

These are just some of the many cultural differences that made it virtually impossible to make an unambiguous one-to-one identification between a local/native and a Graeco-Roman deity. A well-known example is the confusion between the Celtic 'Toutatis' and 'Esus' as recorded on the Berne scholia (*Commenta Bernensia*) of Lucian's *Pharsalia*:³⁰ Both Toutatis and Esus³¹ could each be identified with Mercury or Mars. From a Roman perspective, this confusion does not make much sense since Mars and Mercury appear very different in character and function:³² Mars, for example, increasingly focused on the military aspect in the Principate, having lost many of its Republican (agricultural) functions. But from a 'native' perspective, one looked for a deity that most 'resembled' the local god. If we take Toutatis, which was not necessarily the name of a god, but merely a cognomen or epithet meaning 'of the *touta/populus*',³³ his main role must have been to protect the community and provide fertility and prosperity. In Gallia Narbonensis, he was usually identified with Mars,³⁴ a strong deity that protects from menaces, like drought, bad harvest or even war. But perhaps the local social

Roman Iron Age; Gallo-Greek dedications *matrebo* may date to the Principate, rather than the Iron Age; cf. A. Mullen, *Rethinking 'Hellenization' in South-eastern Gaul: the Gallo-Greek Epigraphic Record*, in Häussler (Éd.), *Romanisation et épigraphie*, cit., 249-266.

²⁸ Cf. R. Häussler, *How to identify Celtic religion(s) in Roman Britain and Gaul*, in J. d'Encarnação (Ed.), *Divindades indígenas em análise. Divinités pré-romaines - bilan et perspectives d'une recherche*. Actas do VII workshop F.E.R.C.A.N., Cascais, 25.05.2006 Cascais, Coimbra/Porto, 2008, 13-63.

²⁹ For the «triple cosmologie verticale des trois mondes», cf. the lemmata *Albiorix* («le roi du ciel»), *Biturix* («le roi du monde intermédiaire des hommes») et *Dubnorix* («le roi de l'enfer») in X. Delamarre, *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise. Une approche linguistique du vieux-celtique continental*, 2e édition augmentée, Paris 2003, 77.

³⁰ Cf. Hainzmann, this volume; Häussler, *How to identify*, cit.; M. Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*, London 1992; P.-M. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule*, Paris 1976².

³¹ For *esus* merely meaning 'god', cf. W. Meid, *Keltische Religion im Zeugnis der Sprache*, «Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie» 53, 2003, 20-40; Häussler, *How to identify*, cit., 24.

³² Also in Gaul they take, for example, different consorts (Mars-Nemetona; Mercury-Rosmerta). But cf. for example the statement regarding different distribution patterns of Mars and Mercury in the *civitas* of the Senones – a problem resolved by B. Debatty by explaining that both Mars and Mercury derive from a «dieu celtique souverain et guerrier» and therefore have the «même fonctions que les divinités poliades» so that the population can assemble «autour de valeurs communes»: B. Debatty, *Marti, Volkano et sanctissimae Vestae sacrum. Le sanctuaire suburbain de la Motte du Ciar près du Sens (cité des Sénons)*, in M. Dondin - Payre - M.-Th. Raepsaet-Charlier (Éds.), *Sanctuaire, pratiques culturelles et territoires civiques dans l'Occident romain*, Bruxelles 2006, 159-180, esp. 175.

³³ For Toutatis, cf. Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 294-295, s.v. *teuta, touta* «tribu, peuple»; De Bernardo Stempel, *Continuity, translatio and identificatio*, cit., 77; Häussler, *How to identify*, cit., 23-24.

³⁴ Cf. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule*, cit., 66 ff. J.C. Balty, *Teutates*, in *LIMC* 8, 1, 1197; Häussler, *Pouvoir et religion*, cit. But also in Britain: cf. e.g., Marti Toutati from Barkway (*RIB* 219 = *ILS* 4540) and *Condercum*/Benwell (*AE* 2001, 1298).

agents also considered aspects of the earlier Republican Mars, notably as agricultural 'guardian'³⁵ (knowledge of Republican or even Etruscan deities may derive from early contacts between Italy and Southern Gaul in the Republican period).³⁶ By contrast, in the *Tres Galliae*, people often choose Mercury to represent this role of 'Toutatis'.³⁷ We can also recognise differences: Mars, for example, can have a large variety of Celtic *epitheta*, unlike Mercury.³⁸

Other cases appear even more complex, like 'Sucellos' and the mother goddess(es) in Gaul. As we shall see below, the mother goddesses – *matres* or *matronae*³⁹ – can be identified with a large number of Graeco-Roman deities: as triad they appear like the Moirai, Fates, Parcae and Iunones; an explicit *interpretatio* is provided by the *Matronae Deruonnis* from Mediolanum⁴⁰ which were called by their 'Romanised' version *fatae Deruonae* in Brixia⁴¹ (but were the terms *matronae* and *fatae* really synonymous for people?).⁴² But there is also the single mother goddess in the Keltiké,⁴³ whom Caesar identifies as Minerva (*Gall.* vi 17, 2: *Mineruam operum atque artificiorum initia tradere*).⁴⁴ She can appear in many disguises and with many names in the Roman West: besides Minerva, we find her as Iuno Regina, Regina, Rosmerta, Epona Venus, and many more (*v. infra*).

The Celtic theonym *Sucellos*,⁴⁵ 'the Good Striker',⁴⁶ can be attributed to a

³⁵ Cf. M. Beard - J.A. North - S.R.F. Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*, Cambridge 1998, 1, 47-48.

³⁶ For the interaction between Southern Gaul and the Italian peninsula, notably Etruria, Latium and Campania cf. Mullen, *Rethinking 'Hellenization'*, cit. Also cf. the possible presence of the Etruscan goddess Feronea at Lioux (Vaucluse) in the Narbonensis: [*Fe?*]ronea (*ILN* 4, 136; cf. Häussler, *Pouvoir et religion*, cit., 197-199 with further bibliography; for Feronea as *interpretatio indigena* of a local goddess in Hispania, cf. Marco Simón, this volume).

³⁷ But also in the *Tres Galliae* do we find Mars as 'polis deity': e.g., *Mars Loucetius* in the *civitas Vangionum* – worshipped together with Nemetona/Victoria (cf. R. Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum: a new sacred landscape at the fringes of the Roman Empire?* in Häussler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, 2, cit., 185-215) or *Lenus Mars* for the Treveri.

³⁸ For Mercury and Mars – and her Celtic epithets – cf. N. Jufer - T. Luginbühl, *Répertoire des dieux gaulois*, Paris 2001, 90-93, 97-104.

³⁹ The terms are Latin, but they are not attested in Rome. *Matres/matribus* may have been chosen because they resemble the Celtic *māīr* and its dative plural *matrebo* (e.g. *RIG G* 14, *G* 203), while *matronae* resembles the plural genitive *matron* (cf. Gallo-Greek inscriptions from Istres: *RIG G* 519).

⁴⁰ *CIL* v 5791.

⁴¹ *CIL* v 4208, cf. A. Sartori *L'alto Milanese, terra di culti*, *MEFRA* 104, 1, 1992, 77-90, esp. 83.

⁴² Taking into account that they obviously do not have the same linguistic meaning, this *interpretatio* would be perhaps a functional identification of *matronae* and *fatae*, not a translation.

⁴³ For the concept of a single mother goddess in the Keltiké who had different names according to her functions and who could be at the same time mother and wife of all other gods, cf. C. Sterckx, *Éléments de cosmogonie celtique*, Bruxelles 1986, 48-50.

⁴⁴ Cf. discussion by Manfred Hainzmann, this volume.

⁴⁵ Using here the Celtic ending *-os* since a Latinised *Sucell-us* is not attested. On *Sucellos*, cf. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule*, cit., 62-64; P.F. Dorcéy, *The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion*, Leiden 1992; for attestations of *Sucellos*, cf. Jufer - Luginbühl, *Repertoire*, cit., 63; a possible addition: [*d(eo)*] *Suc(ello?)* from Mehadia (Dacia) (*CIL* III 1575 = *AE* 1998, 1108); *Sucellos'* consort is only attested once at Sarrebourg: *Nantosuelta* 'Sunny Valley' (*CIL* XIII 4542 = *ILS* 4614; cf. *nantu-* in Delamarre *Dictionnaire*, cit. 231-232; Green, *Dictionnaire*, cit. 157-158).

⁴⁶ For etymology, cf. *cellos* in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 113-114; *su* in *ibid.*, 283-284; *Sucellos*



FIG. 1. *Nemausus* / Nîmes: (a) altar with depiction of Sucellos holding a mallet and an *olla*, accompanied by a dog; (b) Altar to the hammer-god (courtesy of Nîmes Archaeological Museum; photos: author).

chthonic deity that can be recognised by his most common attribute – the mallet or hammer⁴⁷ – across the Roman West. Notably in Gallia Narbonensis, we also find Sucellos in anthropomorphic forms on reliefs and as statuettes represented as an old man that not only carries the hammer or mallet, but also a bowl, accompanied by a dog. We have to bear in mind that this iconography is the result of a very creative process: this kind of divine representation is very different from Iron Age ones in Southern Gaul which are dominated by statues of ‘accroupis’ and depictions of ‘têtes coupées’ and horses.⁴⁸ As in FIG. 1a, we can see how Graeco-Roman iconography was taken up and re-arranged to depict the local Sucellos. Most altars, however, only depict his main attribute: the hammer/mallet, sometimes with a dedication to Silvanus (FIG. 1b).

composed of *su-* «bon» and *cellos* «marteau» or «frappeur», hence «le bon frappeur», «the Good Striker».

⁴⁷ The hammer is rarely attested in pre-Roman times; perhaps it is visualisation of Roman times of a myth comparable with that of Charu’s hammer in Etruscan myth (v. *infra*) or Thor’s hammer.

