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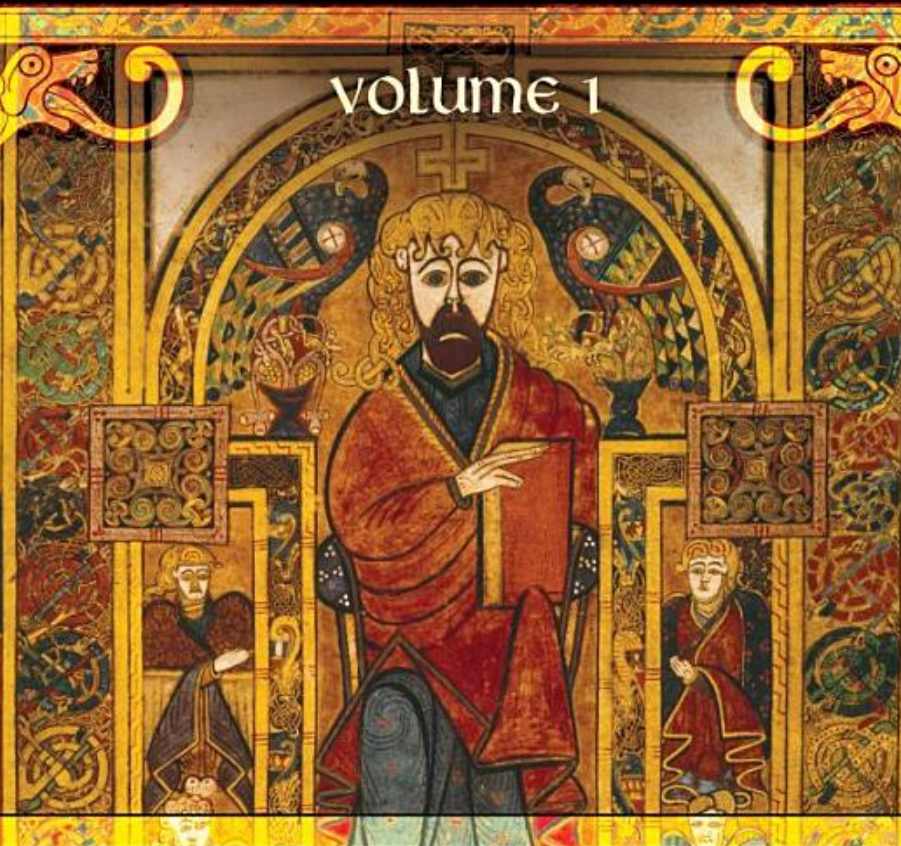
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The Celts

History, Life, and Culture

volume 1



John T. Koch, General Editor
Antone Minard, Editor

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BODB

Bodb (later Badb, pl. Badba), ‘scald-crow’, was a designation for a supernatural female being associated with battle and slaughter in early IRISH LITERATURE. There are references to the Badb, a *badb*, and several *badba*; thus the designation may be both a proper name and a generic term for a supernatural battle creature. The Badb is sometimes identified with other supernatural women from early Irish narratives—the MORRIGAN, (the) Nemain, Bé Néit (Woman of battle), or MACHA. At other times she is mentioned together with one or more of them as separate personalities.

The Badb appears in different forms in the tales, as both human and animal. Her figure may be marked by asymmetry, the colours associated with her being red and pallor. The battle creatures called *badba* are likewise often described as being pale and their mouths as red. They are said to hover above a battlefield, where their shouts either incite or terrify the warriors. Bleeding *badba* with ropes around their necks are described in TOGAIL BRUIDNE DA DERGA (in the version in LEBOR NA HUIDRE). The Badb often functions as a harbinger of death by battle; thus she may appear as a so-called ‘washer at the ford’ or as an ominous visitor to a BRUIDEN (hostel), where she prophesies evil (*Bruiden Da Choga*). She may incite people to fight or terrify them, in her appearance as a single woman, in the company of her ‘sisters’ Bé Néit and Nemain, and as a group (*badba*) together with similar battle creatures. The incitement is done in two ways: either by nonverbal cries or by a verbal message. When the aim is to inspire fear, nonverbal shrieks are uttered. The Badb (equated with the Morrigan) announces the victory in battle and prophesies the end of the world (CATH MAIGE TUIRED §§166–7). In general, the appearance of the Badb is an evil omen.

Bodb is also the name of a male supernatural being: Bodb Derg from Síd ar Femin, king of the *síde* of Munster (MUMU), who is famous for his knowledge (*Aislinge Oengusa*). Bodb Derg is, moreover, a supernatural protector of Ireland (ÉRIU), together with the Morrigan, Midir, and OENGUS MAC IND ÓC (*Airne Fingein* §9).

BRYTHONIC includes numerous examples of the cognate word, Welsh *boddw* < Celtic **bodwo-*, as a high-status name element. The earliest occurs on COINAGE of the British IRON AGE with the legend BODVOC[- < Celtic **Boduācos*. Early medieval examples include Archaic Welsh *Boduan* in the 7th- or early-8th-century charters appended to the Life of St Cadoc, corresponding to Old Breton *Boduuan/Bodguan* in the Cartulary of Redon, and St *Elbodug* (Elfoddw) mentioned in *Annales Cambriae* at years 768 and 809. Note that Bran/BRAN 'crow' also occurs as a man's name in mythological tales in both Irish and Welsh. Such names probably imply Brythonic traditions not merely of naming men after the crow, but rather wider supernatural associations along the lines of those better attested in Irish literature as described earlier.

Jacqueline Borsje