

## Brittonic Saints and Heros in ‘El’.

### (St Alban and the End of Roman Britain Part V)

In Part IV we sought to explain why we have figures derived from (or associated with the cult tradition pertaining to) St Alban in *El-* rather than *Elv-*. One might argue we should have figures in *A-l-* rather than *E-l-* but we might have Celtic i-assimilation again (parallel to that we have seen in the evolution of *albi-* to *elv-*) if we have forms with *i* (an original *Alios* say, perhaps with suffixes like *-en* ?) or perhaps more likely (see further below), due to the influence of closely related forms in ‘*Elv-*’ that our basic hypothesis would suggest, were conflated with those in *Al-* > *El-*<sup>1</sup>.

In particular this would explain why we have an ‘Elen’ - not an ‘ElVen’ - Llyudawc’: as the name of a figure whose tradition we interpreted as derivative of the sub-Roman role of the cult of St Alban in Part II. It is worth noting, meanwhile, that the existence of important legends from the fifth century or earlier, about ‘Helena’, in a Continental context, might suggest that the assimilation of the name ‘Helena’ - as appropriate to the historical Empress/mother of Constantine - with our hypothesised early solar theonym in *al-*, or *el-* might have occurred very early on in an originally Continental context<sup>2</sup>. If so this would make the fusion of the Welsh/Brittonic ‘Elen’ with ‘Helena’ all the more natural.

Of our hypothesised early theonym in ‘Al-/El-’, in an insular context, we might have just a hint in one of our rare fifth century sources. In the *Confessio* of St Patrick (c.20) that saint describes himself appealing to ‘Helia’. It seems rather curious that the young St Patrick should have appealed to his God, even in the context of an

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1 There might also be the possibility of a sound-change associated with the substrate (if we are thinking of an ultimately pre-Indo-European *al-*: see below and above Part 4). For *el-* as a variant of *al-* in a hydronymic context see Dauzat 1978: 18-19, 43-4, 55 under ‘Allier’, ‘Elle’. Flutre, 1957:123, cites Elantienses/Alantia for “alternance radicale el-/al-” in Celtic.

2 Note, e.g., the legend that Treves cathedral was the ‘palace of the Empress Helena’: Gould: II, 158. Might this reflect an original association of the site with a deity in *Al-/El-* ? For legends of Helena see further Attwater: II, 220-3.

inspiring sun-rise, under the Greek name for the sun god (so Powell 1992) but, arguably, it might seem rather more explicable if the name 'Helios', as he used it, actually had some kind of resonance in native tradition: which might have been the case if there had been a native divine name in 'El-', that sounded similar to Greek 'Helios' as well as having parallel solar associations. That name might actually have been our hypothesised 'Elbios' < 'Albios', but one might also envisage a native name in 'Al-/El-', influenced by, or syncretically assimilated to, that form, to give 'Elios', or similar.

To return to 'Elen Lluydawc': in our examination above we were most concerned to identify characteristics that might be suggestive of an inheritance from our post-Roman Christian(ised) cult-figure and what we have hypothesised to have been his role in British society at that time. But it might be equally possible that elements of what we have suspected to be the ultimately pagan heritage of that figure, have survived and we can bear this in mind as we consider other likely derivatives of our martyr-saint come pagan cult-figure. In fact, we are now considering a much wider context of solar theonyms in *Al-* or *El-*, and their derivatives in terms of Christianised cult figures, with which our (pseudo-) martyr was associated and with whom his tradition may have merged - in an insular Celtic 'popular' context, at least.

