

Musings on the priesthoods of Bretonnia, part 3: Priests of the Old World Gods during Unification

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In the previous two articles I made a rough sketch of what Old World Gods the Bretonni believed in and more importantly how they believed in them. Now we're going to look at how the priests and devotees of these Gods reacted to the events of the Unification of Bretonnia. Let's start by first looking at what these events actually are.

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Unification

For sake of convenience and to prevent unnecessary referencing, I'll give a summary of what has so far been published on Unification. In I.C. 976, the armies of Gilles, Thierulf and Landuin - the rulers of the early Dukedoms of Bastonne, Lyonesse and Mousillon respectively - met together for an honorable death fighting the innumerable Greenskin hordes that were ravaging their lands. They were visited by the Lady of the Lake, who asked the trio to free Bretonnia in her name from all the evils that plagued it. She made them sup from the Grail, which turned them into the first Grail Knights. The next morning the three Lords and their armies attacked a horde of Orcs and Goblins in what would become the first of the Twelve Great Battles of Unification. With their newfound strength and abilities they scattered the Greenskins so utterly they ended up in the neighboring province of Bordeleaux. Naturally, the victorious knights finished the day with a feast in the private hall of Lord Marcus of Bordeleaux. The Lady of the Lake also showed up for the festivities and blessed both Marcus and Lord Fredemund of Aquitaine. The trio of Grail Companions had become a quintet.

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They then rode south to Brionne, where the castle of Lord Balduin was besieged by Greenskins. Realizing the opportunity before him, the boisterous ruler of Brionne sallied forth and fought his way to the relieving force. Once Gilles and Balduin came across each other during the battle and shook hand, the Lady manifested to let Balduin sup from the Grail. After the Greenskins were defeated the Grail Companions journeyed to Carcasonne. They were swiftly joined by the stoic Lord Lambard, but the Lady of the Lake did not yet appear to him. As the army went further east they arrived in Quenelles and saw that Athel Loren, the forest of the Fay, was overflowing with rampaging Orcs. The Companions entered the forest whereupon they met the armies of the Fay and Rademund the Pure, Lord of Quenelles. Once the battle was done and the warriors had rested, Lambard and Rademund were alight with power. They said that the Lady of the Lake had come to them in their dreams.

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Afterwards the Grail Companions went to the neighboring province of Parravon. Here they encountered Lord Agilgar, friend of the Pegasi. Once the enemies of Parravon were defeated they swiftly rode on to the mountains of Montfort. Gilles got a giant dart in his chest for his trouble. Carrying him out of the fray, his friends fought their way to the castle of Lord Martrud to enable his recovery. The Companions took turn watching over their bedridden leader. When it was the turn of Agilgar and Martrud, the Lady appeared to heal Gilles and to bless the two rulers of Parravon and Montfort.

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The ten holy warriors continued on their crusade by way of Gisoreux, where they picked up Lord Beren. Then they went further west to Mousillon, where they heard from Lord Folgar of Artois that legions of the Undead were coming their way. While the living corpses were being vanquished, Beren and Folgar chanced upon the Lady and received the power of the Grail. L'Anguille was the next port of call for the Grail Companions. Once Marcus defeated Svengar, the leader of the pillaging Norscans that had wrecked the city, the grief-stricken Lord Corduin joined the army of Gilles. The Companions then rode eastward to the city of Couronne, where they ran across of Caerleond, the brother of Thierulf. Just before the army left for the final battlefield, the Lady came to bless Corduin and Caerleond. The final battle in and around the city went on for weeks, but at last victory was theirs.

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On a side note here, I find it curious that the Lady only presents herself to first a trio and then to pairs of would-be Grail Knights. Gilles, Landuin and Thierulf at first; then we have Marcus and Fredemund at the festivities in Castle Bordeleaux; Lambard and Rademund in Athel Loren; Agilgar and Martrud when they watch over the ailing Gilles; Folgar and Beren in the forest near Mousillon; and finally Corduin and Caerleond right before the battle for Couronne began. The only exception to this is Balduin of Brionne during the siege of his castle. However, he's described as being the brute of the Grail-supp'd bunch and he was completely surrounded by Greenskins at the time the Lady of the Lake appeared to him with the promise of power. It's thus debatable whether he thought the consequences of this through. My point is that I wouldn't be surprised if the Goddess of Chivalry used some subtle form of peer pressure to make the Bretonni Lords sup from the Grail. It would certainly go some way to explaining why they would devote themselves to a suddenly ambitious patron saint of the land, no matter how beautiful she is or how much power she now possesses.