⁴⁸ Cf. P. Arcelin - G. Congès (Éds.), *La sculpture protohistorique de Provence dans le Midi gaulois*. Actes de la table ronde de Velaux 2001, «Documents d’Archéologie Méridionale» 27, 2004 (dossier).

So far, we have already seen a creative process that made people design new visual representations for this god. In addition, we find a number of rather discrepant *interpretationes* for 'Sucellos', such as Silvanus, Vulcanus and Dispater.⁴⁹ And we need to understand what motivated people to make such diverse associations. Silvanus, for example, seems to be the most common *interpretatio*. His association with Sucellos is explicit in two dedications *deo Sucello (et) Siluano* from *Borbetomagus* / Worms and *Augusta Raurica* / Augst.⁵⁰ Otherwise, the Latin theonym seems to have replaced the indigenous name and there was no need for a double-name. It is obvious that Silvanus was not the Roman *rusticorum deus*, but an important chthonic deity in Gaul.⁵¹ Silvanus takes many epithets, such as *Silvanus conseruator* 'le saveur';⁵² this epithet can also be associated with the *matres* (*Ma[t]ribus Conseruatricibus*)⁵³ and *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus conseruator* and *Jupiter conseruator omnium rerum*.⁵⁴ A combination of Jupiter, Silvanus *conservator* and a goddess can be found in the dedication *I.O.M. Siluano Cons(ervatori) Dianae Aug(ustae)* from Upper Germany.⁵⁵ Altogether, rather 'non-Roman' epithets for both Jupiter and Silvanus. There is also an interesting dedication to Silvanus containing a prayer, *Silvano | u(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito) | [A]ris[---] | [Dom] itiae(?) Seu | [erin]ae(?) ser(uus?) | [u]t fecerit sapie[n]ter sic h[ab]eat Siluan | [um] p[ro]pitium* «Dans la mesure où il/elle aura agi sagement, qu'il/elle jouisse de la faveur de Silvain». ⁵⁶ We find the phrase *Siluanum propitium* again in a second-century A.D. inscription: *Sucellum propitium nobis* (Vichy, Arverni).⁵⁷ Silvanus – with the hammer as attribute – was also worshipped as a popular healing god, notably in Glanum.⁵⁸

But why did people choose Silvanus? Silvanus has neither Sucellos' attributes (hammer; *olla*), nor his functions (chthonic god, link to the underworld and rebirth), while the Roman Silvanus has very specific function in a rural context – for forests, herdsmen and boundary stones, if we follow Cato (*De re rustica* 83), Hyginus (*De limitibus constituendi*, preface), and others.⁵⁹ There must be other reasons for this association: it seems far-fetched to assume that *silua* 'wood' indicates the place of worship for Sucellos.

Sucellos was also represented as Hephaistos/Volcanus, perhaps for very mundane reasons: like Sucellos, Volcanus was a chthonic deity and his main attribute

⁴⁹ Cf. Häussler, *How to identify*, cit., 33 with bibliography.

⁵⁰ CIL XIII 6224 (Worms): *Deo Su|celo et | [S]ilvano | Ti(berius) G P I P*; AE 1926, 40 (Augst): *In honor(em) | d(omus) d(iuinae) deo Su|cello Silu(ano)*.

⁵¹ Cf. Häussler, *How to identify*, cit.; Id., *Pouvoir et religion*, cit.

⁵² ILN 4, 16 : *Silvano con|seruatori | C[---]us*; cf. Ph. Leveau, *Six dédicaces à des divinités indigènes du Lubéron et du plateau d'Albion*, ZPE 71, 1988, 180-186, esp. 183 f. ⁵³ ILN 2, Riez, 8.

⁵⁴ ILN 4, 80 : *I(oui) [O(ptimo)] M(aximo) [co]n|seruatori | u(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito) | Q(uintus) I(ulius) M()*; ILN 3, 153 = ILS 3016 : *Ioui | Conseruatori | omnium rerum*.

⁵⁵ CIL XIII 6618 (Trennfurt).

⁵⁶ ILN 4, 85.

⁵⁷ P. Wuilleumier - A. Audin, *Les médaillons d'applique gallo-romains de la vallée du Rhône*, Paris 1952, no. 104.

⁵⁸ Cf. Roth Congès, *La fortune éphémère*, cit., for Silvanus as healing god at Glanum.

⁵⁹ Cf. Dorcéy, *The Cult of Silvanus*, cit.; Cato, *De re rustica* 83.

was a hammer; in addition, the Greek Hephaistos has Aphrodite as his consort which might have been important to local people (v. *infra*).⁶⁰

The hammer appears to be Sucellos' most important attribute, but we can only speculate on its significance. Miranda Green⁶¹ suggests that the hammer was a symbol of authority, a weapon to protect people and combat disease, a symbol of boundaries and prosperity, etc.⁶² The hammer can also produce thunder and one might also see parallels with the Germanic god Thor.⁶³ But the hammer is also known in the Roman world, as reported by Tertullian:

«When it comes to the gladiatorial shows, you are even more devout. (...) We have laughed over the midday games of your gods when Father Pluto, brother of Jove, hauls off the remains of the gladiators brandishing his hammer (...).»⁶⁴

The importance of Tertullian's 'Pluto' – the Roman Dispater – in gladiatorial shows reflects above all the meaning of the Etruscan god Charu(n) whose main attribute was a hammer; in Etruria, depictions of hammers even seem to have served as an apotropaic device, like a 'talisman' to defend against evil.⁶⁵ When looking at the multiple *interpretationes* between the Greek Charon, the Etruscan Charu, the Graeco-Roman Pluto and the Roman Dispater, it is apparent that each deity has its own particularities: Charu was clearly different from Charon and actually escorted the dead into the underworld.

If the hammer was already an important attribute in pre-Roman mythology in Gaul, then this may explain the meaning why Caesar chose 'Dispater' as the deity whom all Gauls claimed to be descended from (*Gall.* vi 18: *Galli se omnes ab Dite patre prognatos praedicant idque ab druidibus proditum dicunt*); for Parthenios of Nikaia, Hercules was the ancestor of all Gauls,⁶⁶ and Ogmios (Hercules' Celtic 'counterpart', v. *infra*) could be seen as the god from whom all life originates.⁶⁷ While Caesar might have simply thought of a deity with hammer, the motivations and mentalities that motivated local people in Gaul and Britain to make their *interpretationes indigenae* appears very different and much more complex.⁶⁸

Besides the hammer, 'Sucellos' also holds an *olla* and is accompanied by a dog (cf. *Esp.* 437). Was the *olla* merely a sign of fertility? The story of the Irish god

⁶⁰ Cf. Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit., with bibliography.

⁶¹ Green, *Dictionnary*, cit., 112.

⁶² On the hammer and the 'hammer-god', cf. Green, *Dictionnary*, cit., 112; Ead., *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art*, London 1989, 79-85.

⁶³ Cf. S. Botheroyd and P. Botheroyd, *Keltische Mythologie von A-Z*, Wien 2004, 152.

⁶⁴ *Tert. nat.* i 10, 47; cf. *apol.* 15.

⁶⁵ L. Bonfante - J. Swaddling, *Etruscan Myths*, London 2006.

⁶⁶ Parthenios of Nikaia, in J. Zwicker, *Fontes historiae religionis Celticae*, 2, Bonn 1935, 20; of course this is just one of many origin myths regarding the Gauls/Celts.

⁶⁷ Cf. Sterckx, *Éléments de cosmogonie*, cit., 71. Lucian of Samosata clearly associates Ogmios with Hercules: cf. M. Euskirchen. *Ogmios – ein wenig bekannter Gott*, in G. Brands - J.-N. Andrikopoulou-Strack - D. Dexheimer - G. Bauchhenß (Hrsg.), *Rom und die Provinzen. Gedenkschrift H. Gabelmann*, (Beihefte Bonner Jahrbücher 53, Mainz), Bonn 2001, 119-124; Green, *Dictionnary*, cit., 167-168, s.v. Ogmios.

⁶⁸ Like Sucellos/Dispater/Charu, Dispater's consort, Proserpina/Persephone, leads us again to cycles of life, death and re-birth which were also important in Roman Gaul and Britain.

Daghdha – *Dagda Eochaid Ollathair* ‘All Father’ – might give us a clue to its meaning since his cauldron provides a drink for immortality and resurrection.⁶⁹ This may also remind us of the large stone cauldrons from late Iron Age Gaul, usually dedicated to Belenos ‘Maître de la Puissance’.⁷⁰ Sucellos’ dog might just be a reference to the Roman iconography of Silvanus, but dogs can have very diverse cult functions: we find them in the context of healing sanctuaries (cf. the healing sanctuary of Mars Nodons/Nodens at Lydney) and healing seems to be a major function of the South Gaulish Silvanus/Sucellos.⁷¹ But on a relief from Oberseebach, Sucellos was also accompanied by a three-headed Cerberus (Esp. VII 5564) who is a common theme for the ‘Gaulish’ Hercules (v. *infra*).

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND INNOVATION

The Romans were well aware that deities can have several names. In every *ciuitas*, Romans encountered different deities which they ‘interpreted’ by their existing gods. Tacitus, for example, recorded the following Roman *interpretationes* of Serapis which differ according to people’s focus: his healing quality, his omnipotence or his attributes (Tacitus *Hist.* IV 84, 5 on Serapis):

«Many identify the god himself with Aesculapius, because he heals the sick, some with Osiris, a very ancient divinity of those people; many again identify him with Jupiter, for his powers over all things; but most identify him with Dispatēr, from the emblems that are manifest in him, or through arcane reasoning.»⁷²

Another famous description comes from Lucian (*De dea Syriae* 31-32) on the temple of Atargatis in Hieropolis:

«In it are two images, one Hera, the other Zeus, whom they call by another name (...) Certainly the image of Zeus resembles Zeus in all respects – his head and cloak and throne – so that you would not willingly liken him to anyone else. But Hera will reveal to you as you look at her a form of diverse appearances. Taken all together, to be sure, she is Hera, but she also has something of Athena and Aphrodite and Selene and Rhea and Artemis and Nemesis and the Parcae.»⁷³

The various *interpretationes* here are worth noticing, notably for Atargatis⁷⁴ whose sculpture seems to be a bricolage of various goddesses (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis and the Parcae), though this is of course Lucian’s view. He identifies elements that he associates with the representations of goddesses that he is aware of. While the *interpretatio* with Zeus appears unprob-

⁶⁹ Cf. Green, *Dictionary*, cit., 57-58, s.v. *cauldron*; *ibid.*, 75, s.v. *Daghdha*.