Particularly interesting in this respect is a saint 'Elian', of North Wales.<sup>3</sup> This saint appears in *Bonedd y Saint* (Bartrum 1966: 61, 66 nos. 47, 87) as 'Elyen', although a later recorded variant form appears to have been 'Elgan' (p.70, *Achau'r Saint* no. 25). These forms might suggest an original name, 'El-genos', 'born of El' (or a similar form like 'Eli-genos', or possibly originally 'Ali-genos'<sup>4</sup>) although the form 'Elian' might suggest the element *el-i-* (or, originally, *al-i-*) followed by a common suffix ('-an'): in fact these two names of different (but related) origin would readily have been confused together and used interchangeably like 'Sulien' and 'Sulian'. The form 'Elgan' might represent a corrupted version of an older spelling of 'Elien' (one would rather expect 'Elgen') or another name ('El-' with a different second

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3 Miller 1979:55 (also 25, 34, 38, 42, 86-90). For the variation Elian/Eilian Gould: II, 436, note1; Jackson 1953: 587-8.

4 *al-* > *el-* by final i-assimilation of the first element of a compound, with subsequent syncope of the *i*: Jackson 1953: 579-81, 643-54.

element) confused with 'Elie/an', perhaps on the basis of this earlier spelling. In any case the 'El(i)-' in these names might have had reference to our hypothesised substrate-derived solar theonym in *el-* (ultimately from *al-*), especially if the original form contained the element *genos*, in which case the first element would typically have had reference, originally, to some kind of 'divine being' (D'Arbois de Jubainville in *Revue Celtique* 10, 153-77). One might conceivably even go so far as to suggest this was a name reached by assimilation from 'Elven' (or 'Elvyen' or 'Elvien', from 'Albio-genos', born of 'Albio(s)') but it might be wiser to say, simply, that this name might have represented a cult tradition easily assimilable to that of our pseudo-martyr.

The saint actually appears in *Bonedd y Saint* as 'Elyen Keimyat map Altu redegawc', where the two epithets mean 'champion' (*keimyat*) and 'running' (*redegawc*) respectively. These are associated with some very interesting material about the saint in a 15th century cywydd by Gwilym Gwyn (Henken: 240-5): this material is rather unique and might suggest the antecedents in pagan myth that we are looking for. In the cywydd the saint's father seems to be involved in an epic run to escape enemies, while carrying his mother who is pregnant with the saint. The poem is very cryptic but Elian shouts out from inside his mother's womb and there is a violent beheading after which Elian is born. This birth, in violent circumstances, from a dying mother might suggest some kind of parallel with similar stories in Greek myth; the birth of Asclepius for instance, or - more relevant for us, perhaps - the birth of Dionysus (Apollodorus II,4; Apollonius of Rhodes IV,1137; Graves 1955: 14.c). Elian, meanwhile, appears from other sources to have a special affinity with the power of speech: it might be that the idea of 'running' is somehow associated with the fluidity inherent in speech. Both the idea of 'running' and the fluidity of speech, meanwhile, might link up with our suggested association of the 'Alb-', cult figures with rivers or flowing water: it might be relevant, in this context, that Elian had a very famous, miracle-working well<sup>5</sup>. A parallel might be found in the legends and miracle stories associated with St Genesius, of Arles and elsewhere, that link him both with the

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<sup>5</sup>Gould II, 440-3; F.Jones 1954: 71-2, 103, 119-23, 173-4, with other 'Ffynon Elian', 141; Anglesey, 197; Montgomery, Cf. the 'wells of Elen', above, I

river Rhone and with 'speech', either in its written or spoken form: I have suggested elsewhere that these originate in the pagan lore with which this reputed martyr was associated (Thornhill: note 8 on pp. 472-3).

Late tradition calls Elian 'Hillarie', evidently due to his identification with St Hilary of Poitiers at some stage (Gould II, 437, 443). This shows the influence of sound assimilation: 'Hilary' will have been pronounced 'Hel-' and a comparable process of sound assimilation linked Elian with a doe (*elain* in Welsh) in local legend (Gould II, 436; Henken: 242-3). It seems to have come about, however, via an identification of Elian with 'Eleri', whose name represents the Welsh version of 'Hilary', but whose tradition made him a Welsh saint<sup>6</sup>: it may be that his name was reached by assimilation to that of the famous bishop, Hilary, from an older name in 'El-', appropriate to a local figure. (This would demonstrate how new forms of cult name - not necessarily related in strictly philological terms - might evolve, by assimilation, from a single original). If so, the possibility arises that this figure shares a common origin with 'Elian' and we are in fact dealing with 'related' figures.

