

Musings on the priesthoods of Bretonnia, part 2: The Classical Gods and the Bretonni

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 Sunday, 26 January 2014
 Last Updated Tuesday, 04 February 2014

In the previous article I had concluded through obscure sources, logical observation and my own fertile imagination that the four most important Gods of the Bretonni would be the four main Elder Gods. The remaining deities in the Old World pantheon are the four main Classical Gods; Morr, his wife Verena and their two daughters Myrmiddia and Shallya. Also Ranald, but I'll discuss him later on.

The most important question surrounding the Classical Gods - or at least regarding my current topic - is to what degree they would influence the Bretonni. Note how much the Gods from the south have affected the Empire. Sure, the Elder Gods and Sigmar dominate throughout the provinces, but the Classics are still worshipped and have a decent following from the Imperial citizens. All this despite the fact that Bretonnia is between Estalia and the Empire, and the only reliable connections Tilea has with their Imperial cousins is the Brenheim Pass and the River of Echoes. For those not in the know, the Brenheim Pass is a rugged route cutting through four huge mountain ranges and is often sealed by snow for six months every year, and the River of Echoes is a massive underground river over three hundred miles long[1]. If these passages are not possible, then you have to take the long route by sea, go through the length of Bretonnia or else maneuver through the fractious Border Princes. But despite all these obstacles, the Classical Gods still have a following in the Empire. Let me repeat that; despite that the Empire and the southern lands are separated from one another by immense differences in both terrain and culture, the land of Sigmar is still influenced by the Classical Gods. Imagine then how the Bretonni tribes would respond to them, since their country directly borders both Estalia and Tilea.

However, in the end the Bretonni still created Bretonnia instead of becoming a part of Estalia or Tilea. One could argue that there were a few of the tribes or tribesmen who joined their southern neighbors at one point or another, or that before, during and after Unification there were some minor groups who didn't want to be ruled by the King or his Lady of the Lake. But that doesn't discount the fact that despite the major influences from the south, the Bretonni in the end still considered themselves a separate race and nation. True, the same goes for the Empire, but the horse-warriors have a long history of conflict with their northern neighbors and their founder, the Man-turned-God Sigmar. "Those tribes that did not join [our emperor] Sigmar were driven from his lands. The remaining Bretonni in the south fled across the Grey Mountains and settled the fertile lands they found on the other side. Thus it is perhaps appropriate that they became either beaten peasants or arrogant fools obsessed with thick plate armour: somewhere in their backwards society lurks the primal memory of their early defeat at the hands of Sigmar." [2] You can see why the early Bretonnians would guard against Imperials affecting their culture too much.

We do see evidence that Estalia and Tilea have influenced modern-day Bretonnia to some degree. The Dukedom of Brionne, which borders Estalia, is renowned for its artists (and people who think they are artists) its beautiful (but

impractical) buildings and the many sordid (and stupid) adulteries the inhabitants of Brionne commit. Compared to what we know about the other Dukedoms, this is somewhat uncharacteristic and decadent behavior. This makes it possible that these artistic and free-spirited customs of Brionne come from the southern countries, which have a longer history of civilization, art and science than Bretonnia (or the Empire for that matter) and are more open-minded about sexuality. Then there's the Dukedom of Carcassonne, who shares borders with Tilea, Estalia and Brionne for good measure. While most Bretonnians refuse to employ mercenaries of any kind, the Carcassonnians frequently make use of them (although they do call their hired swords 'shepherds' in order to keep up the masquerade of Bretonnia not needing foreigners or outlaws to defend its lands[3]). That might not seem important, but Tilea is often seen as the country for mercenaries and mercenary armies, to the point that the 'Dogs of War' armylist is seen as the armylist for this country. "Although Dogs of War ply their bloody trade to every point of the compass, the most notorious breeding-ground of mercenaries is the land of Tilea where they can be assured of ready and profitable employment." [4] Then there's the small fact that the formation of Estalia and Tilea occurred at roughly the same time as the founding of the Empire, which means that these two civilizations and cultures had somewhere around a millennia to ingrain themselves into the customs of the Bretonni.

