

Sovereignty as Hag: A Case Study in Mythological Analysis

“In Irish tradition it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this idea of the land and its sovereignty conceived in the form of a woman.”¹

“When one inquires what kind of stories are these which have been credited with such extraordinary power, one finds that they tell of the adventures of heroes and heroines; enchantments and disenchantments; kings and queens, ogres and monsters and fairies... Such is the stuff of the stories told by all peoples whose traditional culture has not been upset by the teaching of modern history and modern science, and it is remarkable how the same themes or motifs, and even series of motifs, recur in the traditions of peoples widely separated from one another in space and in time. The very homogeneity of the material presents a considerable problem to the modernist. What is there in this fantastic heritage that from time immemorial it should have retained the sympathy and excited the wonder of mankind?”²

A popular theme in Celtic lore finds Sovereignty being personified as a hag-like woman. According to the thematic pattern in question, a would-be king can only obtain the throne by kissing or “marrying” a hideous hag who, in various versions of the tale, suddenly transforms into a beautiful woman shortly thereafter.³ Although the oldest extant version of the legend comes from the eleventh century, scholars generally agree that the theme is archaic in nature.⁴

In the *Book of Ballymote*, a manuscript dating from the 14th century, it is recounted how one Lugaid Laigde journeyed to a distant house wherein there dwelled “a huge old woman...her spears of teeth outside her head, and great, old, foul, faded things upon her.”⁵ Upon joining her in bed, the hero was witness to a dramatic transformation in the hag’s appearance and demeanor:

¹ P. MacCana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1969), p. 92.

² A. Rees & B. Rees, *Celtic Heritage* (London, 1961), pp. 19-20.

³ See the discussion in A. Coomaraswamy, “On the Loathly Bride,” in R. Lipsey ed., *Coomaraswamy: Selected Essays* (Princeton, 1977), pp. 353-370; T. O’Maille, “Medb,” *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 17 (1958), pp. 129-146; A. Krappe, “The Sovereignty of Erin,” *The American Journal of Philology* 63:4 (1942), pp. 444-454; A. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 210-224.

⁴ G. Dumézil, *The Destiny of the King* (Chicago, 1973), p. 98.

⁵ Quoted from A. Hildebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle* (Ithaca, 1976), pp. 175-176.

“Lugaid Laigde who, with astonishment, saw the old body, under his embrace, become radiant like the rising sun in the month of May and fragrant like a beautiful garden. As he clasped her, she said to him: ‘Happy is your journey, for I am Sovereignty, and you shall attain the sovereignty over all of Ireland.’”⁶

Similar stories were told across the European continent. James MacKillop summarized the various exemplars of this thematic pattern as follows:

“Stories of a king’s, or a potential king’s, lovemaking with the goddess of Sovereignty are so widespread in early Ireland and elsewhere in Europe, such as Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘Wife of Bath’s Tale’, as to merit their own international folk-motif number, D732. According to the conventionalized steps in the story, the male protagonist encounters an ugly hag who invites him to have intimate relations with her. Her repulsiveness... initially put him off, but he eventually relents. On the morning after their lovemaking, the hag is transformed into a beautiful maiden.”⁷

There have been numerous learned attempts to understand the origins of this peculiar tradition. According to T.F. O’Rahilly, the myth survives as a vestigial memory of archaic mystery rites involving the king’s marriage to Mother Earth herself:

“The idea that Ireland is a goddess, and is wedded to the king of the country, is of hoary antiquity...It has its roots in the time when men regarded the material Earth as a Mother, and when the ruler of the land was inaugurated with a ceremony which professed to espouse him to this divine mother, with the intent that his reign be prosperous and that the earth might produce her fruits in abundance.”⁸

⁶ Quoted from G. Dumézil, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

⁷ J. MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford, 1998), p. 344.

⁸ T. F. O’Rahilly, “On the Origin of the Names *Erainn* and *Eriu*,” *Eriu* XIV (1943), p. 21 as quoted in S. Eisner, *A Tale of Wonder* (London, 1957), p. 17.