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Once victory was finally obtained, Caerleond was made the ruler of Couronne, since its Lord perished at some point unknown to us. The fourteen Bretonni tribes were now unified as the country of Bretonnia, and the Lady of the Lake crowned Gilles le Breton as its King. He still remained the direct ruler of Bastonne, which together with the thirteen other regions of the former tribes were proclaimed as Dukedoms, each with a Grail Companion as their Duke.Â But while the Lady of the Lake gave Gilles and his Dukes extra-ordinary powers, they were neither invincible nor immortal. One by one they passed away, either through battle or old age. In I.C. 995, or the year 17 of the newly established Bretonnian calendar, the King was killed unexpectedly by Greenskins. He was borne away to a mist-shrouded island by a woman who later identified herself as the Fay Enchantress, the direct representative of the Lady and a reliable advisor to the throne. However, the throne was now unoccupied. The problem here, aside from the death of a beloved icon, was that there were no clearly established rules of succession. Normally in a monarchy the most direct descendant of the king would be crowned, which in this case would be Louis, Gilles's only son who was born under mysterious circumstances. His mother was rumored to be the Lady of the Lake herself. But aside from the fact that he was young (no age is given, but since his father only met his presumed mother no more than nineteen years ago, he would be at his most about

eighteen years old and probably younger than that), he hadn't drunk from the Grail. Considering that the power of the Lady was what gave Gilles and his Grail Companions the strength to unite the country in the first place, there were those who believed that one of the remaining Companions should be installed as King of Bretonnia. Landuin, Thierulf and Marcus were all considered for the throne.

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A council of the great and good of Bretonnia eventually decided that only one who had the blessing of the Lady could become the King. Immediately, Louis declared he would search for the Grail, an act which earned him the title of 'the Rash'. He asked Landuin, Thierulf and Marcus to serve as regents of the country while he was away on his quest. After about six years, Louis the Rash returned with the recognition and blessing of the Lady, whereupon he was swiftly crowned by the Fay Enchantress as the King of Bretonnia. The newly installed monarch created the Decrees of Chivalry, in which the codes of conduct for the Bretonnian nobility were formalized. In these decrees he also established the custom of the Questing Knight, the pattern by which a knight of Bretonnia could search for the Grail. Those who succeed can drink from the holy cup and become Grail Knights, the new elite of country as the fourteen Companions died one by one.[1][2][3][4]

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[Back to the show](#)

In the context of these articles, the question now is as follows: how would the various cults of the Old World Gods respond to Gilles le Breton, the powerful Grail Knights and the former-patron-saint-and-now-Goddess, the Lady of the Lake? As worship of the Lady is now the state cult of the country and the Old World Gods are still worshipped in Bretonnia, it would appear this transfer of power went with relative little fuss. Rather than the Goddess of Chivalry removing thoughts of all the other Gods and their priests from the hearts of Bretonnians, she simply replaced them. But a second look tells us that this wouldn't happen effortlessly.

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While it would be easy to say that the priests of the Old World Gods all drop on their knees and convert to the Lady of the Lake, this seems unlikely. Firstly I've already established that the Bretonni regarded the Lady as a patriotic spirit of the tribes and their lands in part 1. Although her hitherto unknown power would certainly surprise the Bretonnian cults of the Old World pantheon, it's not as if she would be completely unfamiliar to them. Secondly, there isn't any mention of the Grail Companions or anyone else trying to persuade other people into worshipping the Lady. In fact, it wasn't until Gilles died that the Fay Enchantress appeared, the first and so far only true priestess of the Goddess of Chivalry. Furthermore, before Louis the Rash returned from his Grail Quest it was apparently thought impossible that people other than the Companions could drink from the Grail and gain the divine sanction of the Lady. Thirdly, the Bretonni were at that point in time well established in the region that would become Bretonnia; close to a thousand years in fact. It would be downright insulting, to say nothing of boring, to allege that the resident cults would just roll over and die.