We can compare, meanwhile, the association of Ailbe with 'episcopum Hilarium', in his *Vita* (I, note 16, above): this is a rather curious connection, taken in isolation, but might be explicable on the basis that it derives from a link between that saint and (these Welsh or other) cult-figures in 'El-', associated with Hilary, on the basis we have outlined above, of sound-assimilation. If so that would suggest that, in our late Welsh sources, we might be dealing with a pattern of associations that goes back a long way (to the late eighth century date of the *Vita Ailbe* at least). It might be that the equating of these cult-figures in 'El-' with 'Saint Hilary' goes back to the earliest attempts to assimilate them to Christianity. Nevertheless if we are right about this link with Ailbe then that suggests some kind of link with our Alban/Albios cult so assimilation to our pseudo-martyr's cult may have played a role in their 'Christianisation', too: perhaps at a yet earlier stage.

Although St Elian's cult flourished on Anglesey its other centre, as

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<sup>6</sup> Gould II, 428-30, 436, 440; Miller 1979: 54, 40, 86, 95; Bartrum: 57, *Bonedd y Saint* 18: "...Eleri ym Pennant Gwytherin...".

well of that of St Eleri and of a St Elidan, was within the diocese of Llan Elwy. This may be no coincidence if, as we have begun to suspect, many of these cult-names in 'El-' derive ultimately from the same solar theonym. The patron saint of Llan Elwy was St Kentigern, but it has been shown that that cult was probably introduced by immigrants from Strathclyde, in the ninth century (Miller 1975: 273-6). Although the Llan-name has reference to the local river it might be that originally this name had some cult relevance (so that originally the Llan name incorporated a cult-name, in line with so many others) and that the original leading cult-figure of the region bore a name in 'El-'. 'Elian', 'Eleri' and 'Elidan'<sup>7</sup> would then represent divergent derivatives from this regional cult-figure.

If this was the case then we might expect to find some kind of suggestion of a merger between the cult of Kentigern and its predecessor, perhaps taking the form of some confusion between the former and cult-figures in 'El-'. It is a curious fact that Geoffrey of Monmouth has as his bishop of Strathclyde (or of its 'capital', 'Alclud', Dumbarton) an 'Eledenius' (*Historia Regum IX*, 15) and not

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7 Note also the Elwoc/Elfoddw (F.Jones: 174; Miller 1979: 54-5, 42, 85) whose well was in Rhos and who might represent ultimately the same cult-figure in 'El-', assimilated to the famous Gwynedd bishop: like Elian, 'Elfoddw' was otherwise associated with Anglesey (Miller 85). Gould II, 444-5; Miller 1979: 55, 39, 86. To 'Elidan' cf. the 'Elidon' of *Liber Landeveis* (see Rhys 1893) 157-8 (now St Lythan's), see below, and the St 'Elidius' of the Scillies (now St Helen's : Bartrum 1993: 242). An 'Elidan' was also the 'mother' of Curig, the two being equivalent to the Cyricus and Iulitta of pan-European legend. Iulitta was otherwise interpreted in Welsh as 'Ilid'. The fact we have a form in 'El-' may be significant given that 'Iulitta' contains the element 'Iu-', from *dyew-* as appropriate to the archetypal Indo-European sky god : Iulitta may have reference ultimately to the Iulitta praised by St Basil (Delehaye 1933: 167-8; 1931: 321) but her popularity in legend (and association with Cyricus) may rather have a basis in popular traditions of pagan origin. Compatibility with 'Iulitta' may, anyway have been a factor in the use of the particular form 'El-ID(an)' as a cult name. 'Ilid' of Llanilid, Glamorgan, represents an adaptation of 'Ilud' (Bartrum 1994: 185; *De Situ Brecheiniauc* 12, Bartrum 1966: 16) to Iulitta : perhaps originally Ilud = Elud (i.e. *eludd* < *el* + (*i*)*udd* ?)- by analogy of Eltud > Iltud (under Irish influence : Doble 1971: 124, note 85).