For Ananda Coomaraswamy, the various legends presenting Sovereignty as a Hag have a wholly mundane explanation. According to this esteemed scholar, the myth of the loathly bride has its origin in the perpetual war between the respective sexes: “We have so far seen that the heroic motif of the transformation of a hideous and uncanny bride into a beautiful woman cannot be regarded as peculiarly Celtic, but rather represents a universal mythical pattern, underlying all marriage, and one that is, in fact, the ‘mystery’ of marriage.”⁹

In an insight-laden commentary on the loathly bride theme, Coomaraswamy made much of the fact that, in several variants of the tale, the hag is given serpentine features or otherwise likened to a snake: “The Loathly Lady must be identified with the Dragon or Snake whom the hero disenchants by the Fier Baiser.”¹⁰ Defending the sacred domain of metaphysics against more profane explanations of ancient myth, the wise sage cautions against any and all attempts to refer such universal themes to a historical prototype:

“Myths are significant, it will be conceded: but of what? If we do not ask the right questions, with the Grail before our eyes, our experience of the mythical material will be as ineffectual as that of the hero who reaches the Grail castle and fails to speak, or that of the hero who will not kiss the Dragon: our science will amount to nothing more than the accumulation of data, which can be classified, but cannot be brought to life. Myths are not distorted records of historical events. They are not periphrastic descriptions of natural phenomena, or ‘explanations’ of them, so far from that, events are demonstrations of the myths.”¹¹

Alas, Coomaraswamy never got around to explaining why the loathly hag came to be conceptualized as a serpentine dragon, much less why Sovereignty itself should be

⁹ A. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

envisaged as a woman or as something that could be won through marriage. Other equally difficult questions remain unexplained to this very day. Whence derives the hag's disheveled and repellent form in the first place? And how we are to explain the hag's sudden transformation into a beautiful woman?

For Erich Neumann, the myth of the hag-like monster is best explained by the findings of modern psychology. Thus he would understand all such female monsters as products of the unconscious:

“The symbolism of the Terrible Mother draws its images predominantly from the ‘inside’; that is to say, the negative elementary character of the Feminine expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images that do not originate in the outside world. The reason for this is that the Terrible Female is a symbol for the unconscious. And the dark side of the Terrible Mother takes the form of monsters, whether in Egypt or India, Mexico or Etruria, Bali or Rome. In the myths and tales of all people, ages, and countries—and even in the nightmares of our own nights—witches and vampires, ghouls and specters, assail us, all terrifyingly alike.”¹²

It is our opinion, in contrast to Coomaraswamy, that the serpentine form of the loathly hag—herself the very embodiment of sovereignty—will never be explained by reference to the interpersonal relationships of men and women. Nor, for that matter, will referring all of the peculiar imagery surrounding the hag to unconscious determinants solve the mystery at hand, as it merely replaces one mystery with another and begs the following question: Whence derives the specific contents or mythological imagery to be found in the unconscious, collective or otherwise?

It is our claim that the curious mythological traditions in question can only be explained by reference to extraordinary natural events as experienced by ancient man the world over—namely, spectacular close encounters with the planets Venus and Mars. Indeed, we

¹² E. Neumann, *The Great Mother* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 148-149.

would go one step further and argue that the primary reason such archaic myths continue to resonate with modern readers is precisely because they reflect actual catastrophic events that once traumatized *Homo sapiens* and continue to haunt us to this very day at a visceral, albeit typically unconscious, level.

Readers of my two volumes *The Many Faces of Venus* and *On Fossil Gods and Forgotten Worlds*, will remember that the planet Venus was explicitly conceptualized by ancient skywatchers and mythmakers as “the dragon of the gods” and as the luminous crown of sovereignty. Indeed, it was the planet Venus that was singled out as the Queen of Heaven who tied on the crown of kingship *in illo tempore*.

The evidence from ancient Mesopotamia is especially instructive in this regard, being both archaic and abundant in nature. According to the Sumerian hymn *The Exaltation of Inanna*, it was in the form of a great dragon that the war-mongering planet-goddess rained fire from heaven:

“Like a dragon you have deposited venom on the land, When you roar at the earth like Thunder, no vegetation can stand up to you. A flood descending from its mountain, Oh foremost one, you are the Inanna of heaven and earth! Raining the fanned fire down upon the nation...When mankind comes before you In fear and trembling at your tempestuous radiance.”¹³

Far from being atypical or exceptional, such cataclysmic imagery abounds in the earliest hymns invoking Inanna, which typically describe the goddess as a raging warrior of monstrous form and incendiary behavior.