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Now we have that out the way, let's see how the nobles and priests would respond to the Lady and her Grail Companions. Considering that the cults weren't strictly organized or united, to say nothing of the many threats roaming the countryside before and during Unification, I think it's fair to say that the head honcho of the tribes, cults and other groups wouldn't deal with Gilles le Breton until he arrived at their doorstep. Especially since he had an army with him with which he tried his utmost to destroy every last terror that was plaguing the land. As such, I think it's also fair - and easier - to say that the cults' response to Unification can be discussed one cult at a time. Besides, since the Lady of the Lake was considered a patron saint of the Bretonni long before Unification, it seems natural to say that the powers-that-be would regard stories of a large army praying to the Lady as patriotic behavior in these harsh times.

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If the first trio of Grail Companions had any overtly religious beliefs before meeting the Lady, it's not mentioned. Even if they did have previous beliefs, once they received the blessing of the Lady they attacked the Greenskins with such passion that they ended up in another region. In other words, their priests and kinsmen would not have time to dissuade them. Once Gilles, Landuin and Thierulf came back to their homelands they already had the support of half of the country. Also, when they returned the Mousillon region was teeming with Undead and Beastmen, while the Grail Companions seem to have skirted around Lyonesse and Bastonne. The naysayers from these three early Dukedoms would have trouble making their case against the Lady if they couldn't meet up with their rulers. As such, the Lords of Bastonne, Lyonesse and Mousillon and their kinsmen can be safely ignored for now. This brings us to the next in line to sup from the Grail, namely Marcus of Bordeleaux, beloved of Manann.

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Calming the sea

I already talked about the sentiments of Manann, his followers and the Dukedom of Bordeleaux in the previous articles, so I won't repeat myself here. With that in mind I find it interesting that a province who fervently worships a wrathful sea deity would support a delicate Goddess of Chivalry. Especially when one considers the fact that the Cult of Manann is still well regarded by the ruling classes of Bretonnia today, not least of which Bordeleaux. This would imply that the Cult of Manann and the followers of the Lady are on relatively good terms with each other. But how could that happen?

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The answer to this question lies in the location of the Grail Companions' first party. There are various mentions in *Knights of the Grail* that the Lady revealed herself to the Lords of Bordeleaux and Aquitaine in the private hall of Marcus's castle. This means that unless Marcus was so impressed by Gilles, Thierulf and Landuin that he ordered his family, friends, advisors and servants - who would most likely be interested in these "Grail Companions" and their devotion to the Lady of the Lake - to stay away from the festivities, it would appear that the Companions, Marcus and Fredemund of Aquitaine were not alone in the private hall. This in turn means that his court, and more importantly for us the resident priest of Manann, also saw the Lady of the Lake in all her glory.

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I don't think that the priest would bend over backwards for the Lady; the Cult of Manann is nothing if not headstrong. More likely he would treat her with contempt, complaining about how strange women lying in ponds and their farcical aquatic ceremonies are no basis for a system of government. But since it's suggested numerous times that Marcus was a wise ruler - and that we already know that this story has a happy ending - it's fair to say that he managed to appease both the raving priest and the enigmatic Goddess. How you might ask? To quote *Knights of the Grail*: "Bordelen nobles tend to think that the domain of the Lady of the Lake ends where the water turns salt." [5] This might seem flippant, but it does fit with what we know about cultists of Manann. They focus on the sea and care little about what happens inland. "When not at sea, cultists spend their days preparing for when they can go back out again - few venture far from large bodies of water, and most become irritable and twitchy if they can't smell the salt of the ocean or hear the cries of the gulls in the wind." [6] Let's say that Marcus convinces the high priest of Manann that as long as the Sea God still gets his due and it doesn't affect the sea and its inhabitants, it shouldn't matter to the Cult of Manann what the Bretonnians do when there's no sea or river in sight. This gives us a reason why the cult would work together with the Grail Companions and be loyal to the new government of Bretonnia, which in turn would explain why the Cult of Manann still gets respect and devotion from the nobility of Bretonnia to this day.

