

SCOTTISH FOLK-LORE AND FOLK LIFE

____By Donald A. Mackenzie 1935____

Introductory: THE PEOPLE, THEIR ORIGINS AND HISTORY

ANCIENT GODDESS FORMS.

CAILLEACH BHEUR, THE MUILEARTACH



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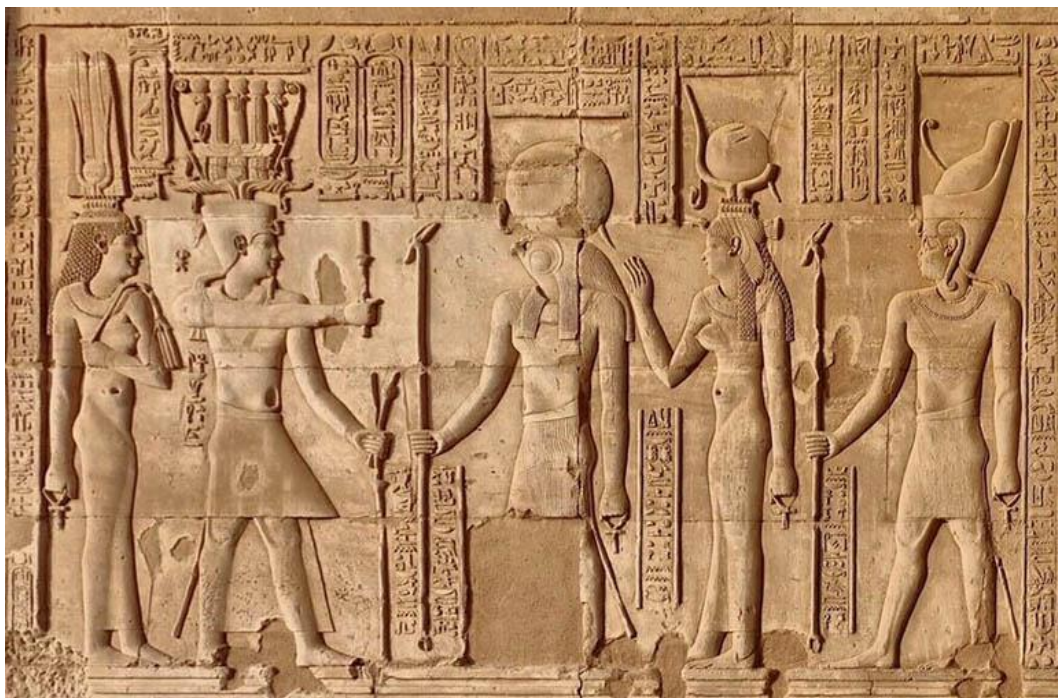
Introductory: THE PEOPLE, THEIR ORIGINS AND HISTORY

CHAPTER VIII

ANCIENT GODDESS FORMS.

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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODDESS



Related images

An ocean form of the Cailleach is known as the Muileartach or Muireartach. Gregorson Campbell as suggested that this name means the "Eastern Sea", and that he monster was therefore a personification of the ocean which was regularly crossed by the intruding and hostile Vikings. His theory, however, can hardly be regarded as conclusive. It is questionable if we really meet in Scotland with any supernatural beings which can be regarded as local personifications of nature. Before the Celts or the earlier Bronze Age people arrived on our shores, they had definite ideas regarding the control of natural forces by anthropomorphic and shape-changing deities. They believed in the existence of deities and they imported and perpetuated them, imparting to them a degree of local colour.

A deliberate personification of natural forces would take us back to the very beginnings of early religion, and we find ourselves far from the beginnings when an intensive study is made of Scottish folk-lore and mythology, which are really of highly complex character. The idea of control in nature by supernatural beings arose after the family group had developed into an organized clan or state, and this development took place long before Britain was colonized by settlers from areas of ancient civilization - the Bronze Age people, whose burial customs and weapons indicate that they had definite religious beliefs and an advanced social organization, and the Celts with their pantheons and eastern chariots and other manifestation of the impress of cultures derived from areas of origin or characterization. It does not follow, however, that a pantheon in which a goddess was supreme necessarily reflected a state of society in which the females were supreme. The prominence accorded to the Great Mother was due mainly it would appear, to the rise of a people who believed that life had "origin" when the first mother came into existence and gave birth to a fatherless son. The theories regarding the riddle of life must not be confused with their social organization.

