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**Festschrift for Erzsébet Jerem
in Honour of her 70th Birthday**

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Stamp decorated Early La Tène flask from Hidegség
Eisenstadt, Burgenländisches Landesmuseum

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Hero Cults between Iron Age and Principate

RALPH HAEUSSLER

‘(...) the day has this merit: he who arms for the first time today
will achieve fame and greatness. But his life is short.’
‘That is a fair bargain,’ CúChulainn said. ‘If I achieve fame,
I am content, though I had only one day on earth’
(*The Táin*, translation KINSELLA 1969, 85).

As has been prophesied, he achieved ever-lasting fame, with his display of terrifying battle frenzy, but his life was short – altogether not too dissimilar to the Greek hero Achilles. Heroes – half human, half god – play an important rôle in insular Celtic mythology, but they seem to be largely missing in Romano-Celtic religions. Hence it is the aim of this paper to look for indications of hero cults in the *Keltiké* in Roman times. If we take the hero of the Irish *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, CúChulainn ‘Hound of Culann’, son of Lug and Deichtine, who both was born and died during the annual Samuin festival (cf. WAIT 1985, 222), then there are a number of striking parallels from the Roman period, like CúChulainn’s father, the god Lugus ‘the Shining One’, well attested in toponyms and theonyms across the Roman West (HAEUSSLER 2008c, 31). There is also Samuin, the insular Celtic feast of death on the 1st November when the frontiers between this world and the Otherworld became permeable and during which nature was re-born (GREEN 1992, 42; 185–6). In Roman times this was *samonios* attested on the Gallo-Roman calendar of Coligny (BERNECKER 1998), and this was also the time of increased cult activities (i. e. animal sacrifices) in many Romano-Celtic sanctuaries (cf. e. g. KING 2005, 363; LAMBOT 2006, 185). Moreover, the cycle of life and death, rebirth and reincarnation also played an important rôle in Iron Age and Romano-Celtic religions. Caesar, for example, tells us that for the druids ‘(...) souls do not become extinct, but pass after death from one body to another’ (Caes. *BG* 6.14). Similarly Diodor (5.28) and Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1.442 ff:

(...) the shades of men
Seek not the dismal homes of Erebus
Or death’s pale kingdoms; but the breath of life
Still rules these bodies in another age.

In this respect, stag and antler seem to symbolise re-birth in many Romano-Celtic representations, for example as attribute of Cernunnos, but also as addition to chthonic gods like Vulcanus or the semi-divine Herakles (e. g., *CSIR* II.1, no. 1; cf. HAEUSSLER 2008a). The popularity of the Greek hero Herakles across Gaul is particularly important since his heroic deeds were already known in pre-Roman Gaul (cf. 2nd century BC Herakles statuette in Glanum: ROTH CONGÈS 2000, 42); his indigenous counterpart was Ogmios (cf. DUVAL 1976, 79–82; BAUCHHENS 2008). Parthenios of Nikaia considered Hercules to be the ancestor of all Gauls (in ZWICKER 1935, 20), and Ogmios was considered to be the god from whom all life originates (STERCKX 1986, 71).

Of course, we should not create artificial parallels between Irish and Welsh mythology and the religions in Iron Age and Roman Gaul and Britain, but the numerous resemblances may indicate that there was a common repertoire of mythical figures and divine conceptions; there also were a number of transformations and adaptations in time and space, and it is possible that local creations of the Roman period continued to evolve (e. g. Apollo *Maponus* ‘son of god/Zeus’ became the god *Mabon*, son of Mellt

‘lightning’, in the Mabinogion). In mythology, heroes are portrayed as humans with a special relationship to the supernatural, serving as intermediaries between humans and gods. They are an expression of a ‘heroic’ society in which contact to the supernatural was commonplace (WAIT 1985, 222; ROSS 1967). Various particularities in late Iron Age funerary rituals can also be attributed to such a ‘heroic’ society, such as the elaborate warrior graves and the excarnation of the corpses of heroic warriors. Excarnation means that the corpse was exposed in the open for a process of decomposition, aided by scavengers; the remains were sometimes buried in cemeteries or inside settlements (cf. BRUNAUX 2004, 118–124). This ritual was not intended for everybody, but limited to the warriors that suffered a heroic death. In the 1st century AD, Silicus Italicus (*Punica* III, 340–343) wrote:

*his pugna cecidisse decus, corpusque cremari
tale nefas: caelo credunt superisque referri,
impastus carpat si membra iacentia uultur.*

In the archaeological record, excarnation is attested both in Iron Age Gaul and Britain. In this respect, the village and sanctuary of Acy-Romance (cf. LAMBOT 2006) provides an interesting case with a number of burials of excarnated humans of the 2nd century BC marking out the sanctuary; the first burial is contemporary with the establishment of the village, though the deceased was probably too young to be an ‘*oikistés*’.