⁷⁰ Cf. the Gallo-Greek dedications to Belenos: RIG G 24, G 28, G 63. The Lemmata *belo-*, *bello-* in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 72.

⁷¹ E.g. at Glanum: Roth-Congès, *La fortune éphémère*, cit.

⁷² Cf. Ando, *Interpretatio*, cit.

⁷³ Cf. discussion by Ando, *Interpretatio*, cit. and M. Hainzmann, this volume.

⁷⁴ For Atargatis, cf. e.g., P. Bilde (Ed.), *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom*, Aarhus 1990.

lematic, Atargatis could not be simply associated with Hera. To characterise her, people appear to have used additional elements which they borrowed from other goddesses. In addition, the complex iconography of Atargatis may also be the result of her actually incorporating the myths and functions of other local deities.

Also in Gaul and Britain, we find sculptural representations that do not just copy one type, but combine elements from different deities in one image.⁷⁵ We cannot always tell whether we are dealing with Iuno, Minerva, Fortuna or Venus due to the combination of attributes or the addition of 'non-Roman' attributes, postures and representations. These are no 'syncretised' gods. But it shows an attempt by individuals, euergètes and stone cutters to use an iconographic language at hand to represent the character of a local deity; the choice of particular features (hair, dress, posture, attributes) may represent elements that these individuals considered important to a deity's functions and her role in mythology. The task to categorise such 'provincial' sculptures as Juno, Minerva or Fortuna may sometimes be futile since people may have never made a direct *interpretatio* with a Graeco-Roman deity, but they merely borrowed sculptural representations and re-arranged them (cf. e.g., Fig. 4c; 9).⁷⁶

These cultural differences between 'Romans' and 'natives', between 'conquerors' and 'conquered', between the people of various cultural and ethnic origin that come together in provincial hubs – towns and sanctuaries –, stimulated the creation of new interpretations for local deities, attributing to them new functions, myths, symbols and new names by creating new theonyms/epithets and by trying to create a figurative representation for the local deity. Cultural differences can catalyse innovation, notably in a world with growing transcultural interaction.

For example, knowledge of anthropomorphic representations of Graeco-Roman deities can motivate people to re-think the nature of their local deities. In this respect, Glanum (Saint-Rémy de Provence) provides an interesting case.⁷⁷ In the late second century B.C., a trapezoidal building was constructed at the heart of the city, aligned to the contemporary 'Tuscan' temple. Around its central courtyard, we find capitals with depictions on four sides. Some of them show figures from Greek mythology, like a one-eyed Cyclops or an allegorical representation of Africa (Fig. 2a). But there are also depictions that cannot be identified (Fig. 2b-c). Is this an early attempt to depict local deities, like Esus and Taranis, or do these heads represent the local heroised ancestors that seem to have played such an important role in these late Iron Age societies?⁷⁸ Of course, anthropo-

⁷⁵ Cf. a selection of exemplary statues and reliefs in Germania superior: Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit., figs. 30.4, 30.8b, 30.9b-c, 30.10 f, 30.13-15.

⁷⁶ Cf. Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit.

⁷⁷ Roth Congès, *La fortune éphémère*, cit.; Ead., *Glanum. De l'oppidum salyen à la cité romaine*, Paris 2000; F. Gateau - M. Gazenbeek, *Carte archéologique de la Gaule 13/2 – Les Alpilles et la Montagne*, Paris 1999.

⁷⁸ Cf. R. Häussler, *From tomb to temple. On the role of hero cults in local religions in Gaul and Britain in Iron Age and Roman period*, in J. Arenas Esteban (Ed.), *Celtic Religion across Space and Time*, Molina de



FIG. 2. Figured capitals from the trapezoid building of second-century BC Glanum (Saint-Rémy-de-Provence): (a) cyclop (b+c) unidentified indigenous deities or heroes (photos courtesy of Centre Camille Jullian, Aix-en-Provence).

morphic sculptures were not unknown in Glanum and across Southern Gaul, notably the so-called ‘accroupis’ (lifesize sculptures of humanoid persons sitting in a cross-legged position), a tradition going back to the early Iron Age,⁷⁹ but these ‘accroupis’ are very different in character to Glanum’s second-century BC figured capitals from the trapezoidal building. And in the Principate, the anthropomorphic representations of deities in Glanum are fundamentally different from those in the Iron Age.

PILIER DES NAUTES AND INTERPRETATIO INDIGENA

This leads us to a prime example for the study of religious understandings and *interpretatio indigena*, the *pilier des nautes* (‘Pillar of the Boatmen’) from Paris, which was dedicated to the emperor Tiberius by the local *nautae*.⁸⁰ This pillar consists of four blocks with depictions on each side, fifteen depictions in total plus one face for the Latin dedication. What are we dealing with? Does this represent the local pantheon of the *Parisii* in the early Principate or is this just an ‘accidental’ and ‘arbitrary’ arrangement of deities? For Peter Scherrer,⁸¹ for example, this monument is above all a sign of loyalty to the emperor Tiberius by auxiliary soldiers since for him the *nautae* were no Seine shippers, but marines of the Roman fleet; and as auxiliary soldiers, we could see the *pilier des nautes* as result of the

Aragón, Toledo, 2010, 201-226. However, the facial expressions are very different from contemporary *têtes coupées* and *accroupis*.

⁷⁹ Cf. Arcelin - Congès (Éds.), *La sculpture protohistorique de Provence*, cit.

⁸⁰ Esp. iv 3132-3135 = ILS 4613 = CIL XIII 3026; CAG 75, 445-452, no. 760* with further bibliography on the *pilier des nautes*. Also cf. paper by M. Hainzmann, this volume.

⁸¹ P. Scherrer, *Pilier des nautes*, in M. Hainzmann et al. (Hrsg.) *Akten des 10. F.E.R.C.AN. Workshops*, 25-26. Mai 2010 Paris, *L’Année Épigraphique*, forthcoming.

'army culture' that the *Parisii* experienced. For Peter Scherrer, the selection of deities might reflect pragmatic choices: Volcanus could merely demonstrate the importance and the esteem attributed to blacksmiths, while Celtic theonyms are considered to display a notion of local identity.⁸²

But is this all there is? Can we really assume that the dedicants just chose a range of religious images from a Roman stone-cutter's pattern book? Instead, we should start from the premise that the choice of deities, the depictions and their arrangement on the pillar were planned and meaningful for this period. Certainly in a period of extreme sociocultural change, like the transition from Augustus to Tiberius with all its uncertainties, such a monument can have a significant impact in innovating and rewriting local religious cults and religious understandings. Should not we ask instead, why certain deities were chosen to be represented as 'Roman' deities on the Pillar, while others were represented by non-Roman theonyms and images? Taken on their own, each image might well represent a specific Roman deity (plus a few Celtic ones), but, I would argue, together this composition provides an insight in the complex religious and mythical understandings of the *Parisii* in the early Principate, resulting from the cultural processes of bricolage, mimicry and creolisation.

The Pillar consists of four blocks and the largest reliefs can be found on the two top rows. Latin theonyms, accompanied by Classical representations, include: Jupiter, Volcanus, Castor and Pollux; Celtic theonyms include Esus, [C]ernunnos, Smert[rios], Tarvos Trigaranos.⁸³ On the lowest row of depictions, we find four pairs of deities: Mars plus an unidentified consort (Victoria? Nemetona?); Mercury and consort (Rosmerta?); Fortuna and another female deity, perhaps Juno (cf. e.g. relief of Juno and Minerva on Viergötterstein, *infra*).

Let us first explore the case of Smert[rios] or Smert[ullus].⁸⁴ He is depicted killing a snake (FIG. 3a). This depiction closely resembles a relief from *Altiaia/Alzey* (*ciuitas Vangionum*) of a god killing a snake-like animal with a club (mid-first century AD) which traditionally has been interpreted as Hercules killing the hydra (FIG. 3b).⁸⁵ We can see here that both Smertios and Hercules must have been comparable 'heroes' whose deeds play an important rôle in people's religious understanding; the story of heroes often serves to explain complex reli-

⁸² Scherrer, cit.

⁸³ *CIL* XIII 3026 = *ILS* 4613: starting with the dedication, though the top block could have been the one with Jupiter-Esus: (a) *Tib(erio) Caesare | Aug(usto) Ioui Optum | o | Maxsumo(!) s(acrum) | nautae Parisiac[i] | publice posierun | [t(!)] | | Eurises | | Senant U[s]eiloni(?) | | (b) Iouis | | Taruos Trigaranus | | Volcanus | | Esus | | (c) [.Jernunnos | | Castor | | [---] | | Smert[ri?]os | | (d) [---] | | [---]Fort[una?] | | [---]V[---] | | [---]*.

⁸⁴ On Smertrios, cf. Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 277, s.v. *smero/smerto*- «prévoyant, qui prend soin de, pourvoyeur». For reading Smertullus, cf. e.g. *Smertu[---]* from Escolives-Sainte-Camille (*AE* 1967, 317).