The Muileartach resembled the Sumerian Tiamat of Mesopotamia and certain old Egyptian goddesses I having a demon and reptile, or half-reptile, and in being a slayer and destroyer as well as a giver of life. She could also appear as an anthropomorphic deity. Like the mother of the giants in the Finlay Changeling folk-story, the Muileartach assumes the form of an old woman after leaving the sea and visits a house to ask for a night's lodging, pretending to be a traveller who is cold and weary. In a well-known Gaelic folk-poem, of which there are several variants, she is represented a son who knocks at a door and calls upon Fionn to admit her. Although, as she approached in the darkness, she "pulled up a tree, swept off the branches and had it for a stick", she cries in a plaintive voice:

*"Is mise Cailleach through, thruagh
(I am a pitiful, pitiful Cailleach)."*

She wants only to warm herself at the fire and would be content to eat with the dogs. (*B'fjeàrr learn, a bhith am biàth 's do theine mhòir, 's a bhith an comith ri do chonaibh*). The door is barred against her, and when she finds that her deceitful pleading is in vain, she kicks it open. Then, entering quickly, she seizes with her "crooked claw" Fionn's "Cup of Victory" and runs away with it, having shown herself in her true colours as a Cailleach of great fury. (*a' Chailleach bu mhòr fearg*). The Fians pursue and struggle with the Cailleach:

"Thinman (Caolite), son of Roin, caught
His big sword and his two spears;
And the active youthful Oscar caught
The embroidered skirt that was round her body.
They took the apple from the wretch."

This myth has not only been connected with the Fians, but the much later Manus (Magnus Bareleg), and in "the confused snowball of narrative" are fragments of ancient myths like the mystic apple and the "Cup of Victory" from which Fionn derived his mysterious powers, supplies of food, &c.

Like our Cailleach Bheur, the Muileartach has a blue-black face and a single eye:

"There was one flabby eye in her head
That quicker moved than lure-pursuing mackerel.
Her head bristled dark and grey
Like scrubwood before boar frost."

A variant is:

"Her face was blue-black of the lustre of coal,
And her bone-tufted tooth was like red rust.
In her head was one pool-like eye.
Swifter than a star in a winter sky."

She had come across the ocean to demand the heads of Fionn and his chief warriors, but was herself slain.¹

CAILLEACH BHEUR



Related images

1. J. G. Campbell, *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition, Argyllshire Series No. IV. pp. 131 et seq;* J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands, Vol.111i. pp. 136 et seq;* Mrs. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Our Cailleach acquired various names in different localities. She is *Cailleach uisge* ("water Cailleach") when she comes from the sea or haunts a swollen river ford, waiting to drown reckless and hurried travellers. Professor W. J. Watson tells me he has heard of *Cailleach na h-Abhann* ("the river Cailleach"), who haunted a ford on the River Orrin in Ross and Cromarty and drowned unwary people.

In the Cromarty Firth the south-westerly gales of spring are referred to as those of "Gentle Annie". Her stormy period is supposed to last for six weeks, and the fisher people of Cromarty have sayings regarding it.

The firth, called before 1300 Sykkersund ("safe sound"), is a natural, land-locked harbour, with abrupt headlands at its entrance, and is fringed by undulating hills. It is well protected from the east and north winds, but part of it is dangerous for small craft when the south-westerly gales blow in spasmodic gusts through a gap in the mountains. A particular point below the Cromarty coastguard station, which stands on Maryness, is feared by the boatmen, because there the tide runs swiftly and gusts of south-westerly wind sweep with great fury. The point of the promontory is called Heel of Ness, and the writer has seen fishermen lowering their sails as they rounded the point even in moderate wether, owing to the superstitious dread of this are of danger. "Gentle Annie" is deceitful and no risks should be taken!

The fishers speak an archaic dialect of Old English (or Scots), dropping the "h" and "wh" and using "thou" (thoo) and "the" like the Quakers. According to local tradition, they came originally from the Firth of Forth area in the reign of James I and VI. The "h" is dropped or misused in like manner by the fishers of Newhaven, near Edinburgh.

In Cromarty the fishers have the following saying regarding the Cailleach of the south-westerly gales:

"When Gentle Hannie (Annie) is skyawlan (screeching) round the 'eel o' Ness, wi' a w'ite futher in her 'at, they'll (or she will) be 'arrying (harrying) the crook."