a 'Kentigern' (the patron saint of the region) as one would expect, but it is explicable on the basis of this kind of confusion. The fact that the name takes the form 'Eledenius', rather than 'Elianus' or 'Elerius' or the like, may well have to do with Geoffrey's connections with South East Wales and the presence of an 'Ecclesia Eliddon' (now St Lythan's), there (*Liber.Land.* 31, 44, 90, 153, 283; cf. Tatlock 1950: 248, Pierce 1968: 61-2), but this figure may have been associated with the traditions surrounding the other 'El-' figures and there is otherwise no ready explanation for his transplantation to distant Strathclyde. Then again, while the feast day of St Elian is on the day of St Hilary of Poitiers, and surely derives from his association/identification with that saint it may be no coincidence that St Kentigern's festival is on the same day: deriving perhaps from his association with an 'El-' figure, identified with Hilary like Elian and Eleri (Gould II, 443-4).

In the context of 'Llanelwy' it is important to recognise that the relationship between saints' names, llan-names and river names was always a close one<sup>8</sup>. The saint's name 'Eleri', for instance, has a directly corresponding river name (Thomas 1938: 142): it might represent the remodeling of an older name in 'El-' after the cult/personal name. It is easy, meanwhile, to imagine some kind of connection between these - and/or some of the many other saints names' in 'El-' - and other rivers in 'El-', like the 'Eli' and 'Elan'. Some kind of relationship between solar deity and 'water' or river deity - and via this river-name - might not be unusual in a context of Celtic paganism.

However we have hypothesised that our forms in *el-* would be ultimately from *al-*. None of the Welsh toponyms in *el-* are recorded from Roman times and in fact we do not have any evidence of any

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8 'Saints' took their names from rivers (e.g. the 'virgin', 'Arganell' : *LL* pp. 82-3; Doble 1971: 75-6; Thornhill: 492) and vice versa (streams named Beuno, David, Cybi : Gould II, 68). While, in recorded times, river or toponymical elements, in 'LLan-' names, have been reinterpreted as saints' names it is not impossible that at an earlier stage a reverse process occurred (or that a river/divine name lost its divine/saintly value) especially in the context of a new patron : introduced by changing patterns of monastic ownership. Llan Mawr ("Lan Movor" in the *Book of Llandaff*) is an example of a Llan name which contained the name of a cult-figure which has disappeared due to 'reinterpretation' of the name.

divine names, river-names or mountain names in 'El-' from the Roman-era records. But we do have at least one river name, with associated divine name, in 'Al-' : namely the 'Alauna' (Rivet: 243-7), the origin of which we have discussed above in Part IV, and which was especially widespread and common in Roman 'Britannia'.

In fact there are some grounds for thinking this particular form might be especially relevant to the evolution of the cult of St Alban itself. That is because it might be contained within the tribal name 'Catuvellauni' appropriate to the people who had their 'civitas' capital at Verulamium, the site of our sub-Roman cult of St Alban. There was a tribal name "Catalauni" appropriate, significantly, to a people of present-day Belgium (Guyonvarc'h 1979: 886; Lebel 1957: 350-54), precisely the region from where we would expect the Belgic invaders of Britain (including the Catuvellauni) to have come. Some connection with 'Catuvellauni' looks highly probable whilst it would seem almost certain to derive from *catu*, 'battle' plus 'Alauna'. On this basis Rivet and Smith (272) have hypothesised that 'Catuvellauni' also derives from *catu* plus 'Alauna' but with the latter prefixed with the intensive *ver-* : therefore *Catu-ver-Alauni*, with elision of the *-r-* and one of the vowels, for which parallels can be found (compare the related but less satisfactory hypothesis of Guyonvarc'h 1979: 886). The element '-vellaunos', meanwhile, also appears in personal names like 'Cassivellaunos' as appropriate to a famous king of the Catuvellauni. However this element is common in personal names (Evans: 272-7) to an extent that is not true of 'Alauna' so that a derivation exclusively from 'ver-Alaunos' seems unlikely: there are indeed other quite credible etymologies for 'vellaunos' (Evans; Lambert 1990: 213-4) What we might well have though is a tendency for any 'ver-Alaunos' to be reinterpreted in terms of this word 'vellaunos' so that we might well still have, in this particular instance a progression *Catu-alauni* > *Catu-ver-alauni* > *Catu-vellauni*, that would allow us to see the presence of the 'Catalauni' in the likely area of origin of the 'Catuvellauni' as no coincidence.