But such semi-divine ‘heroes’ were no ornamental addition to local mythologies. They developed because they played an important rôle in society. Anthropological studies help us to understand the diversity of ancestor and hero cults. For example on the Kiribati and Marshall Islands, with the soul being immortal, the mythical and deified ancestors were local patron ‘deities’; the skull also played an important rôle in the ancestor cult, which may remind us of many ‘Celtic’ examples (cf. LATOUCHE 1984; for Melanesia cf. LANOUGUÈRE-BRUNEAU 2002; for Ixil and Maya cf. COLBY 1976). The development of hero cults in ancient Greece largely resulted from profound sociocultural changes, especially during urbanisation and the evolution of the *polis* (cf. *ThesCRA* II, 126–214; *ThesCRA* IV, 24–38; ANTONACCIO 1995). In such a context, heroes provide an identity for the emerging urban communities, helping to consolidate social hierarchies and territorial integrity. As we shall see, the hero cults in Southern Gaul or in Romano-British Verulamium very much seem to fit this purpose. In analogy to other Indo-European religions, especially Hinduism, such heroes can be seen as reincarnation of deities (DUBUISSON 1986; ASTIER 2007, 78–97): this may explain their often unusual birth, their exceptional life and deeds, their virtues, as well as the divine honours they received after their death. In Hindu epics, heroes are incarnations of deities. Râma, for example, is an embodiment of Vishnu, whose purpose is to show people the righteous path (*dharma*). In Hinduism the mythical deeds of heroes provide concrete instructions to the worshippers on how to lead a good life and thus to popularise abstract religious ideas and norms. In this respect, the Râmâyana can be interpreted as the great battle between the forces of Good and those of Evil, with Râma displaying a wise political government (ASTIER 2007). Such comparative examples may help us to enlarge our interpretative framework to make sense of ancestors and heroes in Iron Age and Romano-Celtic Europe.

The case of Verulamium (St. Albans) allows us to study a community confronted with extreme stress situations, initiated by urbanisation, state formation and the Claudian invasion of Britain. In this situation, the worship of a common ancestor or outstanding hero assisted in overcoming internal crisis. In Verulamium it was a real person that acquired heroic or semi-divine status and continued to be venerated as patron or protective ‘deity’ for many generations. This cult dominated religious life in the Roman *municipium* until the 3rd century AD. It was focused on the suburban sanctuary ‘Folly Lane’ overlooking the river Ver, the Iron oppidum and the site of the Roman town (NIBLETT 1999; FORCEY