(When Gentle Annie is yelling round the Heel of Ness with a white feather (the foam) in her hat, she will be robbing the crook, i.e. the pot which hangs from the hook of the chimney chain.)

There is no food in the pot because the fishers cannot go to sea. A fish-wife once remarked to the writer: "We'll better hae (have) a shilling in oor pooch (our pocket) against the Gentle Hannie wuther (weather)."

The Cromarty fisher people have kept alive memories of former local superstitions and use some acquired Gaelic words.¹

The seafarers of "windjammer days" used the expression "Don't come the Gentle Annie over me" when they suspect they were about to be deceived or cheated by a "mealy-mouthed" individual. "Gentle Annie" had the reputation of playing tricks with the weather. A morning broke peaceful and calm and men ventured to sea, lured by reason of her deceptive promise. Then suddenly a fierce storm came on and there were wrecks and drownings. In Gaelic lore the Cailleach period in spring is comparatively mild, but is only an interlude, because fierce storms follow. Mrs Watson refers to the Cailleach period as, "a few semicalm days" which are followed by the *sguabag* sweeping storms.²

¹ I dealt with "Gentle Annie" in her relation to other storms bridges in my article "A Highland Goddess" in the *Celtic Review* (1912), Vol. VII, pp. 336 et seq. My tentative suggestions of a connexion between goddesses and matriarchal customs and to fusions of beliefs and peoples have apparently inspired Mr. J. G. Mackay's rather extravagant theory of much later date in *Folk-Lore* (1932). pp. 144 et seq.

² *The Celtic Review* (1908-9) Vol. V, p. 66.

A sunken rock known as *Bogha na Caillich* is on the Inverness-shire coast. It is dangerous and is dreaded by seafarers. Other rocks, already referred to, at the mouth of Loch Etive, Connel Ferry, over which pour the Falls of Lora, are similarly a peril, although the Cailleach's "stepping stones" and the tides are very swift and treacherous. A dangerous sandy bar at the entrance to the Dornoch Firth is called "the gizzen brigs" (Norse, *gisnar bryggja*, "leaky bridge"). In the local Gaelic lore the bar is connected with a malicious female spirit.¹ The writer has heard references to her as a storm-bringer and drowner of seafarers. Hugh Miller in his story of the "Stine Bheag o' Tarbat", who gives weather charms to sailors, appears to have preserved a memory of the dreaded hag of the "gizzen briggs".²

The longevity of the Cailleach is accounted for in a group of stories which tell that she drinks the water of life. One of these, which locates the "Well of Youth" near Loch Ba in Mull, tells that she visited it at "the dead of night", and drank "before bird tasted water or dog was heard to bark". She thus "kept herself always at sixteen years of age". J. G. Campbell, who gives a version of this story, continues:

"At last, when making her way to the well on a calm morning (and such mornings are very beautiful in the west Highlands) she heard a dog bark. She exclaimed:

`Little knows any living wight
When mischance may befall him;
For me early has the dog called
In the calm morn above Loch Ba.
`I had enough of spells
To sere the seed of Adam,
But when the mischance was ripe
It could not be warded off.`

Having said this, she fell, crumbling into dust. She lied so long that she had above five hundred children."³

A prior's daughter in Tiree is said to have met the Caileach Bheur and asked her how old she was. She said her memory extended back to the time when the Skerryvore rocks, where the lighthouse stands, were covered with arable fields.

"Little sharp old wife, tell me your age."
"I saw the seal-haunted Skerryvore
When it was a might power;
When they ploughed it, if I am right,
And sharp and juicy was its barley.
I saw the loch at Balefuill
When it was a little round well,
Where my child was drowned,
Sitting in its circular chair;
And I saw Leinster lake in Ireland
When children could swim across."

Beira sang in terms of affection regarding places in Tiree, and especially some on the farm of Valla:

1. W. J. Watson, *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty*, p. 37.

2. *Scenes and Legends* (1st edition, 1835), pp. 304, et seq.

3. *The Scottish Historical Review* (July, 1915) Vol. XII, No. 4, pp. 413 et seq.