⁸⁵ For Alzey relief, cf. *CSIR* II, 1, 18-19; recent discussion by Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit. with further bibliography; also cf. similar depictions on the Gundestrup cauldron: G.S. Olmsted, *The Gundestrup Cauldron*, Bruxelles 1979, esp. pl. 2A; *ibid.*, 127 for the theme of Hercules and the Nemean lion already 'borrowed' to represent a local myth on the Gundestrup cauldron.



FIG. 3. (a) Smertrios relief from the *pilier de nautes*, Paris (photo: author); (b) relief of Hercules/Smertrios slaying the Hydra from Alzey (Kreis Alzey-Worms) (after CSIR-D II, 1, no. 18).

gious understandings to the general public, providing examples of a good and virtuous lifestyle.⁸⁶ The snake in these images could be a symbol of regeneration or a connection between the world of the living and the dead⁸⁷ – allusions to the latter are also reflected in other popular ‘Hercules’ depictions in Gaul, like the apples of the Hesperides which were used in order to establish contact with the ‘Otherworld’. It seems that Hercules and Smertrios had similar characteristics (at least superficially): the hero, the semi-god and the champion of immortality. A dedication to Smertrios from Lyon, which can be associated with a (bearded) Hercules, further supports the association of these two deities, though on the few epigraphic attestations of Smertullus his name ‘The Purveyor’ was used as *epitheton* for Jupiter and Mars.⁸⁸ It seems that Hercules in Gaul acquired a particular function, taking on substance from local, indigenous religious myths and beliefs, not just from Smert[rios], since Hercules was also associated with the semi-god Ogmios ‘god of eloquence’, as reported by

⁸⁶ Häussler, *From Tomb to Temple*, cit.

⁸⁷ Cf. G. Moitrieux, *Hercules in Gallia. Recherches sur la personnalité et le culte d’un dieu romain en Gaule*, Paris 2001, 226; also cf. Olmsted, *Gundestrup*, cit., 162–165 for Mercury with snake and the snake as manifestation of the sovereign chthonic Celtic goddess, *terra mater*.

⁸⁸ E.g., *Iou[i] Smer(trio)* from Grignan (AE 1987, 756); *Marti Smertrio et [---] Vindoridio Boud[a]nae* from Liesenich (CIL XIII 11975 = ILS 9303); *Marti Sme[rtuli]t[a]no et [Anc]amnae* from Mohn (CIL XIII 4119 = AE 1983, 718); *[D]iti Smer[trio] Aug(usto) M Claud(ius) Rufus [et I]ulia Gemellina aedem fecerunt l(ibentes) m(erito)* from Grossbuch (AE 1950, 98 = ILLPRON 121); also cf. AE 1984, 641: *Apollini Augusto Atesmert* and AE 1925, 98 *Atesmert(a)*.



FIG. 4. (a) Volcanus relief from the *pilier des nautes*, Paris (photo: author); (b+c) double relief showing Volcanus and Venus from Alzey (Kreis Alzey-Worms) (after CSIR-D II, 1, no. 28).

Lucian.⁸⁹ This leads to a particular Hercules that an inscription from Samnium called *Hercules Gallicus*.⁹⁰ This function of Hercules may well explain his presence on the majority of ‘Viergöttersteine’ in Eastern Gaul.⁹¹

Another relief on the *pilier de nautes* depicts the Roman god ‘Volcanus’ with the typical attributes of a blacksmith: tongs and hammer (FIG. 4a). Does he only represent the patron god of the local blacksmiths? Let us consider a series of comparable depictions. Again a relief from *Altiaia* shows Volcanus in a very similar pose (FIG. 4b); this is a two-sided relief, depicting a rather non-Roman version of Venus on the other side (FIG. 4c);⁹² this association of Volcanus and Venus is important. On another relief, we find Volcanus holding a sceptre and behind him a stag (FIG. 5a) – which is not meaningful in a Roman context and probably serves here to symbolise (comparable to Hercules’ deeds with Cerberus and apples of Hes-

⁸⁹ Zwicker, *Fontes historiae religionis Celticae*, cit., 2, 78 for Lucian of Samosate; for Ogmios and Hercules, cf. Euskirchen, *Ogmios*, cit., 120-121; G. Bauchhenß, *Hercules in Gallien – facts and fiction*, in Häussler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, cit., 2, 91-102.

⁹⁰ CIL IX 2322; cf. Bauchhenß, *Hercules in Gallien*, cit., 91, n. 2. Of course, the character of Hercules in Gaul can vary enormously from *civitas* to *civitas*.

⁹¹ Cf. G. Bauchhenß, *Die Jupitergigantensäulen in der römischen Provinz Germania superior*, Bonn 1981; Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit.

⁹² CSIR-D II, 1, no. 28; Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit., 197; also cf. Venus-Volcanus from nearby Becherbach: Esp. 5127 = CSIR-D II, 9, no. 19.



FIG. 5. (a) Volcanus with stag (Alzey, after CSIR-D II, 1, no. 1); (b) Volcanus with hammer (Bad Kreuznach, after CSIR-D II, 9, no. 62).

perides) the deity's association with the annual cycles of life, death and re-birth.⁹³ This leads us to the above-mentioned association between Volcanus and Sucellos since, on a fourth relief, Volcanus' hammer is even more prominent, holding it at the centre of the image (FIG. 5b).⁹⁴ This resembles very closely the iconography of the hammer god in Southern Gaul, for example at Nîmes and Goult (FIG. 5c).⁹⁵

On such an elaborate monument like the Parisian *pilier des nautes*, Volcanus must be more than just a patron deity for

blacksmiths. We have only discussed a few indications that show the possibly complex nature of that deity in Gaul: a chthonic deity very closely related to the 'Otherworld', the dead and re-birth which were symbolised by appropriate symbols in provincial art. We have also seen the 'omnipotent' character of these deities. It is difficult to distinguish clearly between Hercules-Smertrios-Ogmios, Volcanus-Dispatet, Esus and many other deities. In the Roman period, we find many local particularities that constantly evolved. A form of 'creolisation' that constantly integrates new myths, iconography, media, functions and attributes into an existing divine concept.

Interestingly, the *pilier des nautes* also has two large reliefs depicting the *dioscuri*, Castor and Pollux, in the typical representation as horsemen (FIG. 6). Their presence may just result from the popularity of horseman for local society, perhaps also as protectors of travellers and boatmen. But before we interpret them as 'perfectly' Graeco-Roman deities, we have to remember that they are of course Tacitus' prime example for *interpretatio Romana* in his *Germania* where they are used to explain the meaning and identity of the indigenous Alcis.⁹⁶ There are also comparable divine 'brothers' in Gaul, if we believe Diodorus Siculus (IV 56); at Béziers, the Celtic *dioscuri* have Celtic epithets associated with Mars: *Diuanno Dinomogeti-*

⁹³ CSIR-D II, 1, no. 1. Häussler, *ibid.*, 196-197.

⁹⁴ CSIR-D II, 9, no. 62 (Bad Kreuznach).

⁹⁵ E.g., ILN, 142 (Goult); ILN 4, 144 (Lacoste).

⁹⁶ Tac. *Germ.* 43, 4; cf. Hainzmann, this volume; Chiai - Häussler - Kunst, *Einführung*, cit.

maro Martib(us).⁹⁷ Also in Vedic religion, we find similar twin brother horsemen, the Ashvin, who symbolise sunrise and sunset, bringing fortune and averting misfortune and sickness.⁹⁸ The Greek myth on the *dioscuri* is equally complex and contradictory, but the alternative immortality – one brother mortal, the other immortal – reported in certain myths may be an important symbol of life-death cycles; the *dioscuri*'s participating in the 'cattle raid' in Arcadia reminds us of the title of the famous Irish myth *Tain Bo Cuailnge* 'the cattle raid of Cooley'. Are we dealing with an Indo-European substratum? This would of course simplify identifications between Alcis, Dioscuri, Ashvin and the twin brothers in Gaul, keeping in mind that these myths had developed their own particularities and variations over the course of many centuries.

It is important to look at the deities that are present on the Pillar and those who are absent. Four of the five 'Gaulish' deities according to Caesar are missing: Mercury, Mars, Apollo and Minerva.⁹⁹ Also, many of our 'pan-Celtic'¹⁰⁰ deities (theonyms) are missing, notably Toutatis, Taranis, Lugus, Epona and Sucellos. The absence of female deities (except for the pairs at the bottom) is also striking;



FIG. 6. Castor and Pollux, *pilier des nautes*, Paris (photos: author).

⁹⁷ CIL XII 4218 = ILGN 557 = ILS 4585: *L(ucius) Coelius Rufus | Iulia Severa uxor | L(ucius) Coelius Mangius f(ilius) | Diuanno | Dinomogetimaro | Martib(us) | u(otum) s(oluerunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)*. Mars «Le Grand Tueur», Mars «very powerful»; cf. in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., the *Lemmata mageto- > mogeto-* «puissant», 212; *maros* «grand», 217; *-uanos* «tueur de», 305.

⁹⁸ On Vedic Ashvin or Asvin, cf. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, Oxford 1985, 212; Olmsted, *The gods of the Celts*; also cf. the divine twins *Ašvieniai* in Lithuania: D. Leeming, *From Olympus to Camelot*, Oxford 2003, 126.

⁹⁹ For some of them might be represented among the badly identifiable pairs of deities on the bottom row; also v. *supra*.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Häussler, *How to identify*, cit. for discussion of pan-Celtic deities.

and there is certainly no mention of Epona, Rosmerta, Regina or any triad of 'mother goddesses', though otherwise so common in Roman Gaul.

If we look closer we can recognise that in general only one deity of an analogous *interpretatio*-pair is present on the Pillar. For example, Smertrios is present, but his Graeco-Roman 'counterpart' Hercules is not; we have Jupiter and not Taranis, we find Volcanus and not Sucellos, Esus instead of Mars/Mercury. If this observation is right, then the dedicants and the stone-cutter must have made deliberate decisions which deities to represent as 'Roman' or 'Celtic' god, though we ought to bear in mind that this artificial distinction may no longer be meaningful or recognisable to people under Tiberius' reign.