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After the feast in Marcus' castle, Gilles and his drinking buddies went to Aquitaine, but I'm going to ignore that region. The reason for this is that Fredemund, the ruler of this early Dukedom, was at that point already a Grail Knight, but also because he was called the Lord of the Skies and was capable of summoning huge flocks of birds to do his bidding. [7] It's not firmly established whether this was a natural ability to him or he could do this via a magical horn. But regardless of the source of this power, it is certain that he had the power, which in turn makes it unlikelier that his subjects would oppose him. You don't mess with someone who controls an army of birds large enough to blot out the sun. It's of course possible that this power came from one of the Old World Gods, but the only fitting candidates among the main pantheon are Taal - since he's the God of Nature and Wild Places - and Myrmiddia, because she and her cultists are fond of eagles. But Fredemund is described as hating everyone who used missile weapons. "Though a dozen or more steeds were shot from under him on the battlefield of Aquitaine, Fredemund never lost his contempt for those that eschewed the martial values of meeting one's foe face-to-face." [8] Perhaps hypocritical considering he had a personal legion of killer-birds at his beck and call, but there you go. Since Taal's followers are mostly hunters and the Cult of Myrmiddia makes extensive use of every trick in the book, including missile weapons, the chance that Fredemund devoted himself fully to either of them becomes rather slim. Aside from that, I have more fitting places for the Grail Companions to match wits with the priests of Myrmiddia and Taal.

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Breaking the spears

The next port of call for the Grail Companions was Brionne, where Lord Balduin was besieged by Greenskins. Since this Dukedom is close to Estalia, and the people of Brionne are obsessed with poetry, music, courtly love and other arts and customs which were probably influenced by the south, I think this would be a good place for the Companions to encounter the Myrmiddian sects - by which I mean priests of Myrmiddia from both Estalia and Tilea. Because of their feud - and because the influence of the Cult of Myrmiddia on the Bretonni needs to be minimal - the priests wouldn't have much say in the politics of Brionne. Besides, Balduin doesn't seem the type to care much about strategy. "Virtue of the Impetuous Knight: In the glory of the charge was Balduin most alive, and though others more tempered by the fires of war better controlled their ardour, he was ever in the forefront of battle." [9]

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I see the Estalian and Tilean priests squabbling with each other during Unification even more than usual, criticizing their opponent's beliefs at every turn and blaming each other for every mistake. Then the Grail Companions came along, destroying with knightly valour what strategic warfare failed at. An inspired Balduin sallied forth from his fortress to help in killing the Greenskins, and when the Lady of the Lake suddenly appeared in the midst of battle to grant him the same power Gilles and his friends possessed, he immediately agreed and drank from the Grail. After the battle the Lord of Brionne would toss the Myrmiddian clergies from his domain.

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This would accomplish two things. Firstly it would signify to everyone that the people of Brionne - and by extension the rest of the Bretonni, especially those in the south - were not vassals to the southern nations, regardless of how much the Bretonni were influenced by their arts and customs. In other words, it would add greater depth and patriotic fervour to Unification and Bretonnia as a whole. Secondly it gives us a reason for why the Myrmiddians did not aid the Bretonni - or else gave insufficient aid - during Unification. This also explains why the Cult of Myrmiddia would have a minor influence on the people of Bretonnia.

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Persuading the judge

After Brionne the Grail Companions went to Carasconne. This was the first early Dukedom where no major battles (that we know of) took place. In fact, the Grail Companions are described as racing through Carasconne to get to Quenelles and Athel Loren as fast as possible. But Lord Lambard and his forces still joined them, in spite of the Companions not aiding the Carasconnians in any major conflicts and the absence of the Lady of the Lake. Apparently the Lord of Carasconne was persuaded to accompany Gilles and his army without any visible demonstration of their abilities or their Goddess. Since there's no mention of conflict between the Carasconnians and the Grail Companions, it seems likely that they simply talked with each other. Eventually Lambard was persuaded into joining up to wipe out the enemies of the Bretonni, which does conform to his description as a brave warrior. "Virtue of Stoicism: Tales are still told of how Lambard stood alone against hordes of Orcs and saved his Dukedom of Carasconne. Steeled by his bravery, those around him fought with the courage of the Breton himself." [10]

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I think that this debate would be a good spot for the Grail Companions to chance upon the Cult of Verena. Firstly, Verenans are disposed to diplomacy, which makes it plausible that they would be present at the negotiations between Lambard and the Companions - or even be the ones who suggested and planned the whole affair. This in turn also makes the success of these negotiations more likely. Besides, her worship would be concentrated in the south and Carasconne is the most southern Bretonnian region. Secondly, while the people of Carasconne are a martial people and not overtly inclined to matters of learning, they also consider themselves as the champions of civilization. "However, [Carasconnians] do not look down on those who are not warriors. This is seen best in their attitude to Brionne, a Dukedom that spends its time on poetry. The Carasconnians like to listen to Brionnian minstrels when they have time, and those who can travel visit Brionne to see the wonders of the city. The Carasconnians are proud of these achievements because, they say, they fight to make such things possible. They fight so that the Brionnians do not have to, and they are proud of this." [11]Â The Verenans would empathize with this point of view, considering their own beliefs on justice and civilization.