"The little dune, the big dune,

Dunes of my love;
 Odram and the Raven's mound
 Where I was a young girl,
 Though I am to-day an old woman,
 Bent, decrepit and sallow."¹

GODDESS CAILLEACH BHEUR



Related images

This is the late, poetical aspect of the Cailleach, reflecting the influence of Christian culture. Her fierceness of character is obscured and she is regarded merely as a woman of remarkable longevity and more a sentimentalist than a treacherous enemy of man who, claims sacrifices of human life.

In numerous fragmentary folk-stories she is, long with her helpers, a shaper of Scotland. One given by Hugh Miller tells how she carried on her back a pannier filled with earth and stones and "formed almost all the hills of Ross-shire". Occasionally an accident happened.

"When standing on the site of the huge Ben Vaichaird, the bottom of the pannier is said to have given way, and the contents, falling through the opening, produced the hill, which owes its great height and vast extent of base to the accident."²

The eminence known as Little Wyvis was similarly formed while one of her assistants was leaping across a valley.

¹. J. G. Campbell, op. cit., pp. 413 et seq.

². *Scenes and Legends* (1835 edition) p. 30.

J. G. Campbell tells tht when the Cailleach was constructing a bridge across the Sound of Mull, commencing at the Morvern side, the strap of her creel, filled with stones, snapped suddenly and the contents of the creel formed the cairn called in Gaelic *Cairn na Caillich*. "She intended to put chains across the Sound of Islay to prevent the passage of ships tht way, and the stones are pointed out on the Jura side, to which the chains were to be secured." Other references by Campbell are:

"*Beinn na Caillich*, a hill in Kildalton parish, Islay, is called after her, and a furrow down its side, called *Sgriob na Caillich*, was made by her as she slid down in a sitting posture. In the parish of Strathlachlan and Stachur in Cowal, Argyllshire, there is also a hill called after her, *Beinn Chailleach Bheur*."¹

In the eighteenth century Statistical Account of this parish, the Cailleach is referred to as "the Old Wife of Thunder". She is reputed to be a leaper from hill to hill and one who could "command terrific thunder and desolating deluges at pleasure and hence the dreadful apprehensions of incurring her ire that generally prevailed".

Although J. G. Campbell and others think that the parish minister of Strathlachlan and Strachur was mistaken in connecting the Cailleach with thunder, we find that the poet William Dunbar, who was familiar with her cantrips as a hill-shaper, &c., in Lothian, also refers to her as the source of thunder-storms. He makes her the wife of Fionn the giant, and writes:

"Scho spittit Lochlomond with her lippis;
Thunner and fyreflaucht (lightning) flew far hir
hippis."

When she "wald rift" the heaven "rerdit" (roared). Dunbar pictures her wading into the Spanish sea "with her sark lape (tucked up)".²

J. G. Campbell quotes a Gaelic poem with regard to a mountain loch in Mull, called Crù-lochan (horse-shoe lakelet), reputed to be "the deepest loch in the world". Cailleach Bheur says:

"The great sea reached my knee
And the horse-shoe tarn reached my haunch."³

A well-known Highland folk-tale is devoted to the Cailleach who came in a dark cloud from Lochlann and threw down fire-balls or thunder-bolts which set on fire the forests of Scotland.⁴

There are likewise folk-stories of our Cailleach as an inhospitable woman. She is visited by a man who wishes to reside for the night, and she gives him the head of one of her sheep to singe and then endeavours to deprive him of a share of it when it is cooked. But he man outwits her in a bardic contest, as the sea captain outwitted the chief of the Blue Men of the Minch. stories of this type were evidently of comparatively late literary development in the cèilidhs. They emphasize the meanness of the food-denying winter deity and the cleverness of men who make use of poetic charms.

1. *The Scottish Historical Review* (July 1915), Vol. XII, No. 4, pp. 413 et seq.

2. Poem "The Manere of the Crying of Ane Playe" in *The Poems of William Dunbar*, edited by W. Mackay Mackenzie (Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 170 et seq.

3. J. G. Campbell, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. XII (1915), pp. 413 et seq;
J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales* Vol. II, pp. 207-8.