Inanna is elsewhere identified as the source of sovereignty. This idea is attested already in a text from the Early Dynastic period, wherein the planet-goddess ties kingship on

¹³ W. Hallo & J. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna* (New Haven, 1968), pp. 15-17.

Lugalkiginnedudu: “When Inanna had tied the lordship with the kingship for Lugalkiginnedudu, she let him exert lordship in Uruk, she let him exert kingship in Ur.”¹⁴

The same idea is evident in the following hymn, wherein Inanna grants sovereignty to the Sumerian king: “To give the crown, the throne and the royal sceptre is yours, Inana.”¹⁵ “A song of Inana and Dumuzi” makes a similar claim:

“May the lord whom you have chosen in your heart, the king, your beloved husband, enjoy long days in your holy and sweet embrace! Give him a propitious and famous reign, give him a royal throne of kingship on its firm foundation, give him the scepter to guide the Land, and the staff and crook, and give him the righteous headdress and the crown which glorifies his head!”¹⁶

Inanna’s function as the goddess of Sovereignty is especially evident in the so-called sacred marriage rite. According to Iddin-Dagan’s hymn describing the rite in question, it was commonly believed that the king could only obtain the throne by “marrying” or engaging in simulated sexual intercourse with the planet Venus. That the “marriage” itself commemorates a conjunction of celestial powers is suggested by the fact that the brilliantly shining Inanna/Venus is said to embrace a “sun-like” king:

“After the lady has made him rejoice with her holy thighs on the bed, after holy Inana has made him rejoice with her holy thighs on the bed, she relaxes (?) with him on her bed... She embraces her beloved spouse, holy Inana embraces him. She shines like daylight on the great throne dais and makes the king position himself next(?) to her like the sun.”¹⁷

¹⁴ P-A. Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Leiden, 2003), p. 105.

¹⁵ J. Black et al, *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford, 2004), p. 96.

¹⁶ Lines 34-40 in “A song of Inana and Dumuzi (Dumuzid-Inana D1), *ETCSL*.

¹⁷ Lines 193-202 as translated in J. Black et al, *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford, 2004), p. 267.

Such imagery finds a remarkable parallel in the Celtic tale of Lugaid's encounter with the Hag of Sovereignty. Recall again the description of the Hag's sudden transformation into a beautiful celestial form upon mating with the hero:

“Lugaid Laigde who, with astonishment, saw the old body, under his embrace, become radiant like the rising sun in the month of May and fragrant like a beautiful garden.”¹⁸

The Celtic tradition likening Sovereignty to a “beautiful garden,” in turn, recalls the fact that Inanna/Venus herself was repeatedly compared to a luxuriant garden in Sumerian hymns recounting the sacred marriage rite.¹⁹ Indeed, the consummation of Inanna's marriage with Dumuzi is accompanied by the sudden proliferation of flowers and greening throughout the land:

“After the union is completed (a broken passage), Inanna rises from the king's lap, and immediately ‘flax rose up with her, the barley rose up with her, the steppe had been filled (with abundance) with her like a blossoming garden’.”²⁰

Analogous testimony comes from ancient Egyptian literature. There, too, we read that a serpentine goddess provided the prototypical king (the Horus-star) with the crown of sovereignty. Known by numerous different names and epithets—Hathor, Isis, Sakhmet, Wadjet, Wepset, among others—the Egyptian mother goddess is everywhere represented as a fire-spewing uraeus-serpent. It is Hathor, perhaps, who offers the most striking parallel to the Sumerian Inanna. A text known as the *Destruction of Mankind* finds Hathor being dispatched by Re to rain fire and destruction upon mankind:

¹⁸ Quoted from G. Dumézil, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁹ Y. Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature* (Jerusalem, 1998), p. 34. See also E. Cochrane, *The Many Faces of Venus* (Ames, 2001), pp. 89-90.

²⁰ P. Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage Rite* (Helsinki, 2004), p. 39.