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I don't see the priests of Verena needing much incentive to give their support to the Grail Companions. Because "Verenans are almost universally wise"[12], I think they would see the many enemies plaguing the Bretonni tribes at that moment in time more important than what Goddess the Companions worshipped. Especially since this particular Goddess was considered as a patron saint of the Bretonni. Since there was no visible evidence of the newfound abilities of the Lady of the Lake, the Verenans could be forgiven for dismissing her power and influence.

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Placating the forest

Now it's time to talk about Quenelles. I don't think I'll surprise anyone when I say that the Grail Companions would encounter the Church of Nature and Nurture here, since I've already said that this early Dukedom would be the most likely centre of this particular cult. But another thing to consider is the capital of the Dukedom. "The city of Quenelles sits right on the border of the Forest of Loren. Indeed, the walls do not guard the eastern edge of the city; instead, they run up to the trees and stop. A broad stone road runs along the border of the forest. This used to be the eastern wall, but it was cast down over a thousand years ago at the command of the Fay."[13]Â Since it lies right next to Athel Loren, the city would be the place where the bounties and dangers of nature, the Fay and the Wild Hunt would appear most often and thusly a major place of interest for the Church of Nature and Nurture. This would also mean that the resident priests of Taal and Rhya had ample chance to mingle with the ruling class of Quenelles, which might explain in part the urbanization of the cult. It also means that they would most likely help Lord Rademund the Pure when he and his army went to the aid of the Fay during Unification. Particularly when you consider that the Church of Nature and Nurture would consider the Forest of Loren as sacred because of its unpredictable inhabitants the Fay and its connections to the Wild Hunt. So the Grail Companions would meet the more prominent priests of the Church together with the rest of Rademund's army in the depths of the forest.

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I think the priests of Taal and Rhya would be hostile to the Companions and the Goddess of Chivalry. The Church of Nature and Nurture would probably see the proclamation of a patron saint of the land as a new Goddess as a challenge to their authority, especially when the Grail Companions show their unearthly abilities. The priests would entreat the Lord of Quenelles to deny or to fight the Companions, saying that he only needed their Gods to defeat the rampaging Greenskins in the forest. But then the forest spirits of Athel Loren and the inhabiting Wood Elves appeared to aid the Grail Companions in battling the green hordes. The complaints about the Companions would suddenly ring hollow. Perhaps a priest or two tried to claim that this was a benediction of Taal and/or Rhya, only for a forest spirit or bow-wielding Elf to kill the overeager preacher. Rademund the Pure would most likely see the Fay's apparent approval of the Companions as validation, as a sign he should respect these knights. It would not be the first time he trusted otherworldly beings. "...indeed it is said that times long past, the first Duke, Rademund the Pure, befriended the [Fay], and could walk among them without fear."[14]Â Because of the Fay's acceptance, Rademund pledged his support to the Lady of the Lake when she came to him in his dreams.

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The Fay's approval of the Grail Companions, and subsequently the denial of the Church of Nature and Nurture, is necessary in my mind. Because of their dominance among the Bretonni, the Church needed to be humbled before these nature lovers could accept another deity having a closer tie to Athel Loren and its inhabitants. Furthermore, it signifies to the rest of the Bretonni that the Lady of the Lake has more power than Taal and Rhya, and by implication the other Elder Gods. This act would be the groundwork for the worship of the Lady to become the new state cult.

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I think we can skip the Dukedom of Parravon. There's little evidence that the Grail Companions would in this region chance upon a particular cult or creed which they couldn't see elsewhere and/or wouldn't come across somewhere else in greater force. Since Parravon was once controlled by the Empire (see the previous installment) one could make a case for Sigmar or another Imperial creed, but the early Dukedom's proximity to Athel Loren and the friendship between Lord Agilgar of Parravon and Glorfinial, Lord of the Pegasi, makes it unlikely that there would be a lasting Imperial influence on the region. You don't befriend a magical flying horse by being a pushover. The Parravonese simply don't seem the type to bow down to Imperial influences. "Many ordinary Bretonnians think that [the forest folk of Parravon are part Fay (which is nonsense) and that they have some sort of extraordinary sense for the hazards of the world around them (which is true). The forest folk move through the world as if they could be punished with death for scraping against a tree." [15] As such I think it's fair to say that the dominate cult in Parravon would be the Church of Taal and Rhya, and that after the battle in Athel Loren the Parravonese would take the Grail Companions at their word and the resident priests would follow suit.