In one of the stories a man named William declared he would compel her to give him lodgings and food. On entering her house she asked him his name, and he said it was "William Sit-Down". She repeated his name and he said, "Why should I not sit down when the mistress of the house asks it?" He thereupon sat down. After some lively passages he tricked her into giving him not merely a meal, but the whole meal.¹

This type of story is of considerable antiquity. Odysseus in the *Odyssey* (Book IX) tricks the one-eyed Cyclops by giving his name as "No-man". In various Gaelic folk-stories a fairy is similarly deceived by a man who gives his name as "Me Myself" or, as Hugh Miller has it, "Mysel-and Mysel". In the development of the William Sit-Down narrative, it is obvious that other popular tales were drawn upon in the *cèilidhs*.

Our *Cailleach Bheur* and her assistants are evidently prominent figures in an imported mythology. In some respects, as has been shown, the chief *Cailleach* resembles the primitive *Artemis* of Greece. The view that she was merely a "deer goddess" ignores her associations with swine, goats, sheep, wolves, birds and fish as well as deer, her connexions with trees and plants, with mountain wells, rivers, lochs, marshes and the ocean, with tempests and thunder and with hills, rocks, cairns, boulders, and standing stones.¹ An outstanding attribute is her druidic hammer or wand, which cannot be accounted for by any deer connexion. We gather from the folk-tales that it may be taken from her and that when she suffers loss of it she is powerless. There may have been a myth explaining how she recovered her wand after she emerged from her boulder, but, if so, it has been lost. As *Finlay Changeling* wields the hammer or wand for a time, so may have the *Cailleach's* son who "put out" her eye, apparently by making use of it.

We seem to detect a memory of some old ritual in a curious dance known in Gaelic as *Cailleah an Dūdain* ("Cailleach of the mill-dust"), which may throw light on this aspect of the problem. It is performed by a man and a woman and the man grasps in his right hand a wand known as the *slachdan druidheachd* ("druidic wand") or *slachdan geasachd* ("magic wand") "The man and the woman, writes Dr. Carmichael,² "gesticulate and attitudinize before one another, dancing round and round, in and out, crossing and re-crossing, changing and exchanging places." When the man touches the woman's head with the wand she falls at his feet as if dead. He laments over her, dancing and gesticulating.

"He then lifts her left hand and, looking into the palm, breathes upon it and touches it with the wand. Immediately the limp hand becomes alive and moves from side to side and up and down. The man rejoices and dances round the figure on the floor. And, having done the same to the right hand, and to the left and right foot in succession, they also became alive and move. But, although the limbs are living, the body is still inert. The man kneels over the woman and breathes into her mouth and touches her heart with the wand. The woman comes to life and springs up, confronting the man. Then the two dance vigorously and joyously as in the first part. The tune varies with the varying phases of the dance."

Magic hammers were wielded by Greek satyrs apparently in connexion with the raising from the earth of Pandora as *Ge*, the earth goddess. An Armenian myth tells that Christ descended from the sky with a golden hammer. He smote the earth and evoked the virgin church.³

¹ The standing stones on Craigmaddy Moore between Glasgow and Milngavie are "the Auld Wife's Lifts".

² *Carmina Gadelica*, Vol. I. pp. 206-7.

³ Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, Vol. III. p. 26; *Hellenic Journal* (1900), pp. 106-7 and for 1901, p. 1, Plate I.

CAILLEACH, ANCIENT GODDESS FORMS



Related images

Our Cailleach cannot now be connected with any particular people who entered Scotland, and there is certainly no justification for confining her to the Caledonians. It is extremely hazardous to assume that she reflects an ancient state of society in Scotland in which "woman was supreme". Although the Picts, for instance, recognized descent by the female line, no woman's name appears in the lists of Pictish rulers. There is really nothing in the Cailleach stories to justify the view that they reflect a "struggle between matriarchy and patriarchy".¹

Mrs. K. W. Grant regards the Cailleach stories as fragments of "nature myths" imported from Norway. There can be no doubt that the deity had a calendar significance in her association with the storms of winter and spring and that she was connected with the sea and the mountains. But Mrs. Grant's theory, like that of Mr. Mackay, fails to account for all the attributes of the complex Cailleach. The theory of Norse borrowing is far from convincing. Even the Norse material cannot be regarded as merely a collection of "nature myths". Weather controlling was only one of the activities of the Cailleach.

Some would have it that the Cailleach was imported from Ireland. Miss Eleanor Hull comments, however;: "The Scottish stories about the Cailleach are far more alive and more widely spread than those of Ireland . . . They do not seem to have any traditions about her in Aran."