Of course, it's been mentioned in my previous article that the Bretonni were gallivanting around in what would become Bretonnia about a thousand years before the founding of any Human civilization in the Old World. The priesthoods of the Elder Gods would have had plenty of time to entrench themselves and resist other deities and their followers. Furthermore, while the two most southern Dukedoms are susceptible to southern contamination, the Dukedom north of Carcassonne and east of Brionne is Quenelles, which I already established to be the most likely center of the Cult of Taal and Rhya in Bretonnia. Then there's Bordeaux, home to the Cult of Manann, which only has one Dukedom between it and Brionne. The priests of the Classical Gods would not go unopposed into early Bretonnia. Let's see what the southern cults would accomplish.

Like mother, dislike daughter

Verena, the Goddess of Knowledge, and her daughter Myrmiddia, the Goddess of Civilization, have much in common. They both place art, science and culture in high regard, they have a distinct martial streak (Myrmiddia more than her mother) and they (and their followers) see themselves as the protectors of civilization. But despite all of this, I believe that Verena would be the predominate Classical God before Unification. Her daughter Myrmiddia would in turn be worshipped as an aspect or patron saint of Verena by the Bretonni. Let's begin with my arguments for the later notion:

1. The negligible hold of the Myrmiddian priesthood on the Bretonni is one of basic necessity. As I said in part 1, if the early Bretonnians did worship the Goddess of Civilization - and more importantly, the Goddess of two neighboring countries - they would have most likely become part of Estalia, Tilea or both.

2. One of the reasons that Myrmiddia is so fervently worshipped by the Estalians and Tileans is because she has a direct link with them. She is a God who assumed mortal form to help these people, to topple down all oppressors and to unite them into one grand civilization. Then she got shot for her trouble and to honor her memory her followers decided to split up into two different countries. Nevertheless, her followers genuinely care about her, and feel she cares about them. "In Estalia and Tilea, nearly everything is influenced by her, for beloved Myrmiddia is not only appealed to in times of war and injustice, but in all matters, especially those concerning revenge, honour, and art, three aspects of her mortal life that have many legends attached to them. This almost universal adoration of Myrmiddia in the south is something that

northern folk find very hard to understand." [5] But there's no mention of the Bretonni being attacked or approached by the forces of Myrmiddia, nor of them ever being under her rule. Furthermore, as I established earlier the Bretonni already had a divine entity to represent them and their land, namely the Lady of the Lake. As such they would have little reason to adore the Goddess of Civilization the same way that the southern Old Worlders did.

3. The tribesmen could always convert sometime after Myrmiddia's death and before Unification, but again they have little reason to do so. While Myrmiddia and her cult have a not inconsiderable following in the Empire, this is not in her guise as the Goddess of Civilization. The Imperials worship her more as a deity of war and strategy. "The Imperial Cult of Myrmiddia portrays her as the Goddess of the Art of War, a strategic warrior willing to use whatever tactics it takes to triumph over evil foes. This is an image that has a great deal of appeal to people recovering from the effects of war. It is also a major simplification of the cult as it is found in Tilea and Estalia." [6] This would appear to be the result of the vast distance between the north and the south of the Old World, both in measurable leagues and the differences between their cultures. Bretonnia on the other hand is a close neighbor to Estalia and Tilea, and deals with their people and customs all the time. There would be little chance for the Bretonni to simplify Myrmiddian worship or mistake her for something she isn't, and even then their southern friends are close by to reprimand the tribesmen. As such, the Bretonni would see Myrmiddia as she is, namely the Goddess of Civilization and more importantly for us right now, as the patron deity of Estalia and Tilea. For the same reason that the early Dukes and their people would not convert to Sigmar, they wouldn't want to convert to Myrmiddia. Doing so would mean betraying their heritage and becoming part of a completely different country.