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Submitting the wolf

This brings us to the mountains of Montfort. I think this rockbound region would be the best place for the Ulricans to confront the Companions. Firstly Montfort is a good place for the leadership of the (Imperial) Cult of Ulric to be located. The region consists almost entirely of mountains, many of which are infested with monsters and Greenskins. "Greenskin attacks are a fact of life in Montfort. Almost everyone has some experience of fighting the Orcs and Goblins, and villages are built to be able to withstand an assault long enough for help to arrive." [16] Furthermore it shares a border with the Empire, which makes it easier for the Imperial creed to establish a foothold. The same could be said about the other three Dukedoms - Parravon, Gisoreux and Couronne - who border the Empire, but the Parravonese are too strange to control, Gisoreux is split into many isolated regions thanks to its labyrinth mountain ranges, and Couronne is the locale of the Cult of Shallya. Secondly, after the defeat of the Church of Nature and Nurture it makes sense that (priests of) one of the Elder Gods would confront the Grail Companions. With the Cult of Manann already on the side of the Companions, the Cult of Ulric remains. Thirdly it makes thematic sense. Let's not forget that Gilles was struck down in the battle for Montfort, and since Ulricans despise weakness they would pounce upon any possible failings they could see in the Companions and their strange Goddess.

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The local high priest of Ulric would preach to anyone who would listen that Gilles' injury meant that the Gods did not favor him or his Lady of the Lake. The Grail Companions, their soldiers and the people of Montfort would begin to have doubts about their fate. But then the Lady of the Lake appeared to heal Gilles and bless Lord Martrud and Lord Agilgar, and restore her followers' faith in her. While the emboldened knights returned to the field of battle, she punishes the offending priest(s) of Ulric (for example, turning them into frogs). The remaining Ulricans would bow down to the strongest, as they

always do, and aid the Grail Companions in the Unification of Bretonnia

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Aside from the thematic spectacle (more on that later) and submitting the Bretonnian chapter of the Cult of Ulric, this further signifies the independence of the Bretonni. Much like Balduin tossing the priests of Myrmiddia out of his domain announces to everyone that the southerners have no claim on the Bretonni, the trashing of the (mostly Imperial) Ulricans says that the Imperials don't belong in Bretonnia. It's true that the Empire has other cults and creeds, most notably the Cult of Sigmar, but the Cult of Ulric would be the one with the most appeal and therefore influence on the Bretonni. Taking the Ulricans down to size would hinder any notions of the Empire controlling or conquering the Bretonni.

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I'll have to skip a few early Dukedoms again. Aside from that only Morr and Shallya remain of the major influential deities of the Old World pantheon and there were still four Dukedoms - seven if we count the home grounds of Gilles, Landuin and Thierulf - who were plagued by monsters and misfortune, the Grail Companions had pretty much won over the country at this point. They had allies in the cults of the Elder Gods and Verena, more than half of the Bretonni tribes were behind them and both southern and Imperial influences had been defeated by the power of the Lady of the Lake. The remaining cults would probably not antagonize them unduly. The next stop for the Grail Companions was Gisoreux, which is a diverse region filled with peaks, valleys and more. "The Dukedom of Gisoreux is divided into four geographical areas. The first, the Plains of Gisoreux, is actually mostly pastoral country and very hilly. (...) The second area is North Gisoreux. This land, between the [major river] Sannex and the Pale Sisters [mountain range], is also mostly pastoral but has substantial arable portions along the course of the Sannez. (...) The third region is the Forest of Arden. (...) The final region of the Dukedom is covered by mountains, split between the Pale Sisters in the west and the Grey Mountains in the east." [17]Â With this in mind, I think the inhabitants would worship Taal, Rhya and/or Ulric. The clergy of these deities had already thrown in their lot with the Companions, so this region can be skipped. I have trouble getting a (religious) fix on Bastonne, but its major river which spans the north and east border could indicate the Cult of Manann or else the Church of Nature and Nurture as the prime movers and shakers. Anyway, since Gilles le Breton came from Bastonne and his crusade experienced success after success, I think the priests of this region wouldn't trouble the Companions. Especially since I mentioned earlier the Companions at best rode close to the border of Gilles' Dukedom on their way to Mousillon. This brings me to the next cult.