In Ireland she had a "wizard's wand" with which, when herding her cow's she strikes a bull, turning it into a stone, and she is connected with cairns and dolmens. There is a "hag's chair" in County Meath. In Northern Ireland she formed a cairn on Carnbane by spilling stones from her apron, and she broke her neck when leaping fro

¹ J. G. Mackay, "The Deer Cult and the Dear Goddess of the Ancient Caledonians" in *Folk-Lore* (June 1932), pp. 144 *et seq.*

an eminence. "She lives in a cave on the hills above Tiernach Barn." Her black dog gives milk which imparts great strength to a man who drinks it. She is credited with some of the feats of *Aine an Cnuic* (Aine of the hill, Knockainy). "the Queen of the Limerick fairies", and she is the "banshee" of some Leinster and Meath families, as Cleena, Grian of Cnoc Grèine, Aine, Una and Eevil are of other families, there having evidently been "culture mixing" and the mixing of myths. Most of the Irish stories emphasize the Cailleach's great strength and longevity.

She had "seen periods of youth" and was a great lover;

"It is riches
Ye love, it is not men;
In the time when we lived
It was m en we loved.
My arms when they are seen
Are bony and thin:
Once they would fondle,
They would be round glorious kings."¹

It may well be, Cailleach, judging from the late character of the Irish material, that the drift of lore regarding her was from Scotland to Ireland rather than from Ireland to Scotland. She Plays no part in Danann myth and, as Miss Eleanor Hutt, who has collected the Irish evidence, points out, "she is not mentioned in Cormac's glossary or in *Cóir Anmann*, which contains the most ancient Irish existing traditions of the gods, nor yet in *the Dindsenchus or Agallamh na Senorach*."

Milton must have heard of her in England, for in his *Comus* he makes the First Brother refer to evil things that walk by night.

"In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost."

In Leicestershire she has been remembered as "Black Annis", who is associated with the Easter "hare hunt" and has a "cat Anna" form. An eighteenth century titled deed refers to land known as "Black Anny's Bower Close". Her cave ws in Dane Hills, but was filled in, according to a local poet:

"An Oak, the pride of all the mossy dell,
Spreads its broad arms above the stony cell;
And many a bush with hostile thorns arrayed,
Forbids the secret cavern to invade."

She is credited in the local folk-lore with devouring lambs and young children. Like Cailleach Bheur, she has a blue face and only one eye. The poet continues:

"Tis said the soul of mortal man recoiled
To view Black Annis' eye, so fierce and wild,
Vast talons, foul with human flesh, there grew
In place of hands, and features livid blue
Glared in her visage; whilst the obscene waist
Warm skins of human victims close embraced."²

1. Kuno Meyer, *Ancient Irish Poetry* (London, 1011), pp. 88 *et seq.*

2. *County Folklore* (Leicestershire and Rutland), Folklore Society's Publications, Vol. I (London, 1895).

In Arthurian romance Morgan le Fay, it is told, was chased by Arthur, whose scabbard she stole.

"Then she rode into a valley where many gret stones were, and when she saw tht she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and m an, by enchantment into a great marble stone."¹

Lady Charlotte in her notes to the *Mabinogion* refers to two large rocks, reputed to be Arthur's "quoits", which he flung from the summit of Pen Arthur. A rock was thrown from the same eminence "by a lady of those days, being a pebble in her shoe which gave her some annoyance".²

A fragment of the Scottish Cailleach story of the imprisoned maiden is found in the Norse Ballad of "Hermod the Young", which tells of the hero liberating a beautiful maiden, who had been taken captive by a giantess. Hermond visits the mountain dwelling of this hag and is permitted to remain for the night:

"Resorting to cunning, he persuades the giantess the following morning to visit her neighbours, liberates the fair maiden during her absence, and flees on his skis with her over the high mountains and down the low ones."

The giantess pursues the couple.