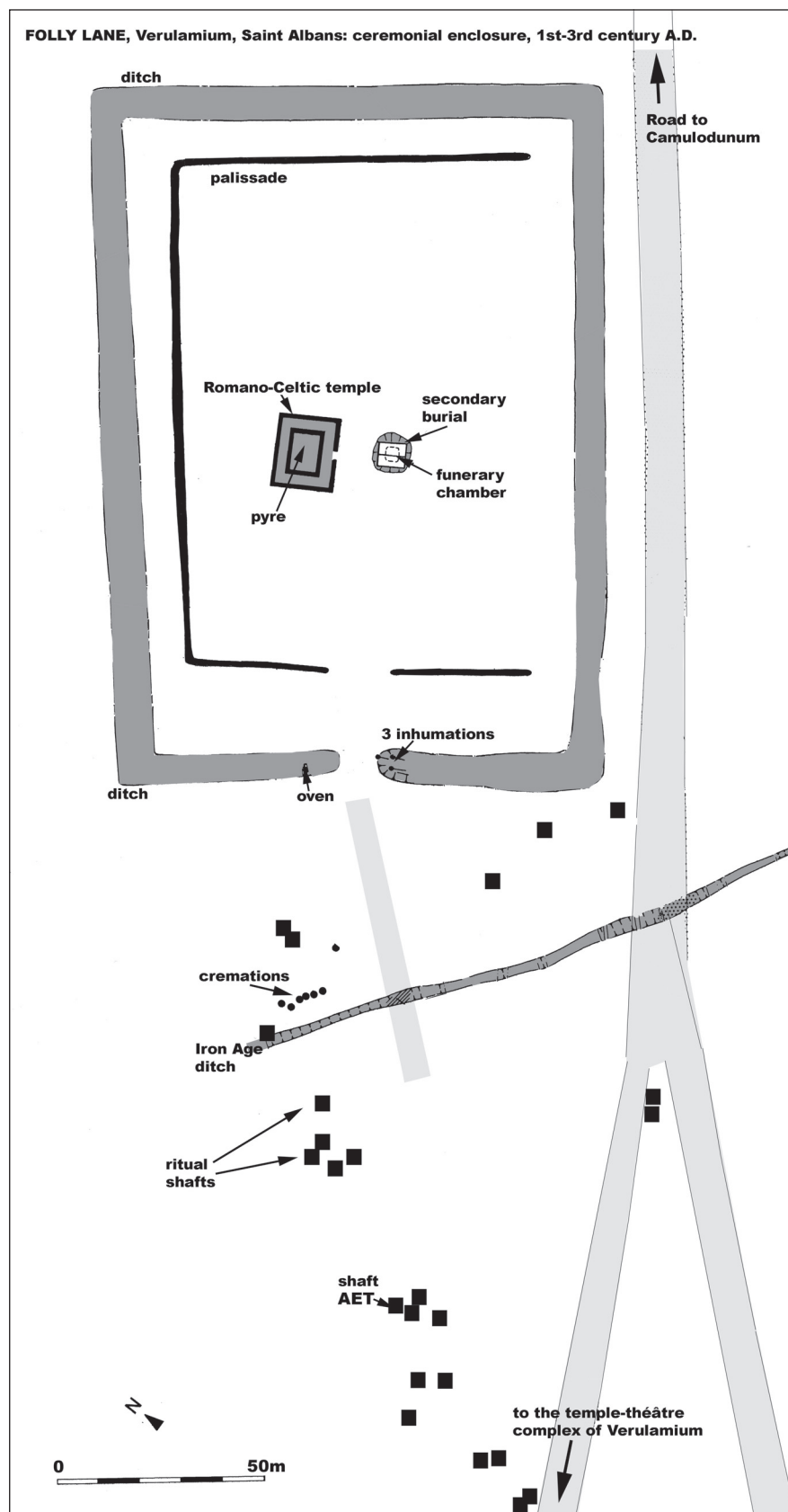


Fig. 1. The ceremonial enclosure at Folly Lane, Verulamium (drawing based on NIBLETT 1999).

1998; HAEUSSLER 2010a; 2010b). At the origin of this sanctuary, there was a burial of an individual, dating to *c.* AD 55, to whom exceptionally elaborate burial rites were granted after his death. Many of these complex funerary rituals might have been part of the process of ‘heroisation’ or ‘deification’. First, the corpse was laid out in an underground ‘funerary chamber’ that probably served to display the corpse for several months, judging from the chamber’s solid construction. The body was exposed similar to the Iron Age excarnation ritual until the appropriate time for cremation had come, such as the summer, autumn or winter solstice (Samuin or Beltene, *v. supra*). A large number of pre-burial funerary rituals took place inside the chamber, such as funerary feasts and libations; probably also processions and dances, like those mentioned in insular Celtic tradition (cf. METZLER *et al.* 1991 for Clemency). Grave goods (e. g., ivory furniture) indicate the person’s high status – or at least the rôle that was attributed to him in the period between his death and the cremation of his body.

After a process of excarnation, the body was cremated on a pyre just outside the chamber. Cremation was probably chosen because it was a more elaborate ritual compared to inhumation (also cf. CARR 2007) and therefore more appropriate for the deceased’s status. A part of the cremated remains were buried next to the chamber. As in many late Iron Age cremations in Britain and Gaul, this was a token burial consisting of just 195.7 grams instead of the usual 1.5–2.5 kg cremated remains. This might suggest that the cremated remains had only a minor significance in the subsequent cult, though it is also possible that the remaining bones were used in other rituals elsewhere, perhaps as ‘relics’. Moreover, all the objects associated with the funerary rituals and the burial were systematically destroyed including all the grave goods. Like the liberation of the deceased’s soul by excarnation and cremation, it is possible that this destruction should assure that all the objects could pass into the Otherworld. After the cremation, the funerary chamber was destroyed, filled up and covered by gravel and turf, creating the image of a *tumulus*. The question arises to what extent these rituals reflect traditional religious practices that were considered necessary for a successful heroisation or apotheosis of the deceased. Taking into account that the situation in ‘Folly Lane’ is a unique case (though some aspects can be compared with sanctuaries like Colchester, Corent, Vertault, Acy-Romance and En Chaplix), we could assume that these rituals are archaising trends at the transition to a new period. Especially in periods of extreme social and cultural change, conservative cognitive behaviour is very common. We also need to take into account that during the period between death and final burial, it is possible that the prestige of the deceased increased far beyond the status during his lifetime and that the rituals therefore reflect the person’s post-mortem importance.