4. One could of course say that devout Myrmiddians convert the Bretonni with either sharp rhetoric or sharper weapons, but that seems doomed to failure. Since its inception, the Cult of Myrmiddia has been split between east and west. The Tileans believe that Myrmiddia was born in their country, and that she and her loyal Tilean armies conquered Estalia. The Estalians believe it's the other way around; that the Goddess of Civilization was born in Estalia and that it was Tilea who was conquered. As one can imagine, this has led some friction in both the priesthood and the followers of Myrmiddia. "Both nations have their own versions of Myrmiddia's holy texts to support their beliefs, and both are convinced they are correct. This fundamental difference has been the cause of, or the excuse for, much of the hostility between the Estalian kingdoms and the Tilean city-states down through the centuries. Indeed, the cult has almost broken in two over the issue on more than one occasion." [7] While the vast distances between the Empire and the southern lands gives a good defense for why the Imperial Cult of Myrmiddia would be relatively removed from this debate between east and west, the Bretonni don't have that excuse. Their lands border Tilea and Estalia, and thusly they would most likely meet Myrmiddian priests of both denominations, each one saying their holy texts are correct and that the other one is a heretic. For people who had many enemies both fair and foul, were still using bow and chainmail armour to fight those enemies and already had their own national religion(s), converting to a Myrmiddian sect would seem to be more trouble than it's worth. Especially since the other Myrmiddian sect would be unhappy with you at best.

5. Provided that's not enough incentive, there's the small detail that while there are currently fourteen Dukedoms in Bretonnia, there were (to our knowledge) sixteen Bretonni tribes. The lands of Cuileux fell in I.C. 930, and the early Dukedom of Glanborielle followed about four years before Unification [8]. That might seem unimportant, until you check the map and see that these two territories were in the south of Bretonnia, quite close to the borders with Estalia and Tilea. It would be easy for scholars and historians of the Old World to say that the fall of these early Dukedoms was because of decadent and cowardly influences gained from the south, and that Bretonnia must rely on its own. Considering the many feuds between Estalians and Tileans, they might very well be right.

While I believe that the above arguments give logical (or at least interesting) speculation to say that Myrmiddia would not receive much devotion or prayer from the Bretonni, they don't make Verena the predominate Classical God of these tribesmen. Here are my reasons for Verena's supremacy in early Bretonnia:

1. Verena would be the most useful deity for the Bretonni compared to the other Classical Gods. First of all there's her daughter Myrmiddia. While mother and daughter have much in common - they both have a martial streak, they protect society and find civilization important - the Goddess of Knowledge places more emphasis on learning and wisdom rather than strategy or art like her daughter does. You might think that would make Myrmiddia the obvious choice for the Bretonni because of their many enemies, but they have other Gods to help them out in battle. What they didn't have is a deity who could help them with learning, who could teach them in the many aspects of civilization. Then there's Verena's other daughter: Shallya the Goddess of Healing, Mercy and Childbirth. This deity and her cult would be helpful to the tribesmen with their primitive tools, but there are a few drawbacks. Firstly, there's the pacifist nature of Shallyans, which means they not only would be of little use in battle, but also actively protest against it. That might seem noble, but considering that there are real monsters and devils in the Old World who don't give a damn about morals, conscience or hygiene, it makes the notion of absolute peace as campaigned by the Shallyan cult somewhat naïve at best. Secondly, Shallya and her followers focus on curing pain and disease, not with preventing it. "The cult is concerned with relieving suffering, not with providing opportunities for growth and development, or for making an average life better. While few Shallyans would be upset if they made someone happy, that is not their goal; they seek rather to eliminate misery. Thus, Shallyans help those who are actively enduring torment, not those who are simply in need of help to improve their lot." [9] The priesthood is neither capable nor willing to have or gain any significant political influence. The priests would still be loved by the Bretonni of course, but they would not be heavily involved with matters of state. Thirdly, cultists and priests of Rhya are also proficient in the arts of healing and childbirth. [10] With the Cult of Rhya being one half of the Church of Nature and Nurture, I don't see the Cult of Shallya taking center stage with the Classical Gods. This leaves us with Morr, the God of the Dead and Dreams, Verena's husband and the father of Shallya and Myrmiddia. For reasons I will go into later because this segment will go on too long otherwise, I don't think he would have many followers among the Bretonni. He would receive respect, but as always there's a difference between respecting a deity and worshipping him with all your heart.

2. Precisely because Verena and Myrmiddia are so much alike, praying to the mother would be logical since the daughter wasn't suited to the mindset of the Bretonni. It would be a way of placating the priests of Myrmiddia; the Estalians and Tileans couldn't deny that Verena was the mother of the Goddess of Civilization, through which praise for Verena could be construed as round-about praise for Myrmiddia. Furthermore, the Verenans pride themselves on being unbiased and impartial. "The cult is prepared to put its beliefs above traditions and friendships, regardless of short-term consequences, just as its cultists are expected to be unbiased and not unfairly favour friends and allies above enemies. (...) They never hesitate to dispense advice or engage in debate, a fact that leads many to opine that Verenans are all arrogant. Still, Verenans are diplomatic and despite popular belief are rarely judgemental, preferring to consider all sides of an argument before forming their own opinions." [11] When coupled with the informal hierarchy of the cult, this makes priests of the Goddess of Knowledge reliable and wise advisors (or at least when compared to the priests of the Church of Nature and Nurture or the Myrmiddians from foreign countries, whose political agenda's are more likely to be self-serving for their particular cult).