“Then mankind plotted something in the (very) presence of Re...Then they [Re’s advisors] said in the presence of his majesty: ‘May thy Eye be sent, that it may catch for thee them who scheme with evil things...It should go down as Hathor.’ So then this goddess came and slew mankind in the desert.”²¹



It is elsewhere reported that this very same uraeus-goddess comes to form the crown of kingship. Indeed, for Jan Assmann, the uraeus-crown was “the most distinctive symbol of kingship.”²² Carol Andrews offered a similar opinion in her analysis of Egyptian symbolism:

“From the earliest dynasties the upreared cobra, the uraeus, was the emblem of royalty, worn on pharaoh’s forehead to signify his kingship and divinity. As a goddess she was the eye of the sun, spitting fire at the king’s enemies.”²³

²¹ J. Wilson, “Deliverance of Mankind from Destruction,” in J. Pritchard ed., *The Ancient Near East* (Princeton, 1958), p. 4.

²² J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 323.

²³ C. Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* (Austin, 1994), pp. 75-76.

The central importance of the uraeus-serpent in Egyptian royal ideology is especially conspicuous in coronation rites. As strange as it must appear to the modern mind, the king's coronation was not considered ratified or "effective" until the uraeus-serpent had been placed on his head as a crown. Barbara Lesko summarized these curious rites as follows:

"Certainly the king's coronation was not complete until the uraeus was placed on his brow. Both King Horemheb of the Eighteenth Dynasty and Ramses III of the Twentieth mention this rite in their inscriptions."²⁴

It is important to underscore the fact that it was the mother goddess herself who, as the fire-spitting uraeus, formed the crown of kingship. T. Rundle Clark, among others, has emphasized the archetypal significance of the uraeus-serpent in this regard:

"The cobra was the protector of the crown and is shown attached to the front, just above the king's forehead. Hence we get the fundamental symbol equation of Egyptian religion: Eye=Flame=Destructive Goddess=Cobra=Crown. This holds true from the Pyramid Texts to the end of the civilization."²⁵

Clark's conclusion warrants close scrutiny. Unquestionably correct, it begs the question: Why would an *extraterrestrial* dragon-like goddess be identified with the crown of kingship? A satisfactory answer to this question will revolutionize our understanding of the archaic cult of the mother goddess—not to mention the recent history of the solar system.

If we are to judge by the Egyptian testimony on the matter, the symbolism attached to the uraeus-serpent as the crown of kingship would appear to find its divine prototype—and

²⁴ B. Lesko, *The Great Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (Norman, 1999), p. 75.

²⁵ R. T. Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1959), p. 220.

probable historical origin—in the singular events associated with the crowning of Horus, the proverbial King of the Gods. As delineated in the Pyramid Texts, the uraeus-serpent came to adorn the forehead of the Horus-star as the crown of kingship during the decidedly catastrophic events attending Creation. Especially instructive is a Pyramid Text devoted to the red crown (*Nt*-crown), wherein the uraeus-serpent is addressed as Ikhet:

“He has come to you, O *Nt*-crown; he has come to you, O Fiery Serpent; he has come to you, O Great One; he has come to you, O Great of Magic, being pure for you and fearing you...He has come to you, O Great of Magic, for he is Horus encircled with the protection of his Eye, O Great of Magic...Ho, Crown great of magic! Ho Fiery Serpent! Grant that the dread of me be like the dread of you; Grant that the fear of me be like the fear of you...If Ikhet the Great has borne you, Ikhet the Serpent has adorned you; If Ikhet the Serpent has borne you, Ikhet the Great has adorned you, Because you are Horus encircled with the protection of his Eye.”²⁶

Evident here is a central tenet of archaic Egyptian religion: The dread-inspiring mother goddess, alternately identified as “Fiery Serpent” and “Eye,” came to encircle the Horus-star *in illo tempore* and thereby provided him with the crown of kingship. Thus it is that the word *i/akhet*—in addition to denoting the fire-spewing serpent—could also signify a crown or diadem.²⁷

As I have documented elsewhere, analogous traditions will be found around the globe, in the New World as well as the Old. In ancient Persia, for example, it was the planet Venus, as the goddess Anahita, that provided the king with the crown of sovereignty: “Anahita appears as a granter of sovereignty and glory (Aban Yast, XII, 46; XIII, 50), and is portrayed in various media handling investiture crowns to kings.”²⁸

²⁶ *PT* 194-198.