Subsequently, Folly Lane became a sanctuary. The large ceremonial enclosure (*Viereckschanze*) is probably contemporary to the funerary chamber. The ditch around the enclosure not only demarcated the boundary between the world of the mortals and the space dedicated to *deis et hominibus*, but it was also at the centre of ritual activities: for example, next to entrance, there are inhumations (not cremations) of women with exceptional illnesses, like tuberculosis, probably because people considered them to have a particular relationship to the divine due to their illnesses (MAYS – STEELE 1999, 310–312). Soon after the cremation a typical Romano-Celtic *Umgangstempel* – orientated to the southeast – was constructed at the site of the pyre, facing the *tumulus*. There is also ample evidence for ritual activities south of the enclosure, such as a series of ‘irregular’ burials and 42 ritual shafts that contain the remains of cult activities down to *c.* AD 250 (NIBLETT 1999). There is evidence for a certain head cult, associated with chthonic rituals, whose presence surprises in the context of a Roman *municipium*: at the bottom of one shaft, a human skull was placed which had been de-fleshed shortly after the person’s death and displayed in the open prior to deposition (MAYS – STEELE 1999, 314–318). These shafts are comparable to the low altars and depressions in the ground that were used for hero cult and chthonic deities both in Greece and Iron Age Europe (cf. *ThesCRA*, II, 126–129; *ibid.* IV, 25). As indicated by the human skull, the remains

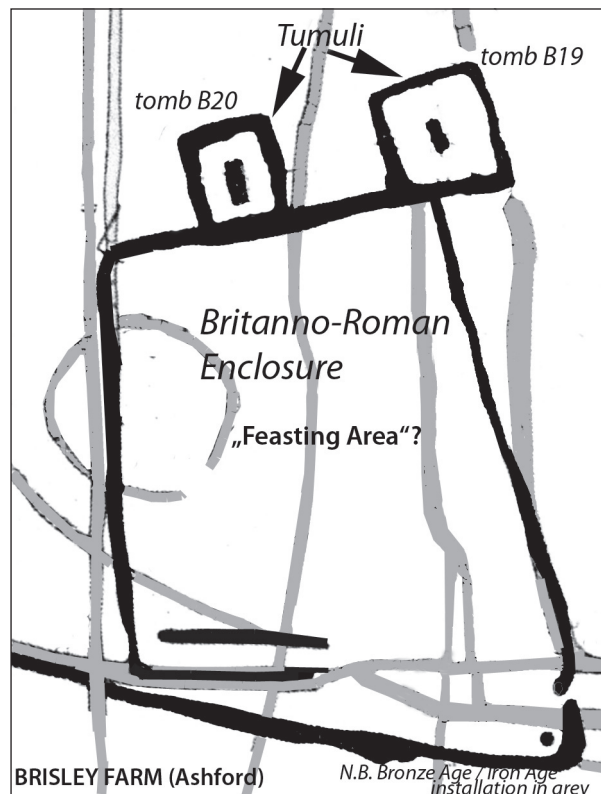


Fig. 2. Brisley Farm (Ashford, Kent) (re-drawn after STEVENSON 2004; HAMILTON 2007).

of 34 cattle and the careful structured deposition, this shaft from Folly Lane indicates a collective *uotum* suggesting that this site moved beyond the original meaning of a burial site to become the civic cult *par excellence* of Verulamium's patron 'deity' in the Principate. Folly Lane not only dominated the landscape, it was also connected to Verulamium's forum and theatre-temple complex. In the absence of epigraphic testimonies, we can only speculate on the hero's identity: the last pre-Roman king of the Catuvellauni and/or the founder of Roman Verulamium (cf. NIBLETT 1999; FORCEY 1998; also cf. other heroised rulers, like Cottius in Susa in the Alpes Cottiae: BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1992).

Another case of continued veneration of a burial in Roman times comes from Brisley Farm in Kent (cf. Fig. 2; HAMILTON 2007; JOHNSON 2003; STEVENSON 2004). At the centre of this indigenous village (c. 200 BC – AD 150), there are two weapon graves (inhumations, not cremations, placed under square barrows; one burial dates to c. AD. 20–45, the other one to AD 30–70). With their location inside the settlement, the burials served as venue for ritual activities, like sacrifices and feasting, down to the 2nd century AD. The continued worship of these two 'warriors' in the Roman period in the context of a settlement may suggest that they acquired cult status. Like elsewhere in Britain, late Iron Age burials had become important places of remembrance for the Romano-British communities (HAMILTON 2007).

In our search for the 'Celtic heroes' in Roman times, it is worth noticing that the boundaries between burial ground and place of worship are permeable at many Romano-British sanctuaries (cf. FORCEY 1998). For example, at the sanctuary of Hayling Island (Hampshire), human bones from the central temple area might also belong to a disturbed burial or to the scattering of human remains (KING – SOFFE 2008). A number of burials were also located on the north side of the 'peribolos' of the sanctuary at Harlow (Essex) (WHEELER 1928; BARTLETT 1988; FRANCE – GOBEL 1985). In Lancing Ring (Sussex),

a Romano-Celtic temple was preceded by a pre-Roman ‘shrine’ that is associated with a number of cremations; the ‘shrine’ could be interpreted as a chamber for the exposure of the deceased.