3. The nobility of Bretonnia are all obligated to be chivalrous; the royal laws of the land are even called the rules of chivalry. The tenets of knighthood are also important to the worship of the Lady, to the point that they are a vital part of its dogma. "The strictures of the Lady are the strictures of chivalry." [12] But where do the notions of chivalry come from? Before Unification the Lady was respected as a patron deity of the Bretonni, as a primal force of nature. While her status as a deity of the wilds doesn't exclude that devoting oneself to her would mean being just and doing justice, it is important to note that chivalry is not confined to justice. It is a warrior code that involves being brave, courteous and above all else, honourable. So why does worshipping the Lady of the Lake necessitate following the rules of chivalry? We can answer this question by making Verena and her followers important to the pre-Unification nobles of Bretonnia. After all, the Goddess of Knowledge is about more than knowledge, learning and wisdom. "Verenans also uphold the sanctity of justice. They do not believe in the letter of the law, as that suggests that the words and ideals of one Man are greater than another, but do believe in the spirit of the law. Justice is blind, and so too all Verenans must be above prejudice and friendship, judging a case on the facts and evidence alone. (...) Verenans oppose tyranny and oppression, as well as injustice." [13] By making the worship of the Goddess of Knowledge important to the Bretonni - and more importantly, their leaders - we get a good explanation for where the notions of chivalry come from, and make the Lady of the Lake a more diabolical deity by her stealing overtaking that which used to be the domain of another Goddess.

Those are my reasons for why Verena would be the accepted southern Goddess for the Bretonni instead of her daughter Myrmiddia. Do note that I said 'accepted' there; while the Verenan cult would have a stronger foothold among the

Bretonni then all the other Classical Gods, that doesn't mean that the Myrmiddians would simply do nothing or that the tribesmen would be completely ignorant of the Goddess of Civilization. It just means that when a Bretonni talked about the Classical Gods, Verena would be the first name that came to mind. Myrmiddia would be considered more of a regional deity than one of the Classical Gods fit for Bretonni worship.

The Myrmiddian cult - and its holy sites - would most likely be centered in those early Dukedoms who have the most contact with Estalia and Tilea. By this I mean the south and the coastlines of Bretonnia. Its priests would get its orders from whichever sect they belonged to. It might be taken for granted that the Bretonni priests would follow whoever was the High Eagle at the time (the Myrmiddian Pope) or else get their own boss, since the Imperial cult is commanded by a high priest called the Eagle of the North. However, since both Tilea and Estalia share a border with their Bretonni cousins, it would be difficult for Tilean Myrmiddians to stop Estalian Myrmiddians preaching their creed and vice versa. As such, it makes little difference whether the High Eagle or a possible Eagle of the Bretonni followed the Tilean or the Estalian texts. The Cult of Verena would likewise be consolidated in the south, but have its fair share of temples further up north. Since Verena would be treated as the figurehead of the Classical Gods and because her priests would be useful to the chieftains of the tribes in the ways that most other holy men and women couldn't, the cult would be the most accepted southern deity by the Bretonni. I don't see the Verenans of early Bretonnia having a highest of high priest, since the cult doesn't believe in formal hierarchy or mindless bureaucracy. Besides, if they did organize into a formal hierarchy, the Church of Nature and the other priests of the Elder Gods could consider them a threat.

As for the temples of Myrmiddia and Verena, I don't think they would be noticeable different from those in the southern lands. The holy sites of Verena would still be repositories of knowledge and wisdom - or in other words, libraries - and the temples of Myrmiddia would honor civilization in all its forms, and provide training in combat and strategy.