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Laying the dead to rest

Since the Cult of Morr would have few temples in early Bretonnia and most of the priests roam the countryside, the question here is not where they would have their headquarters, but where the Grail Companions would meet a majority or most authoritative of the wandering priests of Morr in early Bretonnia. Considering that the God of the Dead and Dreams sends prophetic dreams to his followers, I think the Cult of Morr would concentrate their power on Mousillon because of the marauding legions of the walking dead in that region.

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The priests would most likely greet the Companions with open arms. Either their God would have sent them a vision of Unification and the future of Bretonnia, or he wouldn't, in which case the priests of Morr would have had to admit that they didn't predict the coming of the Lady of the Lake and her Grail-supped followers. Revealing this to the public could have a disastrous effect on their reputation as diviners. Besides, with hordes of the Undead - and a few Beastmen - on the prowl and with the Cult of Morr having few dedicated soldiers and Templars, they would be fools to complain about a massive army willing to help them. However, I do see the priests demanding that Gilles and his drinking buddies swear that they would make sure that all dead Bretonni were buried, and ensure that they stay buried. After the Grail Companions made this vow, they got the full support of the Cult of Morr.

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While I've already discussed how the Bretonni would pay little mind to the God of the Death and Dreams and his priests are (for the most part) apolitical, I do believe the cult would have doubts about their future. At that point in time the countryside was teeming with monsters and witches killing people by the thousands and destroying whole regions. Despite their prophetic visions - or maybe even because of it, since they could conceivably receive dreams of every doom in the land - the priesthood could easily fall in a state of despair. But then the Grail Companions came along, with enough warriors and powerful knights to sweep away the foes threatening both the living and the dead Bretonni. Their salvation at hand, the priests of Morr would do everything in their power to ensure that the dead are sent to the afterlife and stay there.

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The remaining stops on the Unification tour were Artois, L'Anguille and Couronne (the Companions at most skirted the borders of Lyonesse). Both Lyonesse and L'Anguille are mostly bordered by water^[18] and Artois is heavily forested. "The land of Artois is dominated by the dense and mysterious Forest of Arden."^[19] The Church of Nature and Nurture and/or the Cult of Manann would most likely reign supreme in those early Dukedoms, which were already aligned with the Grail Companions at this point. This leaves us with Couronne, which was already established as the center for the Cult of Shallya.

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Accepting the olive branch

I don't think the Companions would have to go to much effort to win over the Shallyans to their cause. All the Bretonni tribes had encountered disaster after disaster, the city of Couronne was attacked from all sides by hostile armies and the ruler of Couronne was dead, apparently leaving no successors. Combine this with the apolitical and pacifist nature of the Cult of Shallya and the fact that by then all the other tribes and cults were united, and it's difficult to come up with reasons why the Shallyans would oppose them. In fact, the death of the ruler of Couronne seems more like a reason to support the Companions, since the people would need a leader during this crisis. It certainly explains why Caerleond was so readily accepted as the new lord and master of Couronne. I do think that the Shallyans would require a promise of them. Just like the Companions promised the Cult of Morr that they would protect the dead, the Shallyans would demand that they vow to protect the living. They would want that Gilles and his drinking buddies accomplished something more than just killing hordes of Greenskins, Beastmen, Chaos-worshippers and other monsters.

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The end result of all this was that the Shallyans supported Gilles le Breton as the absolute King of Bretonnia. Following Gilles' vow to the Shallyans and his own devotion to the Lady, the King established a council of religion - let's call this the Council of Couronne, after the city it was established in - consisting of the leaders of the seven major cults. These would advise the King, support his edicts and acknowledge that the Lady of the Lake was the Goddess of Bretonnia, with the Old World Gods beneath her in the heavenly hierarchy. In return the cults would receive protection, funding and recognition from the kingdom.

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While acknowledging the Goddess of Chivalry as superior to their own Gods seems like a difficult pill to swallow, I do think it would be an acceptable sacrifice to the cults. Aside from the Lady of the Lake's status as a patron saint prior to Unification, she didn't have any organization or priests at that point. It was only when Gilles died that the Fay Enchantress appeared and the concept of questing for the Grail was established. The priests would have to give up next to no power; they would just have to swallow their pride. Since the Grail Companions had basically saved the country singlehandedly and ensured the safety of its populace - and their priests - thereafter, that seems like a small price to pay to me. Of course, the price tag would change once the Fay Enchantress and her Damsels and Grail Knights appeared, but I will discuss that in the next installment of this series.