We might have in that case a theonym, 'Alauna', closely associated with the Catuvellauni of Verulamium, that may quite credibly have formed the germ for our Alban cult and which, on that basis, would

provide another example of our typical assimilation of Al- to Alb- (from *albho-*): here in a context of the Christianisation of a pagan cults as in the case of Ailill and Ailbe, referred to, above, in Part IV. Of course more is involved in this case because we would also have the conversion of a tribal cult into a ‘national’ pan-British one. At the same time there may have been an element of Latin ‘translation’ of the Celtic theonym, in a bi-lingual environment. In any case an original ‘Alauna’ is another factor to bear in mind as having influenced the form of the cult name - ‘Albanus’ - as we find it. It is worth noting, too, that whilst one can see ‘Elen’ as representing simply *elven* from Albanus (or Albios + *-en*) syncretically merged with cult names in *al-/el-*, it is also possible to see it as representing more specifically an *alun* from Alauna, become ‘Elun’ by assimilation to the *elv-* from *albi-*, and become finally ‘Elen’ by assimilation to ‘Helena’. All of this, meanwhile, might incline one to suspect that it was Germanus (under the influence of the Alb- cults of Gaul ?) who converted an original cult of (a Christianised) ‘Alona/us’, or similar, into one of an ‘Albanus’ but there can be no certainty about that: whilst the ‘Alauna’ origin for the cult cannot be more than an attractive possibility.

We will, though, produce more cogent evidence for the Christianisation of a cult of Alauna, below, although for the moment we will stick with the general idea that our medieval cults in ‘El-’ are likely to derive from theonyms in ‘Al-’, of which ‘Alauna’ might be just one example. We might suspect, for instance, that there is some kind of connection between the root in ‘El-wy’ and that in its tributary, the ‘Al-ed’ (for an early record Koch 1997: 30-1, 156), which might share ultimately the same root. This would be the case if, say, the ‘El-’ in ‘Elwy’ (from ‘El-gwy’) is from *al-i-*, via i-assimilation prior to syncope but, as we have indicated, we might be dealing with a more general ‘syncretic merger’ between forms in *al-* and *el-/elv-*. Meanwhile the existence of the river ‘Alwen’, flowing in the opposite direction from the same range of hills as the ‘Aled’ might suggest the element *al-* was once appropriate to this whole upland. This might provide a credible background for our hypothesised regional deity (become ‘saint’) in El- < Al-, and might mesh with our association of a “theo-toponym” Al- with oronyms in, for instance, a Gaulish and



Irish context (see Part IV above). In any case the ‘Al-’ of rivers ‘Aled’ and ‘Alwen’ might seem likely to be linked to the ‘Al-’ of the (both river and divine) name ‘Alauna’ as discussed above. The Anglesey St Elian probably owes something (its precise form, perhaps) to the Denbighshire Elian, given the influence of the Denbighshire (ultimately from the North) ‘Ilwyth Marchudd’ (Miller 1975: 278) in Anglesey. But it might also have had reference to a local divine name: conceivably one that also stands behind the river/valley name ‘Alaw’ (< *alawa*) that is very likely closely related to ‘Alauna’ (< *alawa-no*)<sup>9</sup>.