The pilgrimage of the Shallyans

I had some trouble figuring out how and where Shallya the Healer and her cult could fit in. This is partially because there's little information on what her and her followers did in ancient times. On the one hand, the Goddess of Mercy definitely has a considerable following in modern-day Bretonnia. "However, by far the most important God for most peasants is Shallya. The life of a Bretonnian peasant is extremely hard, and the relief brought by Shallyans is very welcome. No village is more than a day's walk from a substantial temple, and Shallyan priests are as sacrosanct as Damsels of the Lady [of the Lake]."[14] If you would then consider that the main temple of the Goddess of Mercy resides in the city of Couronne, it would be easy to say that the Bretonni prayed to her much like their descendants do today. On the other hand, there's the niggling detail that Shallya is a Goddess from the south of the Old World. This begs an interesting question: why and how did the main temple of the Cult of Shallya become located in Couronne, a city far-up in the north of Bretonnia?

I think the answer to this question is that the clergy of the Goddess of Mercy decided on their own to establish their new headquarters in Couronne, at some point in time - before Gilles le Breton and Unification came along - when there were little to no devout Shallyans among the Bretonni. My reasons for that are as follows:

1. While there's no account of there ever being another main temple of Shallya, it seems safe to assume that Couronne wasn't always the seat for the leadership of the cult. It would be silly for the almost universally loved priesthood of this Classical Goddess to have no base of operations until they encountered the Bretonni and entered their lands. Especially since the city of Couronne resides in the northern-most Dukedom of Couronne, which shares a border with the Empire. The Shallyans wouldn't only have to struggle against the Church of Nature and Nurture and the priests of other Gods, but also the Cult of Sigmar and other Imperial creeds and customs. Add to this that Shallya is still well regarded and loved in Estalia and Tilea, and it's clear that there needs to be a reason for the main temple of Shallya to be in a place so far removed from the cult's original habitat.

2. There are a few sentences in the novel *Sacred Flesh* that provide a solid reason for why the leaders of the Cult of Shallya would establish a temple in a region where there are few followers and many dangers. The book is about a dangerous pilgrimage to Heiligerberg, a mountain in the Border Princes atop of which there's a temple sacred to Shallya. "...and my understanding is that it is a mountain as jagged and treacherous as any in this awful pass. (...) I have pondered the point, and at first it seems a peculiar irony, that the Goddess of Mercy would enjoin her most fervent devotees to clamber up a sharp and treacherous slope to receive her blessing. But then, on further reflection, any person of sense will realize that the difficulty of the climb is the very nub of the point - it is the profoundest test of faith and determination." [15] A similar argument can be found in *Tome of Salvation*. "Most Shallyans spend some time travelling the Old World early in their careers, relieving distress as they find it. Almost all temples encourage this, both because it grants a wider understanding of the world, and because travelling is generally a hardship and a sacrifice, and thus appropriate to followers of the Goddess." [16] The Shallyans would set up their most holy of holy places in the north of early Bretonnia precisely because it wasn't safe for them - or for the resident tribesmen for that matter. The Bretonni were fighting foes left and right, and could make great use of skilled and devoted healers. "These [Bretonni] tribes faced centuries of constant warfare with the Greenskins who overran the land, but the tribes slowly established themselves, driving the Orcs and Goblins back. (...) The number of Bretonni tribes fell over time, as the stronger took over the lands of weaker, and isolated tribes fell to the predations of Orcs, Chaos, and Undead." [17] As I've mentioned before, Shallyans tend to disregard their own problems and instead focus on relieving the suffering of others. They don't found new temples for political reasons or to gain new funds or followers; they do so because it helps them to help other people. The Shallyans would be a sight for sore eyes for the Bretonni. This brings me to my next point.

3. This self-imposed relocation of the cult's leadership could be the beginning of the long-lasting respect that the people of Bretonnia have for Shallya and her priests. The many obstacles that the Shallyans would encounter and passively overcome would be an inspiration for the beleaguered tribesmen. Add to this the apolitical nature of the cultists, their willingness to help and their skill at healing, and it's easy to see why the Cult of Shallya would be embraced by the Bretonni and their descendants.