In addition, people appropriated ancient ruins in order to create a link with a mythical past and with mythical heroes and ancestors. For example, the Romano-Celtic cult places at Lancing Ring and Slonk Hill were constructed near Bronze Age barrows (cf. HARTRIDGE 1978). Moreover, a number of Romano-Celtic temples were constructed inside abandoned Iron Age hillforts, as in Chanctonbury (BEDWIN *et al.* 1980) and Maiden Castle (SHARPLES 1991), thus converting the Iron Age ramparts into the ‘peribolos’ of a Romano-British sanctuary. Together, this is not too dissimilar with the situation in the Greek Iron Age where hero cults were associated with conspicuous ruins or burials, especially Bronze Age *tumuli* (cf. ANTONACCIO 1995). This also reminds us that the cult of a hero need not necessarily start directly after the death of the individual, but perhaps only generations later, for example to legitimate a ruling dynasty by creating a link to a mythical ancestor, though sites, like Folly Lane, also show that an individual had acquired such an exceptional status that they received very particular funerary honours, perhaps directly leading to an ‘apotheosis’.

In Southern Gaul, a number of cult places allow us to study the archaeology of hero cults from the 6th to the 1st century BC (cf. ARCELIN – GRUAT 2003; HAEUSSLER 2010a). The herôa’s rôle for the community is mirrored by their location inside the *oppida* and the enormous investment of resources and manpower for architecture and sculpture (e. g. the porticoes that protect the ‘herôa’, cf. ARCELIN *et al.* 1992). There is also a shared range of features: accroupis, têtes coupées, sculptured heads and pillars with niches to display heads or skulls. For example, the ‘accroupis’ – life-size sculptures of persons sitting in a cross-legged position, often wearing body armour as well as a torques as sign of their divine status – have been interpreted as gods, warriors, dignitaries, ancestors and heroes (cf. ARCELIN *et al.*



Fig. 3. Sainte-Anastasie, Camp-Guiraud. 7th/6th-century BC ‘warrior’
(photo: author, courtesy of Musée archéologique de Nîmes).

1992; DUCEPPE-LAMARRE 2002; GARCIA 2004; RAPIN 2004; HAEUSSLER 2010b; GREEN 1998). But it is important to take into account the long tradition of these representations as this type of statue originates in the 7th–6th century BC. Originally, they were rather rudimentary sculptures, as in the case of Marduel and Sainte-Anastasie (Fig. 3) (DUCEPPE-LAMARRE 2002; GARCIA 2004, 111 ff; ARCELIN 2004, 71–72), that increasingly acquired more realism in the course of the Iron Age. The fact that these statues were venerated for many generations, if not centuries, suggests that they were more than just simple warriors or dignitaries. We could call them ‘guerriers heroisés’ (ARCELIN – CONGÈS 2004), though the warrior element may merely reflect their social status and in particular their function to defend the community from calamity (this in turn may also explain the subsequent popularity of Mars to represent local patron deities in Gallia Narbonensis). Despite all the sociocultural changes in the Iron Age, these ‘accroupis’ remained an important focus point for the local community, indicating religious functions similar to those of heroes in the Greek poleis. We also need to take into account other representations of persons in a cross-legged position, for example on La Tène coinage (e. g. DUVAL 1976, 189, fig. 195) and on the Gundestrup cauldron.

Another prominent feature is the head cult which we encounter in numerous ways: in Glanum, for example, eight human skulls of young persons were found north of the pre-Roman ‘herôon’, while at the herôon itself skulls or embalmed human heads were displayed in a particular type of pillar or stele with niches (ROTH CONGÈS 2004, 25). In addition there are also numerous sculptural representations of human heads, whose facial expression with their closed eyes or their look into the void was interpreted as expressing the stigma of death or life in the Otherworld (Fig. 4) (DEDET *et al.* 1997; DEDET – SCHWALLER 1990; LAMBRECHTS 1954). Skulls in a settlement context are frequently interpreted as war trophy of enemies, following the common *topos* from our Classical sources, especially Strabo (4.4.5) citing Poseidonios. But the context of such finds in South Gaulish *oppida* is not compatible with the idea of a ‘tropaeum’: the heads were not displayed on the gates of the *oppida*, as described by Strabo, but in specifically organised cult places in the *oppida*’s centres where they were associated with ‘accroupis’ and other cult symbols. We are probably dealing with the embalmed heads of ancestors. In the case of steles from Martigues, J. CHAUSSERIE-LAPRÉE (2005, 227) speaks of ‘masques-reliquaires’ to display the heads of the ‘héros ou aristocrates guerriers récents’ to commemorate and venerate these ‘héros de la communauté’.



Fig. 4. Lintel from Nages with ‘têtes coupées’ and horses
(photo: author, courtesy of Musée archéologique, Nîmes).