²⁷ S. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary, Vol. II* (New York, 1952), p. 184.

²⁸ Y. Ustinova, “Aphrodite Urania,” *Kernos* 11 (1998), p. 218.

In ancient India it was the goddess Sri who embodied sovereignty. As was the case with Inanna/Venus, early kings were believed to enter into conjugal relations with the goddess, presumably in order to obtain and/or maintain their hold on the throne.²⁹ Of her Ananda Coomaraswamy remarked:

“Sri (‘Splendor’)-Lakshmi (‘Insigne’) is the well-known Indian Goddess of Fortune (Tyche), Prosperity (the personified ‘Luck’ of western folklore) and Beauty: she is the principle and source of all nourishment, kingship, empire, royalty, strength, sacerdotal luster, dominion, wealth, and species, which are appropriated from her by the gods whose distinctive properties they are.”³⁰

Despite her many positive attributes, Sri was also deemed to be capable of taking on the form of a serpent.³¹ Most significant, perhaps, is the fact that, as the goddess of sovereignty, Sri was thought to be incarnate in the royal diadem, thereby paralleling the traditions surrounding Inanna and the Egyptian uraeus-serpent.³²

To return to the subject matter at hand: It is our opinion that the Hag as Sovereignty myth can only be properly understood by reference to the archaic traditions attached to Inanna/Venus and analogous goddesses around the globe. The Hag herself is best interpreted as a vestigial or Euhemerized version of the raging Venus-goddess in her hideous aspect. Here it will be remembered that the planet Venus was commonly conceptualized as a terrifying witch-like specter blackening the skies.³³ Thus it is that Babylonian astronomical texts describe Venus by the epithet *kakkab kaššaptu*—“Witch-star.”³⁴

²⁹ J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Visnuism* (Delhi, 1969), p. 220.

³⁰ A. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

³¹ J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

³² A. Hildebeitel, “Draupadi’s Hair,” *Purasārtha* 5 (1981), pp. 191-192.

³³ E. Cochrane, *The Many Faces of Venus* (Ames, 2001), pp. 145-151.

³⁴ F. Gössmann, *Planetarium Babylonicum* (Rome, 1950), p. 62.

A classic example of this motif is the Sumerian demoness Lamashtu, commonly acknowledged as a doppelgänger of Inanna/Venus. A witch-like goddess of horrible appearance and ogre-like appetites, Lamashtu was said to have the head of a lion:

“Great is the daughter of Anu...She is cruel, raging, wrathful, rapacious...Her head is the head of a lion.”³⁵

The raging demon was renowned for having disheveled hair. The following passage, wherein Lamashtu’s fall from heaven is recounted, is representative in this regard:

“She is a haunt, she is malicious, Offspring of a god, daughter of Anu. For her malevolent will, her base counsel, Anu her father dashed her down from heaven to earth, For her malevolent will, her inflammatory counsel. Her hair is askew, her loincloth is torn away.”³⁶

Evident here is the terrifying appearance of the raging witch, marked by her wildly disheveled hair.

Analogous traditions surround the Indian goddess Kali/Draupadi, whom we have elsewhere identified with the planet Venus.³⁷ Kali, like Inanna and the Egyptian uraeus-goddess, is reputed to have once brought the world near to destruction:

“The dread mother dances naked in the battlefield, Her lolling tongue burns like a red flame of fire, Her dark tresses, fly in the sky, sweeping away sun and stars, Red streams

³⁵ B. Foster, *Before the Muses, Vol. 1* (Bethesda, 1993), p. 982.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁷ E. Cochrane, *The Many Faces of Venus* (Ames, 2001), pp. 105-112.

of blood run from her cloud-black limbs, And the world trembles and cracks under her tread.”³⁸

Significantly, it is Kali’s “dark tresses” which sweep away the sun and stars. Alf Hiltebeitel, with reference to a similar episode in the mythological career of Draupadi, observes that the goddess’s “disheveled hair is thus itself an image of Kalaratri, the Night of Time, the night of the dissolution of the universe.”³⁹



Strangely enough, however, it is this same dreaded specter that was believed to embody sovereignty: “Draupadi, the queen of kings, is Sri, ‘Prosperity,’ whose marriage to every king...is the sign of a virtuous reign.”⁴⁰ Equally significant is the fact that Draupadi was

³⁸ D. Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 87.