4. Perhaps a negligible notion, but still interesting: it would give greater importance to the Road to Couronne, an important pilgrimage route to the main temple of the Goddess of Mercy. "The pilgrimage to the temple of Shallya at Couronne is one of the most popular pilgrimage routes in the Old World." [18] According to *Tome of Salvation* the Road to Couronne is popular simply because those who manage to arrive at the main temple are almost assured to be healed from any injury or sickness. But with this theory of mine, the pilgrimage route gains more weight. For Shallyan pilgrims this voyage wouldn't just be a holy mission for their own souls, it would be homage to the journey the priesthood of the Goddess of Mercy made in ancient times to get to Couronne.

So there we have my theory for the Cult of Shallya in early Bretonnia. I see the result of this self-imposed relocation being that worship of Shallya became important to the tribesmen, to the point of eclipsing that of her sister Myrmiddia. Especially with the northern tribes, since they would have not as much contact with Estalians and Tileans as those in the south.

I see little evidence or reason for there to be any significant change in how the Cult of Shallya handled her affairs or temples in pre-Unification Bretonnia. Outside of early Bretonnia would be a different matter. Think about it; how would the southern nations respond to the Shallyans placing their new headquarters in a primitive land where the local barbarians are unenlightened about the glory of Myrmiddia? Therefore I think that there would be some friction between the ruling priesthood of the Goddess of Mercy and the ruling class of Estalia and Tilea. Since Myrmiddia and Shallya are sisters it seems unlikely the various priests would let it escalate into violence, but it would be enough for the Shallyans to lose much of the political influence they had in the southern nations. This would probably suit the followers of the Goddess of Mercy just fine, since it lets them focus on healing people.

The wandering prophets of Morr

The God of the Dead and Dreams is vitally important for the people of the Old World. Aside from guiding every soul to the afterlife, even those who don't believe in the Gods, he guards the deceased from the predations of Daemons, evil deities and the masters of the Undead. Furthermore, he sends prophetic dreams to those in need of them, especially to his own priests. "Dreams and portents are typically seen as Morr's way of warning the living of grave threats. Death itself, of course, is not such a threat; prophecies of one's own death merely provide the chance to get your affairs in order first. Portents are rarely absolutely clear, and Morr relies on the intelligence of Humans to unravel their mysteries." [19] Without Morr, the Old World would be a far darker place than it already is. Despite all of this, I believe the Bretonni would devote little time and effort to him, and that the priests of the God of the Death would spend most of their time roaming the countryside, with little to no temples dedicated in Morr's name. Here's why:

1. Much like his daughter Myrmiddia, the lack of influence and importance of Morr and his cult in early Bretonnia is inevitable. There are various mentions of the country being filled with ancient graves. The lost region of Glanborielle has haunted hill-forts, in the land of Quenelles you can find both the Grave and the Barrows of Cuileux and even the Dukedom of Couronne, wherein the capital of Bretonnia is situated and the King resides, is blighted by the restless dead thanks to the Landrel Barrow [20]. What's important about these graves is that they're not just haunted; they're haunted even after 1500 years have passed. While we don't know when exactly the Landrel Barrow was created, the lands of Cuileux and Glanborielle were destroyed in I.C. 930 and I.C. 974 respectively, all some time before Unification in I.C. 978. Then there are the Farulin's Brothers, enchanted monoliths who protect a vast grave of a Bretonni warlord whose power rivaled that of Gilles le Breton. But this barrow in Mousillon is not protected by prayers to Morr, but magical incantations. "Long dead before Gilles was ever born, this chieftain must have been a powerful warlord with many skilled sorcerers at his beck and call for the spell on Farulin's Brothers to remain after all this time. His barrow still stands at the centre of the monolith fields, undisturbed even by the curse of the restless dead that hangs over Mousillon." [21] Then there are the various mentions of druids as the architects of the barrows in early Bretonnia in the aforementioned Return of the Lichmaster campaign and the novel The Red Duke. From this we can imply that the Cult of Morr was either unwilling or unable to bury the dead of the Bretonni and that some other priests laid them to rest (or at least before the Unification of Bretonnia occurred). As Morr often sends messages to his priests in the form of dreams so they know where they're needed, I think it's safe to assume that in early Bretonnia the Cult of Morr just didn't have the numbers or

the influence necessary for them to give the proper rites for every deceased soul.