Taking into account all the various clues, these South Gaulish ‘herôa’ appear as collective religious and political focus point that served to create a shared identity for these (proto)urban societies over many generations. There are many parallels with early Greece during the evolution of the polis where heroes also served to create a common identity for the polis society (POLIGNAC 1996). It is therefore interesting to notice that the earliest sculptures of our Southern Gaulish ‘heroes’ generally go back to the early phases of the *oppida* in the 7th–6th century BC (cf. GARCIA 2004, 111 ff). We also need to look at the individual location of these cult places, as in the case of Glanum where the ‘herôon’ was situated on a central place or ‘agora’ (Fig. 5; cf. ROTH CONGÈS 2004); this is comparable to the Greek polis where the cult of the (sometimes mythical) founder or, in the case of colonies, of the *oikistes* was located on the *agora* (cf. KENZLER 1999, 184–195). In these cases, heroes created a common identity for the evolving communities. Glanum’s herôon was also situated immediately adjacent to the Iron Age rampart at the entrance to the sacred spring: in Greece, too, we find hero cults near city gates and city walls where they served to ward off enemies.

But unlike ‘Folly Lane’, burials are hardly ever associated with these South Gaulish cults. After all, we usually expect a ‘herôon’ to be constructed on the site of the hero’s tomb. There are several possible explanations: first, since the appearance of the first sculptures in the 7th–6th century BC these heroes – perhaps founders of the community or ancestors of certain clans or lineages – may have acquired a more and more symbolic character. Second, the sculptures themselves may have acquired cult status. Third, having been associated with ‘masques-reliquaires’, embalmed heads could be displayed in steles with niches so that recently deceased dignitaries could be associated with their (real, mythical or imaginary) heroised ancestors. Fourth, as in the case of Folly Lane in Britain, it is possible that only a small fragment of a burial was buried (e. g. just 7% in the case of Nîmes, cf. BEL 2010); equally human remains were often distributed and scattered in the late Iron Age, i. e. the actual human remains appear to have lost much of their importance to the community after cremation. This could also represent a process of de-individualisation in order to emphasise the deceased’s function for the whole community.

There are however two important ‘hero’ burials in the South. One consists of a single 3rd-century BC cremation in the ‘oppidum’ Pech Maho (Sigean, Aude), deposited in a *loculus* that contained a wide range of grave goods including weaponry (cf. GAILLED RAT – MARCHAND 2003; SOLIER 1968; DEDET – SCHWALLER 1990, 138–141). Being situated inside the town and next to city gate and rampart (Fig. 5), this site developed into a cult place as suggested by the combination of tomb, a *têtes-coupées*

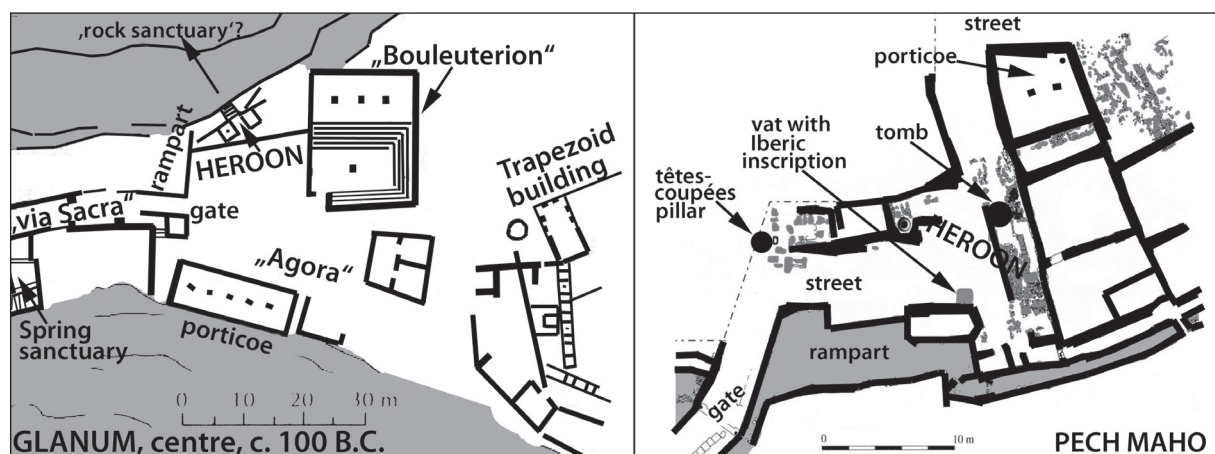


Fig. 5. Left: The ‘herôon’ of Glanum (map re-drawn after ROTH CONGÈS 2000);
right: the 3rd-century BC ‘herôon’ of Pech Maho (Sigean, Aude)
(re-drawn after GAILLED RAT – MARCHAND 2003).

pillar, benches, a ritual vat with Iberic inscription (cf. comparable vats to the god Belenos *RIG* G–28, G–63), a number of ‘*cellae*’ and a neighbouring *porticus*. This is the ideal location for a protective hero whose function is to ward off the city from its enemies. Another case is the 4th-century burial inside the rampart in the oppidum Le Cayla (Mailhac, Aude) (cf. GAILLED RAT – TAFFANEL 2002; GARCIA 2004, 56–57; DEDET – SCHWALLER 1990, 138–141; cf. crouched burial from Uley Bury: SAVILLE 1983). The burial is surrounded by three rooms; in the largest one, we find a number of artefacts, most of which were destroyed and probably burnt on the pyre, while most of the human remains were collected in an urn. It seems that the cult buildings were constructed on the site of the pyre (comparable to Folly Lane). Both sites can be interpreted as a ‘*culte du héros*’: an isolated burial separated from formal cemeteries, situated inside the oppidum – and therefore in the world of the living – and near the rampart, acquiring cult buildings and receiving continuing ceremonies and rituals (DEDET – SCHWALLER 1990, 140).