³⁹ A. Hiltebeitel, “Draupadi’s Hair,” in M. Biardeau ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue* (Paris, 1981), p. 207.

⁴⁰ A. Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle* (Ithaca, 1976), p. 89.

identified with the crown of kingship: “Draupadi, incarnation of Sri—the Goddess of the sovereignty which is symbolized in the royal diadem (*kirita*).”⁴¹

Granted that the Hag’s horrible appearance and serpentine form find a close parallel in the archaic mythology attached to Inanna/Venus and analogous goddesses like the uraeus-goddess and Kali, it remains to ask how we are to understand the Hag’s sudden transformation into a beautiful woman upon marrying the lucky king-to-be?

A valuable clue comes from ancient Egypt. In Egyptian texts, it is expressly stated that the goddess’s “raging” threatened to destroy the world, much as was the case with the destructive rampage of Inanna/Venus. After a period of “raging” and indiscriminate slaughter, however, the Egyptian Eye goddess is magically “calmed” and returned to her consort—typically Horus or Shu—whom she then marries amidst much pomp and revelry. Most instructive for our purposes here is the report that the Eye-goddess assumed a beautiful form upon her marriage:

“Finally persuaded to return, the goddess arrives in a festival procession at Philae, where she purifies herself in the sacred waters of the Abaton, transforming into a beautiful woman whom Ra welcomes into his arms. With her pacification, the order of the cosmos is also restored.”⁴²

As I have documented elsewhere, a very similar turn of events occurs in the mythological history of Inanna/Venus as well. If, in ancient Egypt, the raging Eye-goddess was “calmed” by the magical spells and dancing of Shu so, too, in ancient Mesopotamia were

⁴¹ A. Hildebeitel, “Draupadi’s Hair,” pp. 191-192.

⁴² B. Richter, “On the Heels of the Wandering Goddess,” in M. Dolinska & H. Beinlich eds., *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung* (Wiesbaden, 2010), p. 156. See also H. Junker, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien* (Berlin, 1911), p. 6, who remarks: “Auf dem Abaton kühlt Schu ihre Glut, und sie reinigt ihre Glieder im Wasser der heiligen Insel. Da wandelt sich die Löwin in eine holde Frau mit leuchtenden Augen und frohem Angesicht, mit Locken und Brüsten, die Herrin der Frauen, glänzend in ihrer Schönheit, mit fürstlicher Gestalt.”

the magical spells of Enki credited with enticing Inanna/Venus to return home and desist from her campaign of destruction.⁴³

Having identified the Hag of Sovereignty with the planet Venus, it remains to discover the celestial identity of her paramour. In the Celtic tale quoted at the outset of this study, the male suitor in question is Lugaid Laigde, whom scholars have recognized as a humanized version of Lug, the greatest Celtic god of all.⁴⁴ Early on identified with the Latin god Mars, Lug was also represented as the Lord of the Underworld, where he was allegedly attended by the Goddess of Sovereignty.⁴⁵ Lug's identification with Lugaid, as MacKillop argued, is rendered near certain by the fact that the god embodies kingship and his wife Sovereignty in an Irish tale known as *Baile in Scail* ("The Phantom's Frenzy").⁴⁶ As the greatest warrior-hero in Celtic lore and prototypical King par excellence, Lug is to be identified with the planet Mars.⁴⁷

To summarize our findings: A satisfactory explanation of the Celtic legend of the Hag as Sovereignty continues to elude modern students of myth primarily because they have consistently overlooked its original celestial determinants and context. As we have documented here, the Hag's dramatic metamorphoses and interactions with Lugaid can only be properly understood by reference to the extraordinary recent history and interactions of the planets Venus and Mars.

⁴³ B. Alster, "On the Interpretation of the Sumerian Myth 'Inanna and Enki,'" *Ugarit Forschungen* 10 (1973), p. 30.

⁴⁴ A. Brown, *The Origin of the Grail Legend* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 217-218 writes: "Eoin MacNeill has pointed out that most kings named Lughaid are merely faded pictures of the god, *Lug mac Eithne*. It is therefore probable that Lughaid Laighe, in the poem of *Carn Mail* above, has borrowed his adventure from the god Lug. We may even go further and infer that all the Irish stories just outlined probably began in stories about Lug. As Lug was the winner of sovereignty, it is natural that he should appear in some versions as lord of the great house where the sovereignty dwells."