2. While we divide the Old World pantheon in the Elder Gods and the Classical Gods, this was not always the case. Before the publication of the *Liber Chaotica* they were divided into the country gods and the town gods[22]. It's not a major difference, but it does signify what the Classical Gods are; deities for people who live in towns, who are safe from the predations of beasts and the capricious moods of nature. The Bretonni were (and the Bretonnians are, to a certain extent) a rural people, and have to deal with rural problems. They don't have the luxury to give meaningful devotion to a God who only helps them when they die. One could say that by that same logic the other Classical Gods should be unimportant as well, but they all have something to contribute. Verena and her cult have wisdom and the written word, Myrmiddian priests can teach strategic warfare and the Shallyans provide healing and promote peace and charity. But the priesthood of Morr spends most of its efforts on the dead. True, Morr is also the God of Dreams, and people do pray to him to have their future explained. In this however he's not alone. "But Myrmiddia's cult also has its own oracles." [23] To add insult to injury, there's the fact that while Morr is the God of the Dead, he isn't the only deity in whose name people can be buried. "The friar [of Shallya] stepped up to speak words in aid of the slain. It would have been better to have a devotee of the death-god, Morr, do the honours, but Gerhold's prayers would have to suffice." [24] Then there's the story Wolfshead, where we see a priestess of Rhya administering a funeral. "The nearest priest of Morr is three hundred miles from here", Dietrich said. "It is imprudent to wait for him to visit us, so we consign the dead to Morr's gardens in the old way." [25] A throwaway mention, but it is more than plausible that the priests of other Gods, especially those of more primeval faiths far removed from the southern Cult of Morr, would have some own rituals concerning death. With the Church of Nature and Nurture firmly in power among the Bretonni tribes, the worship of Morr would be less of a necessity and more of a luxury, an added sense of security since the best deity who could protect you and your afterlife was on the job. Taking this all into account, the worship of the God of the Dead and Dreams seems somewhat unnecessary for people from a (pre-)feudal society like the Bretonni.

3. Although the cult doesn't care about their own importance (or lack thereof) in the Old World, it does care about guarding the deceased. This doesn't just translate into giving the dead their proper rites, but also in hunting down Vampires, Necromancers, ghosts of all stripes and other Undead. Furthermore, Morr sends portents of warning to those in need of them. As such, while I don't see the cult having many followers in early Bretonnia, I do see priests of Morr going on quests deemed righteous by their God, regardless of how many friends or enemies there are in their path. Besides, the cult already accepts that some of their clergy wander about, guided by divine messages. "Other [priests of Morr], however, travel across the Old World, often following their dreams." [26] They provide the last rites and portents of warning for those who need them. True, it's mentioned that the temple priests don't much like their wandering counterparts, but since the Cult of Morr would have few temples or authority in early Bretonnia I don't see how they would be in a position to object to them.

4. We've already seen a single priestess of Morr helping to form an entire nation with no discernible help from other cult members. In *The Legend of Sigmar* trilogy written by Graham McNeill, one of the most crucial characters is the Hag-Mother of the Brackenwalsch, a holy oracle of Morr. She manipulates the men and events around Sigmar Heldenhammer so that he would unite the Great Tribes and create the Empire, with few people ever noticing it. "A man is the sum of his experiences, Björn", said the hag woman. "All his loves, fears, joys and pain combine like the metals in a good sword. In some men these qualities are in balance and they become servants of the light, while in others they are out of balance and fall to darkness. To become the man he needs to be, [Sigmar] must suffer pain and loss like no other." [27] At some points in the books she seems to be more wizard than priestess, and apparently there were indeed other priests of Morr around in what would become the Empire [28], but the impact she has on Sigmar and therefore the Empire can't be understated or ignored.

There's a good chance that the Cult of Morr would have a few traditional temples in the south, but otherwise I see the presence of the cult in early Bretonnia being restrained to wandering priests who go where their God guides them. The priesthood of Morr would gain a dreaded reputation with the Bretonni; on the hand they only provide funeral services or cryptic and doom-laden warnings, but on the other hand they give assistance to the bereaved, warn of danger and are blessed by their God. I must place emphasis on that last part, for while the Bretonni would see that other faiths would - and does - have followers, lay-members and monks who have no divine power, from the Cult of Morr they would almost exclusively meet priests who have a direct link with their deity. As such, even if the God of the Dead and Dreams would receive little devotion, he and his priests would be treated with fear and respect by the Bretonni.