Altogether we could argue that the *pilier des nautes* reflects a complex 'theology' and mythology – not Celtic *per se*, but typical for the *Parisii* in the early Principate. Already some seventy years after the conquest, the local people had to re-think their understanding as they were increasingly confronted with new ideas. We can see how a local 'pantheon' for Lutetia was emerging, but a 'pantheon' that will evolve even further at an ever increasing rate: Celtic theonyms and representations become rare and Graeco-Oriental cults become increasingly popular.¹⁰¹

'ICONOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATIO'¹⁰²

For the indigenous deities on the *pilier des nautes*, the question arises how the local people imagined their indigenous deities for whom they did not use to have sculptures. Three examples are revealing: Smertrios, Esus and the Tarvos Trigaranus. The way how a deity is depicted differs fundamentally from Graeco-Roman conventions. They are seen from the side, being engaged in one of the key scenes from their mythology: Smertrios is slaying a snake, Esus is cutting a tree and Tarvos Trigaranus is represented as a bull, standing under a tree, with three cranes on his back.¹⁰³ This is a transitional phase: there is still no iconography for these deities which we onlooker could easily identify, hence the need to represent well-known myths and deeds.

In order to understand the process of religious iconography in Gaul and Britain, we also have to look at earlier developments. Pre-Roman iconography in Gaul is largely limited to coins. But people did not just imitate Greek coins, they developed new iconographies, reflecting cognitions that were fundamentally different to contemporary Greeks and Romans. For example, a silver tetradrachma of Philipp II with Zeus on the obverse and a horseman on the reverse may have been adopted because – apart from its silver content – of its depiction of a horseman which could be associated with various elements in local myth and

¹⁰¹ For Lutetia and the *Parisii*, cf. D. Busson, *Paris-75. Carte archéologique de la Gaule*, Paris 1998.

¹⁰² We cannot distinguish between iconographic and linguistic '*interpretatio*'. Instead people associate or identify deities and divine concepts with each other – not names or images –, though these may help people to make their choice on an appropriate '*interpretatio*'.

¹⁰³ On Tarvos Trigaranus, also cf. Françoise Gury, this volume. For the cranes, cf. Green, *Dictionary*, cit., 68, s.v. *crane*.



FIG. 7. (a) Silver stater of the Aulerci Diablintes with androcephalic horse, second-first century BC; (b) gold stater of the Namnetes with androcephalic horse, c. 70-50 BC (Namnetes).

cult (e.g., *dioscuri*, *Epona*). In the course of time, this horse develops into a variety of images, acquiring more and more abstract forms.¹⁰⁴ Interesting for our study is the type with androcephalic horse, for example on a silver stater of the *Aulerci Diablintes* (located around the modern French département de la Mayenne / north-east of Rennes) (cf. FIG. 7a). Besides the human-headed horse, there are a number of important additions, like the four-spiked wheel (symbol of *Taranis* or just indicating a carriage?) and the person (warrior) under the horse. On a gold stater of the *Namnetes* (c. 70-50 BC) (FIG. 7b), the person under the horse had outstretched arms in this image, seemingly grasping a hindleg and a foreleg of the androcephalic horse;¹⁰⁵ the person depicted on the obverse has a human head with four chains and small human heads ('*têtes coupées*'?) attached to the head's hair. Unfortunately, much of the intrinsic meaning of these abstract icons escapes us. The horse, for example, could just reflect the popularity and esteem of horsemanship in Gaul; but it may also indicate local myths that resemble, for example, the *Rhiannon* myth where the horse stands for the great (chthonic) mother goddess and her union with the celestial god;¹⁰⁶ this theme is of course depicted in a similar way in the *Jupiter-Giant-columns* from eastern Gaul: a *Jupiter* on horseback (unknown from Roman iconography,¹⁰⁷ but resembling the androcephalic horse on coins) who is riding over a humanoid 'giant' or 'snake'.¹⁰⁸

Late Iron Age coinage shows the enormous creativity how Graeco-Roman iconography could be adapted to very different local cognitions. This is going to

¹⁰⁴ Also in respect to the 'dramma padana' in second-century BC Cisalpine Gaul: cf. A. Pautasso, *Le monete preromane dell'Italia Settentrionale*, (Sibrium 7, 1962-1963), Varese 1966; R. Häussler, *At the margin of Italy. Ligurians and Celts in North-West Italy*, in G. Bradley - E. Isayev - C. Riva (Eds.), *Ancient Italy: Regions without boundaries*, Exeter 2007, 45-78.

¹⁰⁵ Scheers, *BSFN* 37, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Olmstead, *Gundestrup*, cit.; Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit. with further bibliography.

¹⁰⁷ But known from Greek gigantomachy.

¹⁰⁸ Very popular among the *Vangiones*, *Nemetes*, *Triboci*, *Mediomatrici*: cf. Bauchhenß, *Jupiter-gigantensäulen*, cit.; cf. Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit. for discussion on the meaning of the *Jupiter giant columns*.



FIG. 8. Relief of local triad: Minerva, Mercury and Volcanus, *Borbetomagus*/ Worms (today: Archaeological Museum Worms; photo: author).

change in the Roman period when these abstract forms disappear relatively rapidly. Looking for breaks from the norm, we can find certain 'creole' sculptures and representations (e.g., statues that do not appear 'properly' Roman). But the dominance of Graeco-Roman iconography and Latin theonyms is overwhelming. This is why our explanatory framework needs to take into account to what extent people of various social statuses participated in imperial and global discourses or used

a *lingua franca* – both in writing, religion and art. But do people merely 'translate' personal names, theonyms, formulas and epigraphic conventions into 'Latin' when they set up a Latin dedication?

How should we then interpret our evidence from the Principate? Let us consider the relief of Minerva, Mercury and Volcanus from *Borbetomagus*/ Worms (Germania superior) which appears perfectly 'Roman' on first sight (FIG. 8).¹⁰⁹ Should we interpret this triad as the protective deities of craftsmen and traders who made a living in this affluent city? Minerva was the inventor of arts,¹¹⁰ Mercury the god of commerce and Volcanus the patron for craftsmen and notably blacksmiths. If this was the case, we might be dealing with the patron deities of a local guild/ *collegium*. Jean-Jacques Hatt¹¹¹ even suggested a purely Germanic triad – Odin, Thor, Freya – which seems highly unlikely. We could also interpret them as the local protective (i.e. polis) deities of *Borbetomagus*: Mercury as the protector of the community (i.e. *Toutatis*¹¹²); Volcanus, as we have seen, could have been an important chthonic deity like *Sucellos*, which makes sense in a *ciuitas* with one of the rare Latin dedications to *Sucellos* and *Silvanus* in the empire (v. *supra*); and finally, Minerva could represent the local mother goddess, a powerful goddess – hence her armour – protecting the community from calamities and providing prosperity and fertility; Minerva is of course widely

¹⁰⁹ CSIR-D II, 10, 33 = Esp. 601.

¹¹⁰ Caes. Gall. VI 17, 1-2.

¹¹¹ J.-J. Hatt, *Mythes et dieux de la Gaule, I. Les grandes divinités masculines*, Paris 1989, 218.

¹¹² Caes. Gall. VI 17, 1; for overview and catalogue of Mercury (and Rosmerta) in the *civitas Vangionum*, cf. Häußler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit.

attested across the *ciuitas Vangionum*, especially on the ‘Viergöttersteine’.¹¹³

Minerva is the only female deity mentioned by Caesar. But who is this ‘native’ goddess? In the *civitas Vangionum*, Minerva appears in unusual form (FIG. 9) and she is frequently associated with Juno Regina.¹¹⁴ The *epitheton regina*¹¹⁵ is of course typically Roman, but it seems to acquire a different meaning in the Keltike: we find Regina on its own without Juno, for example as *deae Reginae*.¹¹⁶ And there is of course the *defixio* from Lezoux, written in Celtic, mentioning *Eieuri Rigani Rosmerta*.¹¹⁷ Regina may have an analogous meaning to the Irish goddess Brigit (*v. infra*) which means ‘The Eminent’.¹¹⁸ The Lezoux inscription leads us to Celtic theonyms (or epithets), like Rosmerta – Mercury’s consort;¹¹⁹ other Celtic theonyms which may reflect different hypostaseis of the same deity according to her function and myth, include Candida,¹²⁰ Cantismerta¹²¹



FIG. 9. Minerva from Borbetomagus / Worms (after CSIR-D II, 10, no. 32).

¹¹³ Häussler, *ibid.* with further bibliography.

¹¹⁴ We usually find Minerva and Juno Regina depicted on most ‘Viergöttersteine’; cf. relief of Minerva and Juno Regina on one panel: Esp. 6029. Otherwise, Juno Regina is often Jupiter’s consort on the top of a Jupiter column and Minerva on the associated ‘Viergötterstein’.

¹¹⁵ *Regina* is also a common epithet for Isis, Diana (e.g., RIB 2122), Nemesis and Bona Dea Caelstis (e.g., RIB 1448).

¹¹⁶ For (*dea*) Regina without Juno, cf. e.g., *Dea Regina* from Lemington (RIB 125 = CSIR-GB I, 7, 94), *Regina* from Longovicium / Lanchester (RIB 1084); dedication *deae Regin(ae)* by the *uicani Se|gorigienses* at Worringen (Germ. inf.) (CIL XIII 8518); but also *Minervae reginae* from Lugdunum Convenarum / Pouech (Aquitania) (CIL XIII 177). Also cf. a possible [*dea?*] *Regina* | [*Iun?*] *oni* from London (RIB II, 4, 2443, 9).