⁴⁵ H. R. Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe* (Syracuse, 1988), p. 89-91.

⁴⁶ J. MacKillop, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

⁴⁷ E. Cochrane, *Martian Metamorphoses* (Ames, 1997), pp. 152-153.

The most compelling evidence for this admittedly bold hypothesis is provided by the archaic Mesopotamian cult of Inanna. According to Iddin-Dagan’s hymn describing the sacred marriage rite performed by Sumerian kings, it was commonly believed that the king could only obtain the throne by “marrying” or engaging in simulated sexual intercourse with the planet Venus. Indeed, it is Inanna/Venus herself who provided the king with the royal crown and the ring of sovereignty (see figure one).

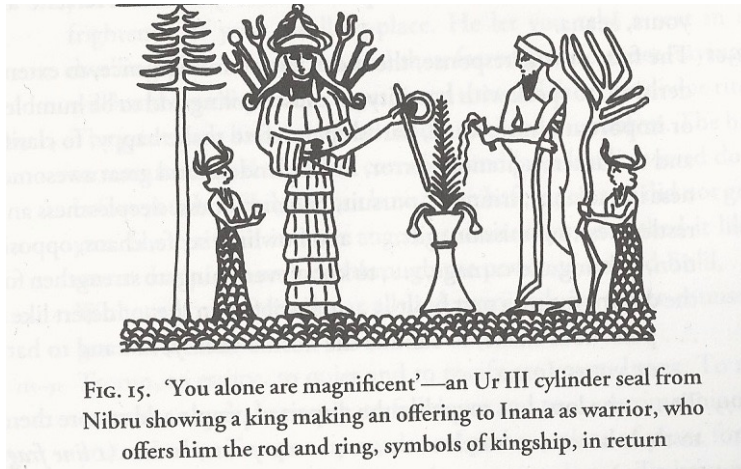


Figure One

Yet Inanna/Venus, like the Egyptian Eye-goddess, was also conceptualized as a raging serpent-dragon—the celestial prototype for the Hag according to the historical reconstruction offered here. In the final lines of Iddin-Dagan’s marriage hymn, the warrior-goddess is finally calmed or “soothed” as a result of the sexual union with her consort (it will be noted that the word *kuš₂*, translated as “relaxes?” by Jeremy Black in the quote above, also denotes “to soothe or calm” and is well known as a euphemism for sexual intercourse in Sumerian sources).⁴⁸ A similar scenario is evident in the Egyptian legend of the Eye’s return: It is only by conjoining with or “marrying” her celestial consort that the raging goddess is calmed and her terrifying form disappears, at which

⁴⁸ Y. Sefati, *op. cit.*, p. 39, states: “In the context of the sacred marriage texts, the expression ‘to soothe the heart’ (*ša kuš-u*) is a euphemism for sexual union.” See also T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven, 1976), p. 38, who translates the passage in question as follows: “She, in turn, soothes the heart for him there on the bed.”

point she assumes the appearance of a radiantly beautiful woman. Such, in essence, is the story of the Hag as Sovereignty.

In the final analysis, the Celtic Hag is simply a caricature or degenerated mythological variant of the raging goddess (Inanna, the Egyptian Eye, Kali). The raging goddess, in turn, represents the planet Venus during a phase of spectacular instability, wherein it presented the appearance of a comet-like body with wildly disheveled hair—the prototypical star of *disaster*. The metamorphosis of the Hag into the goddess of Sovereignty, on the other hand, is simply a variation upon the archetypal myth of the sacred *hieros gamos* wherein Venus conjoins with or “marries” Mars and has reference to a later phase of relative stability in the polar configuration’s evolutionary history during which Venus’s raging “hair” disappeared or was otherwise brought under control, thereby restoring order to the cosmos. With the “soothing” of the raging planet-goddess and the binding or ordering of its witch-like hair, the Queen of Heaven assumes a beautiful form as the radiant crown or headband of the Sovereign King—i.e., the planet Mars (Horus, Lugaid, Dumuzi).