



Baduhenna

Baduhenna is the Dutch Goddess of battle and the forest. It is likely that the Scandinavian and Germanic Valkyrie and the Irish Wargoddesses evolved together. The theory that the Valkyrie and the Irish-, Gaulic-, and Germanic Goddesses of War and Battle influenced each other, and therefore, grew together, seems very logical. It is as if they were sisters, or cousins. Not the same, but part of the same family.

That is to say that because of the close relations between the Celts, the Gauls and the Germanic people it is likely that these cultures intermingled, and through that their mythology and beliefs were influenced. The Valkyrie for example, went from demons, “those who bring fear”, to beautiful, almost Goddess-like, women who chose the slain and poured mead in the Halls of Valhalla.



Wodan

Everybody has heard about Wodan, also known as Odin. He is the creator of mankind, God of magic, knowledge, war and death. He is a trickster both feared and loved by the ancient Germanic people. He is the god of war and leader of the Wild Hunt. But when did Wodan-worship actually begin? What are the roots of Wodan? Here are some theories.



Odin is mostly associated with the viking age simply because almost all written sources about him are from this time period. The etymology of the word Odin provides us some clues on how the ancient Germanic people called him and what Odin's most important aspect was. Odin is a relatively modern name because he was once known as Wodan/Wotan.

What do these words actually mean? His proto-Germanic name means 'rage' or 'manic inspiration'. The proto-Indo-European word means 'to be excited'. The meaning of rage can also be seen in the old Dutch, Frisian and German names. In fact the old Dutch name Woen is the origin of the modern Dutch word of Woede, which means rage. Apparently rage was an important aspect of Wodan. The first written mention of Wodan comes from Tacitus in 98AD. Tacitus describes several Germanic Gods but unfortunately he uses Latin names to describe them. The Romans compared Wodan with their own God Mercury. Just because this is the first written mention of him, doesn't mean that the worship of Wodan comes from this time period. The Germanic people didn't write anything down, their religion was passed down to the next generation by telling stories, it's an oral tradition so we still do not know how old Wodan exactly is.

There is however another theory that suggests that Wodan was introduced to the Germanic people by the Saami. One of Wodan's most defining traits is that he is able to wander across all the realms, speak to spirits and gain knowledge this way. Technically this makes Wodan a very experienced shaman. The Saami people were/are practitioners of shamanism. The Goddess Freyja taught Wodan how to practice seidr. Seidr is a mix of shamanism and witchcraft very similar to the shamanic practices of the Saami people.

Another theory suggests that a Saami shaman, called Wotan, simply became deified by the Germanic people. Perhaps he led a tribe to victory after leading them into battle. Another even wilder theory suggests that Wotan was a Celtic druid who was deified by the Germanic people. The only historic truth that can be verified is that the Germanic culture borrowed elements from both the Celtic and Saami people.

From ancient regional mythology, names of ancient gods and goddesses in this region come from Roman, Celtic and Germanic origins.

Dutch folk tales

Dutch folk tales from the Middle Ages are strong on tales about flooded cities and the sea. Legends surround the sunken cities lost to epic floods in the Netherlands: From Saint Elisabeth's Flood of 1421, comes **the legend of Kinderdijk** that a baby and a cat were found floating in a cradle after the city flooded, the cat keeping the cradle from tipping over. They were the only survivors of the flood. The town of Kinderdijk is named for the place where the cradle came ashore. **The Saeftinghe legend** says that once glorious city was flooded and ruined by sea waters due to the All Saints' flood, that was flooded in 1584, due to a mermaid being captured and mistreated, and mentions the bell tower still rings. This is much like the story The Mermaid of Westenschouwen (Westenschouwen) which also concerns the mistreated mermaid, followed by a curse and flood. In some flood legends, the church bells or clock bells of sunken cities still can be heard ringing underwater.

Sea folklore includes **the legend of Sint Brandaen**



Sint Brandaen

Brandaan is best known for *De Reis van Sint-Brandaan* (also called *Sinte Brandane* or *Sente Brandane*), a Middle Dutch poem from the 12th century. The journey was already described in the 9th or 10th century in the *Navigatio sancti Brendani abbatis* (*The journey of the holy Abbot Brandaan*), a prose piece. According to *Sint-Brandaan's Voyage*, Brandaan read all kinds of things in a book that he did not believe. For example, there would be two paradises on earth, a fish with a forest on its back, and the traitor Judas would receive relief from his punishment in hell every Saturday night. Brandaan did not believe the book and threw it into the fire. An angel appeared with the message that he had to find out for himself what the truth was. Together with a number of pilgrims, Brandaan started a journey across the Atlantic Ocean. The most fantastic experiences happened along the way. He found a talking giant head on the beach, he encountered a dragon that was chased by a deer from the clouds and he met the fish with the forest on his back. Brandaan wrote down everything they experienced in a book. Eventually they arrived at an island where two castles stood. In the second castle was the gate to the earthly paradise, guarded by the angel Cherubin. No one was allowed to enter except Saint Michael (the Archangel Michael) who guided the souls to heaven. Brandaan decided to go back and had many bizarre adventures along the way. Once at home, an angel appeared again and presented him with the choice of whether he wanted to continue living on earth or in paradise. He chose the latter and died. A church was built in his name on his grave.

and later the legend of **Lady of Stavoren** about the ruined port city of Stavoren.