¹¹⁷ Graffito from Lezoux: the theonym Rosmerta is well known from Latin inscriptions (*v. infra*), hence the problem whether Rigani is merely an epithet for Rosmerta or whether these are both theonyms; cf. M. Lejeune, *Textes gaulois et gallo-romains en cursive latine*, «Études Celtiques» 15, 1976-1977, 151-156.

¹¹⁸ *Brigantion* in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 87-88.

¹¹⁹ Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., the Lemmata *ro-* 261 f.; *smero-*, *smerto-* «pourvoyeur», 276. Cf. dedications to Mercury and Rosmerta: cf. e.g. appendix in Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit. with bibliography.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Candida* in Germania superior, e.g. from Nida/Hedderheim: *Deae Candidae Reginae* (AE 1978, 535); *Diae(!) Candid(a)e Reg(inae) et num(ini) eius* by a *beneficarius consularis* with the cognomen Ibliomarus from Osterburken (AE 1985, 00695); *Deae Candi|dae Reginae* from Osterburken (AE 1985, 685); *Deae Can[dida] Reginae* and *D(eae) C(andida) R(eginae)*, both from Ingwiller (CIL XIII 6021-6022).

¹²¹ Notably Cantismerta at Chamalières (cf. Lambert 1995, 118-121) and in the Alpes Poeninae: *Cantismert(ae), L(ucius) Quartillius Quartinus l(ibens) m(erito)* (Saint Clement, CIL XII 131). Cf. Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 103-104, s.v. *canti, canto*.

(=Fortuna?) and Cathubodua.¹²² But there is also Epona Regina,¹²³ for example in this rare combination with Jupiter, *I(oui) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Epon(a)e Regin(ae) Genio loci*,¹²⁴ which leads us to the recurrent theme of celestial god and chthonic goddess, as in the case of Jupiter and Juno Regina (v. *infra*). We should also remember the plural *Iunones* which is used side-by-side with *matres* and *matronae*, thus indicating a correlation between *Iunones* and the indigenous mother goddesses.¹²⁵ It appears that people saw (the 'Roman') Juno as a goddess with many faces and functions.

It appears that Minerva, Juno Regina, Rigani, Iunones, Rosmerta, Venus and Epona, together with the 'triads', like *matres*, *matronae*, *Iunones*, *Suleviae*, *Proxumes*, all refer to a certain indigenous concept of a chthonic mother goddess. But people saw this divine concept very differently and they therefore represented it in so many different ways. *Interpretationes* with Graeco-Roman deities varied, depending on local traditions and people's perceptions of Graeco-Roman myths. In a local context, people emphasised different characteristics (e.g., fertility) and diverse mythical relationships to other deities. In some regions, this mother-goddess-concept was seen as a triad, in others as a powerful single goddess. This powerful goddess was called *Terra Mater* in Nîmes, associated with Jupiter/Taranis; in some regions she could be represented as Juno Regina (also as consort of Jupiter), but she could also be Fortuna, Minerva and Diana. There are similar divine pairs which all had specific connotations (these pairs seems relatively fixed across the Keltiké), like Mercury and Rosmerta (often identified with Maia), Mars and Nemetona (Victoria), Volcanus and Venus (v. *supra*) (but the chthonic-celestial relationship is not always important, reflecting the role of the 'mother goddess' in a different mythical story).¹²⁶ In contrast, the 'horse' goddess Epona – whose equine connections make her epitomise mythical elements that we find in the Rhiannon myth¹²⁷ – usually appears alone; her *persona* is rarely used to symbolise the 'union' between male and female, celestial and chthonic forces.

Regarding their association with the chthonic world, cycles of life, death, rebirth and fertility, these goddesses and theonyms appear to be interrelated, but they are

¹²² E.g. CIL XII 2571 = ILS 4699 (Les Fins-de-Ley): *(C?)athuboduae Aug(ustae)*; After Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 111, s.v. *catu-*: Catubodua means «corneille de combat» i.e. battle crow – the crow as symbol of the war goddess.

¹²³ E.g., *Epon(a)e R[eginae]* set up by [...] *Sep(timius) Exo[un]o[marus]* (P. Kovács - Á. Szabó, *Tituli Aquincenses*, Budapest 2009, no. 53, *Aquincum* / Budapest); *Epon(a)e Regin[ae]* by a *legatus Augusti* (Apulum / Alba Iulia, Pannonia) (CIL III 7750 = *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae*, III 5, 1, no. 70; cf. *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae* III 5, 1, no. 69: [*Eponae?*] *Reginae*), [*dea*](?) *Eponae Reg(inae)* from Abrittus / Razgrad, Moesia inferior (AE 1993, 1370), *Ep[onae] Reg[inae] et] genio t[urmae]* from Samum / Caseiu, Dacia (C.C. Petolescu, *Inscriptiones latinae Daciae*, Bukarest 2005, no. 779).

¹²⁴ From Doclea / Duklje, Rusevine, Dalmatia (CIL III 12679 = ILS 4837; also cf. AE 1933, 76).

¹²⁵ Cf. overview and catalogue by G. Mennella - L. Lastrico, *Le Matronae-Iunones nell'Italia settentrionale: anatomia delle dediche*, in Häussler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, cit., 119-130.

¹²⁶ Since Volcanus often appears as *interpretatio* of Sucellos, a possible *interpretatio* of Dispatēr, cf. perhaps the dedication *Diti Patri et Proserpinae Regin(ae)* CIL III 8081 = ILS 3971 (*Ratiaria* / Archar, Moesia superior).

¹²⁷ Cf. Olmsted, *Gundestrup*, cit.

certainly not interchangeable. It appears that we are dealing with different *interpretationes* for a specific divine context, but interpretations vary depending on specific local preferences and understandings of this mother goddess. Why do we find different goddesses represented on the same relief or in the same inscription, e.g. Juno Regina and Minerva on the 'Viergöttersteine'? A likely scenario could be that different functions of the goddesses were expressed by different deities, i.e. 'Juno Regina' represents the consort with 'Jupiter' (hence we find them as a pair on a throne on Jupiter columns),¹²⁸ while 'Minerva' represents the strong, single goddess, defending the community from calamity. A similar scenario is also known from Irish myth with Brigit (cf. the Romano-Celtic *Brigantia*) and her 'incarnation' or 'hypostaseis', such as Macha, Morrígan, Badh, Nemain.¹²⁹

But it is also very important to consider the further evolution in the Roman period. These *interpretationes* and cults are not static, but people constantly re-invented and re-enacted their local cults, keeping them meaningful for contemporary social and cultural understandings. These various goddesses acquire an independent life during the Principate, by becoming more and more specialised. The most obvious example is Epona who became highly specialised and could be adopted by Romans for whom she became a protector of horses and travellers. Each goddess also has a particular consort (v. *supra*). During the Principate, the character and myth of these deities further evolved – on one hand, an increasing diversification of the cults, on the other hand, inserting them into dominant Graeco-Roman mythical narratives. As a result, people's knowledge of a possible common ancestry of these cults might get lost.

INTERPRETATIONES INDIGENAE OF MARS

This leads us to the 'Roman' Mars and its local incarnations. Here, we are indeed dealing with a successful '*interpretatio*' since the indigenous name of the deity has virtually disappeared. The identification with the Celtic theonyms Esus and Toutatis is really only known through the Berne scholia (v. *supra*) – 'pan-Celtic' deities appear to be the first 'victims' of *interpretatio*.¹³⁰ And yet, the countless discrepancies to Mars in Rome make it obvious that people's perceptions of their local deities were 'amalgamated' into the local character of that deity, leading to a wide range of epithets and a variety of iconographic representations (none of this may have existed in pre-Roman times). In epigraphy, these subtle differences are often less evident to spot. For example a dedication *Marti d(e)o* from Tre Owen (Newton, Powys, Wales) seems relatively straightforward (FIG. 10).¹³¹ But it is iconography that tells a different story: a warrior deity with shield and sword, but not the Classical representation of 'Mars/Ares'. He rather resembles the de-

¹²⁸ Cf. Häussler, *The civitas Vangionum*, cit. with catalogue and bibliography.

¹²⁹ Cf. F. Le Roux - C.J. Guyonvarc'h, *La société celtique dans l'idéologie trifonctionnelle et la tradition religieuse indo-européennes*, Rennes 1991, 114-115 for the six hypostases of Brigit in Irish mythology; also cf. Green, *Dictionary*, cit., 50-51, s.v. Brigit.

¹³⁰ Cf. Häussler, *How to identify*, cit.

¹³¹ CSIR-GB 1, 5, no. 15.



FIG. 10. Mars from Tre Owen (after CSIR-UK I, 5, no. 15).

pictions of Mars Cocidios in Northern England.¹³²

Mars Cocidios appears like the typical *interpretatio*, a 'conflation' of two deities, the Roman Mars and the native Cocidios.¹³³ But as Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel¹³⁴ and Xavier Delamarre¹³⁵ have convincingly shown, Cocidios is in all probability an *epitheton*, i.e. this is no *interpretatio* of Cocidios as Mars, but Mars already was an *interpretatio* of an unknown local deity or divine concept, while Cocidios was merely the epithet (either of the native deity or a newly developed epithet for the local Mars of the Principate), making him the 'blood-red-denied Mars', which De Bernardo Stempel interpreted as a *translatio Celtica* of Mars Ultor.¹³⁶

In Southern Gaul, we find countless Latin-Celtic double names, like Mars *Diuanos*, but the Celtic element is usually an epithet that describes the particularities of the local Mars or the characteristics which the dedicant considered important. Mars *Diuanos* is unlikely to be a 'conflation' between Roman Mars and Celtic *Diannos*, but it merely means 'the divine Mars'¹³⁷ or according to Xavier Delamarre 'Mars le Grand-Tueur';¹³⁸ the latter does not necessarily reflect a war deity, but may be a mythical allusion, like the Hindu god Shiva as 'destroyer'; similarly Mars *Belados* is 'Mars who destroys'.¹³⁹ Mars *Nabelcus* could be interpreted as the 'guiding Mars',¹⁴⁰ Mars *Bruatus* could be Mars *Briuati* 'Mars of the bridge / ford'.¹⁴¹ In this way, epithets reveal additional characteristics attributed to 'Mars'. For example,

¹³² For list of attestations, cf. Jufer - Luginbühl, *Repertoire*, cit., 35.