But what happened to the Iron Age hero-ancestor cult after the Roman conquest? As far as we know, virtually all the statues of ‘*accroupis*’ in Southern Gaul were destroyed in the course of the 3rd–1st century BC: their heads were cut off, some of them were recycled as building material, others were smashed and deposited on site, like one of the ‘*accroupi*’ on the site of the former ‘*herôon*’ in Glanum (ARCELIN – CONGÈS 2004, 11; ROTH CONGÈS 2004). Having been abandoned, the most visible type of Iron Age cult place in Southern Gaul disappears from our archaeological record. In Glanum, for example, there may have been a religious *tabula rasa* for many decades; after its destruction in 90 BC, it was even possible to construct private houses on the site of the former Tuscan temple. But considering the hero cult’s societal importance, the question arises whether it was merely adapted to the *zeitgeist* of the Roman province, disguised by other Roman-style cult representations. Did local aristocracies attempt to perpetuate their religious authority in creating alternatives to the hero worship? In this respect, the South Gaulish mausolea show a particular type of ancestor cult: Glanum’s mausoleum of the Iulii was probably constructed as early as 40 BC, with the reliefs celebrating the heroic deeds achieved under Caesar in the Civil War (ROTH CONGÈS 2000; 2009). The mausoleum of Argenton (c. 50 BC, cf. ROTH CONGÈS 2006, 286–7) is situated in a secluded geographical position, but by being visible from across the valley, it claims authority over land and people. Perhaps such a person would have acquired heroic status, but the society of Gallia Narbonensis – and therefore religious-political understandings – continued to evolve at a rapid pace. Another new religious monument that appears in Southern Gaul from c. 25 BC is the Roman-style podium temple (for example at Glanum and Vernègues). Finally, there is a myriad of rural cult places that become increasingly visible in the archaeological record since the Augustan period; these cults provided a new medium to a large section of the local élites and allowed them to display and consolidate their religious authority in a rural context (HAEUSSLER 2008b). In addition, pre-Roman ruins were appropriated for a number of cult places, like Iron Age *tumuli* and oppida, to give new cult places of the Roman period a certain legitimacy. Numerous deities in the Lower Rhône Valley have unique names not attested elsewhere, like Dexiva, Iboita, Obio, Bergonia, etc. – a particular phenomenon which could be explained if we assume that the conception of a rather localised hero cult as focus of a collective identity continued to be compelling to the local population in the early Principate (HAEUSSLER 2008b).

This leads us to the question whether we can identify heroes in sculpture and epigraphy in the Roman West. An important rôle was played by Hercules (as a possible counterpart to Ogmios and Smertrios), the iconographic allusions to reincarnation (cf. HAEUSSLER 2008a; 2008c) and the various *Martes* that protected a community from calamities (cf. combination of Mars and ‘hero’ in *Marti Sme[rtuli]t[a]no*, CIL XIII 4119). Many of the Celtic theonyms in the Roman West are either deonomastic or describe a deity’s function or character. But there are also theonyms that resemble personal names, many of which are only attested in one region or *ciuitas*. Is it possible that they go back to heroes – whether mythical figures or deified dignitaries like at Folly Lane? In this respect, the god Antenociticus who is only attested



Fig. 6. God Antenociticus from Benwell (courtesy of Great North Museum: Hancock and Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne).

at Benwell (*RIB* 1327–1329) and who was depicted on a 2nd-century sculpture as young man wearing a torque and a head with two frontal locks, perhaps representing antlers (Fig. 6; *CSIR* I.1, no. 232), resembles other Celtic names in *anto-*, like Antenus (DELAMARRE 2003, 49–50, s.v. *anto-* ‘limite’; cf. Trojan Antenor). Analogue for other Celtic theonyms (for listing cf. JUFER – LUGINBÜHL 2001): Aramo, for example, resembles personal names like Aramis (DELAMARRE 2003, 51); for Accoros cf. e. g. Atecurus and Corus (*ibid.*, 126); for Ilikos cf. Iliatus, Ilidius, Illiomarus, etc. (*ibid.* 188); for Matutinus cf. Matugenus, Matumarus, Matunus, etc. (*ibid.*, 220); for Vertumnus cf. e. g. Vertos and Vertacus (*ibid.*, 315 f.), for Viradectis /Virodacthis cf. Viradius, Viriacus, etc. (*ibid.* 320 f.). For Hercules Magusanus in Lower Germany one might cite Magus, Magusius, Magunus, Magurix and *Magurigios (*ibid.*, 213); for Mars Cicollius ‘Grand-Muscles’ cf. names such as Cicelauius, Cigetoutos, Cicadius and Cicorellius (*ibid.*, 115), and for Mars Caturix names like Catubodua (*ibid.*, 110 f.) or Caturus (*AE* 1954, 95; 1965, 348). CúChulainn ‘Culann’s Hound’, the son of Lug, may also remind us of Lucutectus ‘the son of Lugus’ (*AE* 1990, 701) and other hound-deities, such as Cunomaglos ‘Hound Lord’ (*RIB*–3, 3053).