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History as the Bretonnians imagine it

There are a few Gods - and their cults - that I haven't discussed yet, but could still play a part in Unification. For example, a priest of Ranald could come to the Companions with important information on the enemy of the moment. Unable to trick the enemy, the trickster had no other choice but to pass on what he knew to the real warriors. Or perhaps the Norscan-inspired Ulricans witness the atrocities committed by Norse marauders at L'Anguille, and swear off their more brutal practices when they witness the bravery of the honourable Marcus in facing the barbarian warlord Svengar in single combat atop the lighthouse. Another possibility is the Cult of Sigmar appearing at the weeks-long battle for Couronne, in an attempt to conquer the region for the Empire. The hammer-priests who would take advantage of the Bretonni's plight were eventually defeated by the honorable Grail Companions.

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Something I hope got across in the preceding paragraph or earlier in this article, is that Gilles and his drinking buddies either charm or humiliate the priests by showing that the Companions have more divine favour and/or are more capable than them. The Grail Companions, and by extension the Lady of the Lake, do more than just persuade those of other faiths to their cause; they prove that their holy warriors and Goddess are better than their cults and deities. This is both beneficial for making the Lady of the Lake and her followers the absolute rulers of Bretonnia, and appropriate for the mindset of Bretonnians. To me, a major part of Bretonnia is that its populace - both the nobility and the peasantry - want to believe in their heroes. "Individual heroism is very important to the Bretonnian knight, and tales of paladins fighting dragons and heroes facing off against countless foes are the kind of things they dream of. (...) However [peasants] have feudal obligations to their knightly lord and hold knights in the highest admiration - basically, if a knight says jump, a

peasant will ask into what mud. (...) I cannot imagine a bunch of knights that didn't have a guy at the front declaring challenges, which was my thinking behind that - especially since the Bretonnians live for the stories of heroic individuals doing heroic deeds." [20] In my opinion, the Bretonnians want to believe that their knights, their champions, are capable of anything. "Weaned from a young age on these stories of individual heroism and bravery, it is every knight's utmost desire to have great deeds of their own to be sung and recounted for years after their deaths." [21] They want every villain to be despicable, every disaster a challenge for a hero, every event an exciting tale of suspense, romance or another genre. "The cynical say Bretonnia wears a fair mask over deep corruption; the more generous lament the gap often found between its ideals and reality. (...) Worse, the Bretonnians love tragic stories of knights who caught between their loyalties to two different lords, had no way to act correctly, and thus died tragically trying to do the impossible. Some knights even manoeuvre themselves into starring roles in such stories." [22] They would want to believe that when the cults of the Old World Gods allied themselves to the Grail Companions, this was done in a spectacular fashion, with the Companions as the honorable and wise heroes, and the priests as scheming tyrants or humble supplicants. The events I described in this article might not have happened in this particular way, but it wouldn't stop the Bretonnians from accepting these stories as history.

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That about sums up what I intended with this particular article. In the next instalment I will talk about the new structure of the cults in Bretonnia, from the courtly cardinals to the wandering friars. I will also discuss what role these priests play in the lives of Bretonnians.

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[1] Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (Games Workshop, 1996), page 10-12

[2] Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (Games Workshop, 2003), page 6-15, 32, 33, 58 & 59

[3] Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay (Black Industries, 2005), page 223 & 224

[4] Knights of the Grail (Black Industries, 2006), page 14-19

[5] Knights of the Grail, page 58

[6]Â Tome of Salvation (Black Industries, 2007), page 32

[7]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 7, 15 & 62

[8]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 59

[9]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 58

[10]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 58

[11]Â Knights of the Grail, page 64

[12]Â Tome of Salvation, page 72

[13]Â Knights of the Grail, page 91

[14]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 15

[15]Â Knights of the Grail, page 85

[16]Â Knights of the Grail, page 78

[17]Â Knights of the Grail, page 71

[18]Â Knights of the Grail, page 8

[19]Â Knights of the Grail, page 51

[20]Â UK White Dwarf 290, page 29, 31 & 32

[21]Â Warhammer Armies: Bretonnia (2003), page 46

[22]Â Knights of the Grail, page 6, 102 & 103

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