¹³³ For Cocidios as god, cf. *Cocidius* in Green, *Dictionary*, cit., 62.

¹³⁴ *Continuity*, *translatio and identificatio*, cit., 79.

¹³⁵ *Cocos, coccos* «écarlate, rouge» in Green, *Dictionary*, cit., 120.

¹³⁶ De Bernardo Stempel, *Continuity*, *translatio and identificatio*, cit.; also cf. Françoise Gury, this volume.

¹³⁷ *ILN* 3, 230. De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.: *Diuanos* < **divános* < **divo-no-s* «der Göttliche».

¹³⁸ Cf. *-uanos* in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 307.

¹³⁹ Mars *Belado* de Limans (*ILGN* 219-220) et de Plaisians (*AE* 1991, 1197); *Marti Beladoni* from La Tour-d'Aigues (*ILN* 3, 190); cf. Cf. De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.; Holder, *Altceltischer Sprachschatz*, Leipzig 1896-1919, I 367; III, 823; *belo-, bello-* «fort, puissant» in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 70-72.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*; *ILN* 4, 62 Cf. also *Brivatio* at Naintré, *RIG L* 3.

there are many indications to a local 'tree cult'¹⁴² (not necessarily a naturalistic cult, but a symbol for the world and the cosmos and/or re-birth, as we have seen *supra* in the case of Esus on the *pilier des nautes*): we find many theonyms relating to trees, including Jupiter *Baginas* et Mars *Buxenus*.¹⁴³ In Aquitania, there is a *Mercurius Viducus* 'the One of the Tree/Wood',¹⁴⁴ which leads us to *Callirius* 'the One of the Trees',¹⁴⁵ and the *Audruntehae Matres* 'qui se tiennent au pied du grand arbre';¹⁴⁶ for Xavier Delamarre, the latter shows the tripartite division of the world: celestial, chthonic and the 'middle-world' of humans which is evoked here (also cf. Albiorix – celestial, Biturix – human world, Dubnorix – chthonic).¹⁴⁷

It appears the local *Martes* were rather diverse and complex deities,¹⁴⁸ rarely Caesar's *Martem bella regere* (BG VI 17, 2) and certainly no Roman Mars. In Britain, at the Lydney Park sanctuary, for example, Mars *Nodons* appears as healing god. This is a sanctuary where incubation of pilgrims seems to have been practiced; Mars' attributes include dogs that are otherwise typical for Sucellos (who also could be a healing deity).¹⁴⁹ In Southern Gaul, we find Mars as protector of the local community, often taking toponymic epithets.¹⁵⁰ An interesting case comes from the abandoned late Iron Age hilltop site Le Castellar (Cadenet): a dedication of an axe to Mars and his consort Dexiva 'La Favourable':¹⁵¹ even without an epithet, we can see Mars' non-Roman characteristics: the pairing with a local goddess, the location on an abandoned oppidum (comparable to Romano-Celtic temples in former *oppida*, like Maiden Castle¹⁵²), and an axe as votive offering which is a common votive object in the late Iron Age.¹⁵³

Compared to Mars, Mercury hardly ever takes any epithets.¹⁵⁴ But behind the

¹⁴² De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.; Ead., *Continuity, translatio and identification*, cit.; for 'Celtic' tree cult, cf. e.g., J. Arenas Esteban, *Ancient tree cults in Central Spain: the case of La Dehesa at Olmeda de Cobeda*, in Häussler - King (Eds.), *Continuity and Innovation*, cit., 1, 189-199.

¹⁴³ De Bernardo Stempel, *Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.

¹⁴⁴ CIL XIII 576 = ILS 4606; De Bernardo Stempel, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ RIB 194.

¹⁴⁶ For dedications *Matronis Andrustehiabus* cf. CIL XIII 8212; AE 1956, 245 (Cologne); for dedications *Matronis Audrinehabus* and variants of it, cf. H. Finke, *Neue Inschriften*, BRGK 17, 1927, 1-107; 198-231, esp. nos. 280, 282-284. 286 (from Cologne-Hermuehlheim); for etymology and interpretation cf. X. Delamarre, *La structuration verticale de l'espace chez les Anciens Celtes et les déesses rhénanes «Andrustehiae Matres»*, Hainzmann et al. (Ed.) F.E.R.C.A.N. Akten Paris, cit., forthcoming.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *bitu-* in Delamarre, *ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Mars et Mercure romains et gallo-romains, cf. Duval, *Les dieux de la Gaule*, cit., 66 ff.; G. Bauhhenss, *Mercurius*, in LIMC 6, 1, 537-554; J.Ch. Balty, *Teutates*, in LIMC 8, 1, 1197.

¹⁴⁹ For Lydney Park, cf. R.E.M. Wheeler - T.V. Wheeler, *Report on the excavation of the prehistoric, Roman and post-Roman site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire*, Oxford 1932.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Häussler, *Fusion and resistance*, cit.; Id., *Pouvoir et religion*, cit.

¹⁵¹ ILN 3, 220-223; Cf. *dexsiuo-* «à droite, au sud, favorable» in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 143, s.v. for De Bernardo Stempel (*Einheimische, keltische und keltisierte Gottheiten*, cit.), Dexiva is «Bona Dea». Mars and Dexiva: ILN 3, 221; cf. Häussler, *Pouvoir et religion*, cit., 179-181.

¹⁵² N.M. Sharples, *English Heritage Book of Maiden Castle*, London 1991.

¹⁵³ For miniature axes, cf. P. Kiernan, *Miniature Votive Offerings in the North-west Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Mentor Bd. 4), Mainz/Ruhpolding 2009.

¹⁵⁴ The few Celtic epithets are discussed by Jufer and Luginbühl, *Repertoire*, cit., 90-93.



FIG. 11. *Deo Mercurio* (courtesy of British Museum).

Latin theonym, one can recognise local perceptions. For example, the inscription *Deo Mercurio* on a vase in the British Museum (FIG. 11) does not appear suspicious, but the 'face-pot' is however intriguing: the facial representations rather resemble the so-called 'Celtic stones' from Britain.¹⁵⁵ Mercury was also the deity worshipped at Uley:¹⁵⁶ even in the curse tablets (graffiti usually reflect a more personal choice and language) Mercury has no epithet.¹⁵⁷ And yet, the indigenous context seems apparent: a sanctuary that has been frequented from the late Iron Age to the Principate with only gradual changes in rituals, as can be seen, for example, in the very gradual changes to animal sacrifices.¹⁵⁸ This does not mean that Uley's Mercury has not changed since pre-Roman times, but that the choice (*interpretatio indigena*) of a Latin theonym was an important phase in the evolution of the local cult: in the Principate, people thought of the cult as Mercury – including a statue –, which may well represent

the perception of pilgrims from nearby Glevum and Corinium, but many rituals seem to have been constantly re-enacted over many generations and they only changed gradually, hardly noticeable to the local worshippers. We therefore can still recognise features deriving from the pre-Roman Iron Age traditions, like the nature of the sacrifices or the pit (possibly a water-filled pool) as focus of the votive offerings inside the *cella*.

Another emblematic case is Apollo Maponos.¹⁵⁹ Maponos appears in the Welsh Mabinogion as Mabon. But this does make him a Britanno-Roman 'god' and it

¹⁵⁵ Head; head, janiform in Green, *Dictionnary*, cit., 114 ff.

¹⁵⁶ For Uley, cf. A. Woodward - P. Leach, *The Uley Shrines. Excavation of a ritual complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977-79*, London 1993 which included R.S.O. Tomlin, *Votive objects: the inscribed lead tablets*, 113-130; since then, *defixiones* from Uley have been published in the annual reports *Inscriptions from Roman Britain* in «*Britannia*» by M.W.C. Hassall and R.S.O. Tomlin (cf. <http://curses.csad.ox.ac.uk>).

¹⁵⁷ But there is one combination with Mars: *Deo M(a)rti Mercuri[o]* (AE 1979, 385 = AE 1991, 1123).

¹⁵⁸ Cf. King, *Animal Remains*, cit.

¹⁵⁹ For attestations of Maponos, cf. Jufer - Luginbühl, *Repertoire*, cit., 51; Maponus in Green, *Dictionnary*, cit., 140, with literature.

is unlikely that we are dealing here with an *interpretatio* or 'conflation' between the Graeco-Roman Apollo and a British Maponos. Linguistically, Maponos just means 'the son of god'.¹⁶⁰ This is of course a very obvious *epitheton* for Apollo who was indeed the son of god, i.e. Zeus (cf. Apollo 'son of Zeus' in Homer). We also find Maponos on its own, but on a statue base or altar, the association with Apollo might have been obvious. We could also be dealing with a 'secondary theonym', i.e. an original epithet that became commonly used as name for a deity (cf. De Bernardo Stempel, *Continuity, translatio and identificatio*, cit.). In this way, the title Maponos acquires a life of its own and eventually became the Mabon of the Mabinogion (also cf. Welsh *Mabon fab Mellt* 'Mabon, son of lightning' which brings us back to 'Zeus'). Again this shows the continuing evolution: a Graeco-Roman Apollo is re-interpreted in a local context; this *interpretatio* sets in motion a further evolution out of which emerges a 'new' god with a life on its own, eventually developing the character of the Welsh Mabon where he was inserted in a localised sacred geography.