When Hermond with his young maiden had come to the salt fjord (Elivagar) the giantess is quite near them, but in the decisive moment she is changed to a stone, according to the Norse version, by the influence of the sun, which just at that time rose; according to the Swedish version, by the influence of a cross which stood near the fjord and its `long bridge`"³

In Danish lore the captured maiden is Sigrid, daughter of Siward. She is carried away by a giant who is slain by Ottar. The maiden is loved by the hero, but she declines to respond and takes refuge in the hut of "a certain huge woman" and "When Hermond with his young maiden had come to the salt fjord (Elivagar) the giantess is quite near them but in the decisive moment she changed to a stone, according to the Norse version, by the influence of the sun, which just at that time rose; according to the Swedish version, by the influence of a cross which stood near the fjord and its `long bridge`".¹ undertakes the task of pasturing goats and sheep. In th end she consents to become the wife of Ottar, who carries her away.⁴

Mrs K. W. Grant has collected in Rumania from a "Saxon-Hungarian woman", named Malvinia, a folk-tale of a very great witch, who was head over eight witches. She was harsh to her son's wife, to whom she set the task of washing a brown fleece white. The young woman washes it at a brook, but old Winter took pity on her and, taking the fleece from her, made it white. When she returned home with the fleece and some mountain flowers, the old witch was enraged and she and the other witches mounted goats and began a contest against all growth, like the Scottish Cailleach and her helpers.

¹ *Morte Darthur*, Book IV. Chapter XIV.

² Note on Porth Cleis in the story of Kilhwch and Olwen, Everyman's Library Edition, p. 335.

³ V. Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, translation by R. B. Anderson (London, 1889), pp. 573-4. The Ballads are late.

⁴ *Saxo Grammaticus*, Book VII. pp. 225-7.

THE CAILLEACH IS CALLING



Related images

"Snow and hail, wind and rain were summoned to do battle, but the warm sun shone out, the south wind breathed, and Spring triumphed. The nine witches were turned into stone, and `there they sit`, said Malvinia, `on their goats, on the top of the mountain of Silash in Temesvar; and on the anniversary of their death the fountains in their heads overflow and their faces become blurred with weeping`."

The memory of an ancient savage goddess survives in the folk-lore of Greece. She is known as Lamia, Queen of Libya, whose children were robbed by Hera. She took up her abode "in a grim and lonely cavern, and there changed into a malicious and greedy monster, who in envy and despair stole and killed the children of more fortunate mothers". Another Lamia, the Gello, assumes the form of a fish, a serpent, a kite or a skylark and likewise devours babies. When one of these hags is slain, no grass grows where her blood falls.¹

A primitive form of Demeter concealed herself in the cave of Phigalia, had a mare's head and was associated with snakes and other monsters. When the Phigalians neglected to sacrifice to her a famine afflicted the land. She was known as the Black Demeter.² Demeter cast blight the land when her daughter Persephone was carried away by Pluto. The Scottish Cailleach, as we have seen, bets the ground with her hammer, thus freezing it, to prevent the grasses growing.

In Babylonia the demoniac forms of deities are referred to in metrical charms and incantations. Labartu (Sumerian "Dimme") haunted mountains and marsh and devoured stray children, like the English Black Annis. The Egyptian goddess Sekhet was a slayer armed with a dagger. The mother goddess of Crete was associated with trees and mountains, snakes and wild beasts, and brandished a spear, or a staff which may have been a magic wand.

¹ Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, pp. 173 et seq.

² *Pausanias*, VIII, 42.

It would appear that our Cailleach Bheur of Scotland is a localized ancient deity of Cyclopean type and the Great Mother of giants. She shaped the mountains, gave origin to rivers, lochs and marshes, and had a sea connexion; she was the protector of fish and wild animals, whose forms she could assume; and she was connected with uncultivated trees, and was possessed of a magic wand, with which she controlled the weather during the winter and spring; she was an enemy of man, but yet a mother of many children; and she had a boulder or standing-stone form. The outwitting of her by means of clever repartee appears to be a memory of incantations and charms which protected human beings and compelled her to render service.

The Cailleach has to be considered in her relation to human beings as well as to the calendar, and the various stories regarding her emphasize that she cannot be characterized as either a deer goddess or a central figure in a nature myth. The Scottish Cailleach had many specialized and local forms, like Artemis of Greece, whose primitive characteristics survived longer in one area than another. Like Artemis, the Cailleach had, as the lover of many kings and the mother of many children, a connexion with birth. Farrell refers to an "Artemis-Aphrodite". Although reputed to be a "virgin goddess", Artemis gave birth to children. Perhaps like the Cailleach, she renewed her youth by drinking from a "well of life" and was supposed at the same time to renew her virginity.

CAILLEACH BHEUR - ANCIENT ORIGINS



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