The lady of Stavoren.

Druidic mythology in the ancient Netherlands retold for children

"In years long gone, too many for the almanac to tell of, or for clocks and watches to measure, millions of good fairies came down from the sun and went into the earth. There, they changed themselves into roots and leaves, and became trees. There were many kinds of these, as they covered the earth, but the pine and birch, ash and oak, were the chief ones that made Holland. The fairies that lived in the trees bore the name of Moss Maidens, or Tree 'Trintjes,' which is the Dutch pet name for Kate, or Katharine..."

The story outlines the following traditional beliefs in Holland: Wodan (Mentioned here as "God of Sun") is the deity the Dutch shared with other Germanic people, Dutch name for Odin. Wednesday is named after him; Holland is from the phrase Holt Land which means "Land of Many Trees". The tale says the land was once covered with forests and people lived in the trees for a "thousand years" until they became an

agricultural people. In fact, the trees kept the land firm otherwise it would melt or disappear under water and floods. Eyck is ancient Dutch word for oak (the modern spelling is 'Eik') that has become a popular Dutch surname.



Eik or Oaktree

There is notable ambiguity in the tale if the Moss Maiden and Trintje were tree fairies, or a wood elf and tree elf, respectively. As elves, they communicate the trees' promise to humans to "stand upside down" for the Dutch people. The oak trees in particular were the mythical life giving and medicinal tree and had many mythical purposes:

"Under its branches, near the trunk, people laid their sick, hoping for help from the gods. Beneath the oak boughs... wives joined hand in hand around its girth, hoping to have beautiful children. Up among its leafy branches the new babies lay, before they were found in the cradle by the other children. To make a young child grow up to be strong and healthy, mothers drew them through a split sapling or young tree. Even more wonderful, as medicine for the country itself, the oak had power to heal. The new land sometimes suffered from disease called the val [or fall]. When sick with the val, the ground sunk. Then people, houses, churches, barns and cattle all were lost forever" In this legend, the Kabouter



Kabouter

and the elves show mankind how to turn the trees into piles to drive into them upside down into the ground and thus to make the land firm to build on, later how to make wooden shoes. Note that historically, Dutch land was low and prone to flooding, hence the land would sometimes flood and wipe out towns and villages, and the flooding was worse when forests were cut down to make way for agricultural and pastoral lands. Many regional legends exist in the Low Countries about the origins of natural landmarks such as hills, bodies of water, springs, wells, forests and the sea, that attribute creation to the ancient gods.

The creation of the Uddeler- and Bleeke Lake(s)

This myth concerns a battle that allegedly took place between Donar, the God of Thunder with the winter giants and the "Midgaardslang" (a giant snake monster) who strategically align against him. The giants throw hail down, while the snake climbs into a tall oak tree and blows poison into the air. Donar attacks, riding through the air on "his billy-goat wagon", the sky blazes and the earth trembles because of his "never missing thunderhammer." Donar strikes the snake on his head with such force on the head that not only was the monster crushed, the mighty thunderhammer went seven miles deep into the earth. The snake dies. However, in the attack the snake's poison scorches and stuns Donar. Donar crashes down, with his "steerless goats" and wagon onto the Donderberg (meaning Donar's hill or "Thunder-hill") in Dieren.

Donderberg or Thunder-hill



Then the earth sank into the sea, the seagod blew a horn and a big black ship came to collect Donar's body. When the floodwaters receded, two lakes mark the spot that are "as deep as the world, the Uddelermeer or "Lake of Uddel" (Uttiloch), and the Godenmeer (God's lake) ..."

Uddelermeer or "Lake of Uddel"



Later the legend continues that Thor's hammer surfaced from the depths. The grave of Midgaardslang became overgrown with the forest nearby, until in 1222 a bright flame shot out of the pool and the ghost of the snake wriggled up and fled north. The forest was burned and a moor near the lake remains where the forest once was. Donar was worshipped at the Godenmeer (lake of the Gods). The lake Godenmeer may be a Christian version of Wodenmeer, a lake originally dedicated to Wodan.