EPILOGUE

I hope that these few examples provide food for thought to re-think our understandings and methodologies regarding *interpretatio indigena*. We have seen how local people reshaped their cults and myths when confronted with new ideas in an increasingly 'interconnected' world. By choosing elements from a 'global' cultural repertoire, people created deities that were neither 'Roman' nor 'Celtic'. *Interpretatio* is a phenomenon of this 'global' world. In an increasingly interconnected world – with a network of cities as cultural and cosmopolitan 'hubs' – people were confronted with new ideas that made them re-think their own religious understandings which could trigger significant changes to local cults, both private and public. Even more than the Hellenistic period, the Principate represents a kind of 'global world' not too dissimilar to modern globalisation, which, in the words of Robertson involves 'the development of something like a global culture, not as normatively binding but in the sense of a general mode of discourse about the world and its variety.'¹⁶¹ This definition is useful because it leads beyond traditional centre-periphery concepts as if the provincial population were merely passive recipients. People did not just copy or imitate Graeco-Roman deities or myths, but they used the available repertoire to reinvigorate existing cults, position their local cult in a wider mythical landscape, and redefine their view of the world and their local identity, thus developing a linguistic and artistic *lingua franca*. As in a modern context, particularisation is an integral phenomenon of globalisation. The increasing cross-cultural interaction in the Roman period created even more

¹⁶⁰ Cf. De Bernardo Stempel, *Continuity, translatio and identificatio*, cit., 80; *mapo-* «fils, garçon» in Delamarre, *Dictionnaire*, cit., 215-216.

¹⁶¹ R. Robertson, *Globalization theory and civilizational analysis*, «Contemporary Civilizations Review» 17, 1987, 20-30.

diversity, but also more standardisation (e.g., choice of media). The global world of the empire provided a rich religious repertoire from which individuals and communities in Gaul and Britain could make their choices. We are dealing with a highly individualised society (compared to the late Iron Age with its collective votive deposits and collective feasting events).¹⁶² This individualisation has many consequences for local cults and for our evidence: for example, our evidence largely reflect personal *interpretationes* of a local deity since it is the individual who finances or vows an altar, sculpture or other votive objects: among others, there could be multiple interpretations of the same 'cult' by different people, explaining the multitude of similar deities attested in many sanctuaries. Moreover, the meaning of existing cults and/or civic cults could be called into question by individuals who could set up new cults or import a cult from another part of the empire, like the 'mystery cults', such as Mithras or Isis-Serapis.

On the other hand, the global and imperial discourses also guided people's decisions. Besides the pragmatic need for a common linguistic and artistic language, religious expression reflect how individual and communities negotiated and displayed their place in a supra-ethnic myth, like one's position in relation to Homeric and Roman mythology: for the Veneti, for example, a number of origin myths are recorded, like the story of the Trojan hero Antenor who led the Veneti from Troy to Venetia;¹⁶³ the other Trojan hero was of course Aeneas, the progenitor of Rome; this relationship could serve to give Romans and Venetians a common ancestry.¹⁶⁴ It is therefore difficult to say who created which myth: the Venetians to legitimate their position as *amici* and *socii* of Rome or the Romans to legitimate their rule over Venetia? Another set of origin myths inserts Celtic peoples into Hercules' mythical passage through Gaul and across the Alps. About the *Lepontii*, Pliny wrote that «most other writers, giving a Greek interpretation to their name, consider the *Lepontii* to have been those of the followers of Hercules who were left behind in consequence of their limbs being frozen by the snow of the Alps» (with *Lepontii* deriving from Greek *leipō* 'to leave behind').¹⁶⁵ As we have seen, many local people must have had knowledge of Graeco-Roman myths which guided their choices of theonyms and sculptures to represent local deities as Hercules, Volcanus, Mercury, Juno, etc. But these cults and the globalising narrative were inserted in a local context, creating particular versions of (say) Hercules or Silvanus with particular attributes, narratives and associating them with particular local places, mountains, sources, etc. In other words, 'proper' Roman deities are rare in the provinces (unless a *legatus Augusti* makes an official dedication on behalf of the

¹⁶² On collective Iron Age rituals, cf. sanctuaries like Gournay-sur-Arnone, Corent, Acy-Romance, and many more. Cf. J.-L. Brunaux, *Les religions gauloises. Nouvelles approches sur les rituels celtiques de la Gaule indépendante*, Paris 2000. For Corent, cf. M. Poux, *Religion et société. Le sanctuaire arverne de Corent*, in C. Goudineau (Éd.), *Religion et société en Gaule*, Paris 2006, 117-134.

¹⁶³ Liv. 1 1; cf. L. Braccisi, *La leggenda di Antenore: da Troia a Padova*, Padova 1984.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Šašel Kos, *The story of the grateful wolf and the Venetic horses in Strabo's geography*, «Studia Mythologica Slavica» 11, 2008, 9-24.

¹⁶⁵ Plin. nat. III 134.

Roman state), since this contradicts Graeco-Roman conceptions of 'polis religion': this is why in the provinces – more than elsewhere – people also add formulae like *ceteris dis deabusque* since people wanted to make sure not to exclude important local deities. We also should not put too much emphasis on 'army cults': soldiers, for example on Hadrian's Wall, may have acquired knowledge of Latin and Latin epigraphy and they used this medium in a Roman way to express their religious sentiments, for example to worship their 'native' ('German', 'Celtic', 'Italic') or the local deities. There are many sanctuaries that are void of inscriptions throughout the Principate and the only inscription may have been set up by a soldier or veteran, visualising a local cult or deity, as in Hayling Island.¹⁶⁶

Unlike an imperial or colonial discourse, globalism provides a bottom-up approach that not only focuses on the individual social agent, but it also focuses our attention away from the 'centre' Rome. Local cults and deities were 'inspired' by cults from across the empire. For example, the theme of afterlife beliefs – especially resurrection and rebirth – seems increasingly fashionable in the Principate, as we can see from the popularity of Isis and Mithras. This fits well with the theme of re-birth which we associate with many 'native' deities in Gaul and Britain (v. *supra*). No surprise that we find combinations between different goddesses, as in this dedication: *Terrae Matr[i] / Aerecurae Ma/tri deum Mag/nae Ideae / Popilia M(arci) fil(ia) / Maxima tauro/bolium aram / posuit mouit / fecit*;¹⁶⁷ (Aerecura is the consort of Dispatēr).¹⁶⁸

Cross-fertilization between different cultures provided a very creative process in the Principate. Completely new religious expressions, cults, deities and myths were created that were meaningful to people's changing social and cultural understandings. Since one-to-one equivalents between Roman and 'Celtic' deities were rare – the problem of translatability –, people experimented with their cultural expressions and we therefore find that a certain 'indigenous' concept could be represented by a variety of Graeco-Roman theonyms and representations. In a local context, we have seen the unity and diversity of religious understandings and religious change in the Roman West. On the one hand, there seems to be a certain 'supra-myth' that can be found in many local variations in the Roman West, like the existence of a celestial weather/thunder god and the chthonic mother-goddess, their struggle and union that result in fertility and re-birth. Considering our limited information on pre-Roman Iron Age cults, it is very difficult to assess how great the 'culture clash' was. How important were, for example, the cults of bulls and horses, of trees or other inanimate objects, like rocks or stones? And how could they be represented on a Latin dedication? Or could they? How could local heroised ancestors be represented in the *lingua franca* of the Principate?¹⁶⁹

Francisco Marco Simón (this volume) has already discussed Strabo's description of 'nameless' Celtiberian god; indeed, we should consider that local gods

¹⁶⁶ RIB III 3042.

¹⁶⁷ CIL VIII 5524, *add.* 963, 1807 = ILS 3960 (*Thibilis/El Announa, Numidia*).

¹⁶⁸ ILS 3966. ¹⁶⁹ Cf. Häussler, *From Tomb to Temple*, cit.

might not have had a 'proper' name, but perhaps people only referred to them by descriptive words, like the 'thundering' or the 'nourishing' god; in this case, the *interpretatio indigena* with a Roman theonym could fundamentally change the local deity's character.

Religion was not used as merely an expression of loyalty or imitating the Romans – it is rarely an indicator of people's *Romanitas*. Both élites and subaltern people adopted particular elements and media and endowed them with new meaning. We should not limit these developments to a single act of *interpretatio* when a provincial *civitas*, colony or *municipium* was created, although certain 'pan-Celtic' deities, like Esus, Lugus, Toutatis, Taranis, etc., appear to be the first 'victims' of *interpretatio*, having been replaced by Mercury, Mars and Jupiter. We are dealing with long-term developments: the character and function of local deities and cults was constantly adapted to remain meaningful for individuals and communities. We can hardly follow Duval that certain Gallic deities, like Sucellos or the *matres*, «sont restés eux-mêmes en pleine époque romaine». ¹⁷⁰

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ABSTRACT

Interpretatio is an important mechanism to overcome the cultural differences in the Roman empire by providing a common language that is intelligible across this vast empire. But the association of a local deity with a Greco-Roman deity is not as straight forward as it seems. In some case, a variety of sometimes contradictory Greco-Roman names are attested for the same local god. It is therefore important to grasp the subtle differences in these associations in order to understand the 'real' nature of a local deity. These associations between an indigenous/local and Greco-Roman divine concept are not superficial. Instead, we recognise here the cross-fertilisation between different cultures: the original act of *interpretatio* only sets in motion long-term processes that will, in the long run, significantly change the nature of a local cult. We are dealing here above all with a process that we could label *interpretatio indigena* in order to emphasise that it was predominantly the indigenous population in the Roman provinces (and not the Roman conquerors) whose actions changed the nature of local cults. It is their choices of a Greco-Roman theonym or artistic/sculptural representation that will gradually shape the way how people thought about their local deity. The local population chooses particular elements from the alien culture and endowed them with new meaning. Altogether, we are dealing here with a creative process by which totally new cults were created, thus rejuvenating and transforming local religions across the Roman empire.

KEY-WORDS: Roman religion, *interpretatio indigena*, creativity, cultural transformation, cultural identity.

¹⁷⁰ *Dieux de la Gaule*, cit., 66 ff.