Is it possible to recognise hero cults archaeologically? In Greece a hero cult can hardly be distinguished from the cult to a deity since rituals and architecture for a hero cult closely resemble those for chthonic deities; the only major difference is that *ex-votos* and *favissae* are relatively rare in a hero cult (cf. HÄGG 1987; *ThesCRA* II, p. 131). Cults in Britain do, however, reveal some important differences, but this may in part be due to a cult’s evolution. For example, the patterns of animal sacrifices in sanctuaries like Folly Lane and Hayling Island are fundamentally different to other important cult places, like the healing sanctuary Uley (KING 2005): there are 230,000 animal bones from Uley compared to only 14,000 at Folly Lane and 7,250 at Hayling Island; also, animal bone assemblages at Folly Lane reflect a pattern similar to contemporary settlement sites, suggesting that these are predominantly the remains of feasting and banquets, not sacrifice (cf. Iron Age feasting enclosures, like Corent [POUX *et al.* 2008]). In this respect, the large percentage of horse bones (50%) at Folly Lane and their deposition in the enclosure ditch and the ritual shafts reflects pre-Roman rituals: the preference for certain body parts, especially

the head, might indicate a religious function in the cult (KING 2005, 348–9). By contrast, sheep/goat dominated sacrifices in Harlow and Uley; since Mercury was worshipped at Uley and Harlow, one might suggest that goat/sheep are the preferred choice for this god whose attributes were ram, goat and cock.

The aim of this overview is to provide food for thought on the rôle of hero-ancestor worship as an integral part of the religions of Gaul and Britain. The worship of a hero seems to be at the centre of numerous collective ‘public’ cults, both in Iron Age Southern Gaul and in Roman Britain. This may also explain why Poseidonios did not use the common terms ἱερόν and τέμενος, but the terminology of the Greek hero cult to describe Celtic temples, for example σῆκος ‘enclosure’ (cf. Strabo 6.1.13; WEBSTER 1995, 446–7), while Caesar talks about *locus consecratus* instead of *fanum* or *templum* (Caes. BG 6.13.17). Examples, like Pech Maho and Folly Lane, have demonstrated how a tomb developed into an important cult place for a community, such as a newly created town or municipality. In periods of extreme social upheaval, the death of exceptional individuals can play an important rôle in re-defining and re-aligning social hierarchies and ideologies, instigating an increasing veneration for these ‘leaders’ which can lead to their heroisation or apotheosis as local patron deity – perhaps to the extent of de-individualisation and mythicisation. The question arises whether a 3rd-century AD worshipper in Verulamium was still aware that his civic cult derived from a real person. In this respect, we might also consider the possibility that some of the countless Celtic theonyms of alleged Gallo-Roman or Britanno-Roman deities could go back to the names and virtues of local heroes and ancestors. Here, we need to scrutinise the numerous local ‘deities’ in the Roman West, as in the case of Antenociticus (v. supra). Besides the burials of real people, there are also the mythical heroes, like Ogmios and Herakles: especially periods of cataclysmic sociocultural change can initiate a search for a new identity: in the wish to return to ‘traditional’ values, people sought to link up with a heroic past by employing mythical heroes as well as monuments and material culture of an earlier period, whereby re-inventing their shared history.

Abbreviations

ThesCRA = *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum*. II, 3.d: Heroization. Apotheosis; IV, 1.a: Cult places.

CAG 13/4 = MOCCI, F. – NÎN, N. 2006

Carte archéologique de la Gaule 13/4. Aix-en-Provence, Pays d’Aix et Val de Durance. Paris.

CSIR II.1 = KÜNZL, E. v. 1975

Corpus signorum Imperii Romani. Deutschland II: Germania superior, part 1: Alzey und Umgebung. Bonn.

RIB = *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*.

RIG II.1 = LEJEUNE, M. 1988

Recueil des inscriptions gauloises (RIG). II. 1 : Textes gallo-étrusques, textes gallo-latins sur pierre. XLV^e supplément à Gallia. Paris.

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