Other deities of the Bretonni

There's one God of the Old World pantheon who hasn't received his own chapter from me. Two if we count the Imperial God Sigmar, but I briefly discussed him together with Ulric. The deity in question is Ranald the Trickster, a God who would be of little importance to the Bretonni tribesmen in my opinion. He is the God of Luck and Good Fortune, and while that could certainly come in handy, the fact that his faith has no structure whatsoever limits his influence. "[Ranald's] is a curious cult, for it lacks the trappings, the pomp and majesty, even the structure of other cults. His priests are thieves, tricksters, and gamblers, rather than the educated effete so favoured by others. His temples are the gambling halls, the brothels, the taverns, and other dens of iniquity, not the gilt structures of gold and marble." [29] Then there's the fact that he and his followers all detest unnecessary violence, which makes it unlikely that the popularity of his cult among the embattled horse-warriors would be high.

There are many other deities in the Old World, ranging from minor Gods who have cults with international connections to localized nature spirits who dwell in an old tree. I like to believe that the Bretonni would have a wide variety of lesser deities and spirits to pray to, much like their Imperial cousins still do to this very day. In the context of these articles however they're of negligible importance. Especially since their cults are more often than not disorganized at best. While the priesthoods of Handrich the Dealer, Scribes the God of Scribes and other deities have a more formal structure, they in turn rely upon that structure. Or more precisely, their cults rely upon the structure and safety of civilization. Their domains are restricted to towns, arts, philosophy and high culture, which means these deities and their cults would be of relative little use to the rural Bretonni. There are more martial deities such as Solkan the Avenger, but his status as a God of Law again means that the tribesmen would at best tolerate the worship of this restrictive and formal God. In short, the cults of the other deities of the Old World would not have enough influence among the Bretonni to justify talking about them in this series.

The end of the beginning

Let's summarize what my musings have come to so far. First you have the Church of Nature and Nurture - or the priesthood of Taal and Rhya if you prefer - as the dominating religious authority in early Bretonnia. This is closely followed by the worship of Ulric and Manann, with Ulric being cast as the martial and survivor aspect of the Church of Nature, and Manann as the avenging 'angel' and/or the executioner of the cult.

Then you have the Classical Gods, where Verena is shown as the figurehead of these southern deities. Her daughter Myrmiddia is considered as a saint of Verena, with Myrmiddians being characterized as warmongering theocrats that fight among themselves for little discernible purpose. The priests of Shallya would be seen as the saviours and

benefactors of the Bretonni, bringing relief to all they meet. Morr would receive little love, but his wandering devotees would inspire much dread.

Now we have a notion of what kind of religious customs the Bretonni had before Unification. Starting from that it's possible to conceive how and why these customs changed due to Unification. In the next part I will talk about how the priests of the Bretonni reacted to the coming of Gilles le Breton, his Grail Companions and the Lady of the Lake.

[1] Sigmar's Heirs (Black Industries, 2005), page 5 & 6

[2] Tome of Salvation (Black Industries, 2007), page 14

[3] Knights of the Grail (Black Industries, 2006), page 65

[4] Dogs of War (Games Workshop, 1998), page 3

[5] Tome of Salvation, page 40

[6] Tome of Salvation, page 105

[7] Tome of Salvation, page 44

[8] Knights of the Grail, page 14 & 15

[9] Tome of Salvation, page 51

[10] Tome of Salvation, page 63-65

[11] Tome of Salvation, page 72

[12] Knights of the Grail, page 37

[13] Tome of Salvation, page 73

[14] Knights of the Grail, page 40

[15] Sacred Flesh (Black Library, Robin D Laws, 2004) page 32 & 33

[16] Tome of Salvation, page 51 & 52

[17] Knights of the Grail, page 14

[18] Tome of Salvation, page 173

[19] Tome of Salvation, page 36

[20] Knights of the Grail, page 64, 66, 70, 89, 90 & 91

[21] Barony of the Damned (Black Industries, 2006), page 24

[22] Apocypha Now! (Games Workshop, 1995), page 25

[23] Tome of Salvation, page 44

[24] Sacred Flesh, page 83

[25] Brunner (Black Library, C.L. Werner, 2003), page 98

[26] Tome of Salvation, page 37

[27] Heldenhammer (Black Library, Graham McNeill, 2008), page 179

[28] Heldenhammer (2008), page 227

[29] Tome of Salvation, page 46

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