As an example of Welsh river names that are related to mountain names one could cite the ‘Elan’, as related to the ‘Elennydd’ (Thomas 1938: 65-66). Given that the names might have interacted during a long period of evolution it is not necessarily as obvious as it might seem which is ultimately primary. We suggested above in Part IV that hydronyms and oronyms might derive from the same root *al-* on the basis that that was primarily ‘theonymic’, in function. However we also suggested that the *al-* in oronyms (like ‘Alesia’), especially, might have been likely to be ultimately pre-Indo-European in origin whilst also suggesting that such an ancient toponymic root (of simple so widespread type) might very likely have been reinterpreted in various ways (even whilst quite possibly retaining its original ‘divine’ associations). This might have been in terms of the *al-* in *albho* (meaning ‘white, bright, divine-bright’) but also perhaps in terms other routes like the *\*al-* from *\*pal-*, ‘cliff’. If we assume something similar in a Welsh context then we might have an original substrate theonym in *al-* (arguably from an original *kal-*, as discussed above in Part 4) that would stand ultimately behind all, or many, of the mountain and river names in *al-* > *el-*, but which might have been subject to various types of secondarily reinterpretation.

Thus, for instance, the river names ‘Elan’ and, perhaps, ‘Elwy’,

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9 So Nicolaisen 1976: 187; 1958: 226 and Krahe 1962: 308; 1964: 35 (though for both *al-* represents an Indo-European root *el-/ol-*, ‘to flow’) and as discussed. in Part IV, above. Note also on Anglesey the ‘Saint-king’ ‘El-aeth’ of Amlwch, (Gould II, 426; Miller 54, 24, 86), a ‘Ffynon Halog’ (but very likely from ‘Al-awg’: F.Jones: 144) and some ‘ffynon alarch’ (= ‘swan’, but cf. Part IV. above).

might represent reinterpretations in terms of \**ela-*, ‘to drive, to push’<sup>10</sup> as an Indo-European root with appropriate meaning. The ‘Elwy’ has also been interpreted (Williams 1945: 40, 38) as representing the common prefix *el-* (see further below), ‘numerous, great’ (or here ‘very’) plus ‘Gwy’ (meaning ‘windey’ as in ‘Gwy’ = ‘the Wye’) but if so such a form might still have been reached by assimilation from an older name that included *el-*, from *al-*. However none of the above interpretations are certain and it must be possible that these river names do actually derive from the same *al-*, as found in ‘Alauna’, which might well (as argued above) contain the *al* of *albho* (with a meaning ‘shining-white’), even if that, itself, might represent re-interpretation of an older name.

Then there are the mountain-names like ‘Yr Elen’ and ‘Yr Ogof Elen’ in Snowdonia, which are very credibly associated with *el*, ‘angled’ (as in *elin*, ‘elbow’). Nevertheless they might represent survival of an earlier name by assimilation to this root at localities where it gave an appropriate meaning.<sup>11</sup> Of course this kind of reinterpretation will have made it difficult for us to detect our hypothesised earlier name. But we can bear in mind the existence of an oronymic *al-* on the continent<sup>12</sup> and perhaps Ireland as well as the one we have hypothesised, above, for Denbighshire, as associated with local river names: while looking out for the odd hint and being careful to take into account the overall context. For instance the involvement of Elen Lluydauc with tales based on the toponymy of Snowdonia - including Ogof yr Elen - is

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas 1938: 65-66 and 1935: 30-1. Assimilation of this kind might explain a change *al-* to *el-*, although that might make the assimilation, itself, seem less likely: ‘Elan’ might conceivably represent the influence of ‘Elenydd’ where the ‘El-’ might be by i-assimilation. Or, finally, we might have *al-* < *el-* by analogy in a context of cult-related names, as suggested above and see below.

<sup>11</sup> GPC 1206, Lloyd-Jones 1928: 77. Both present sharp angles from certain points of view. Such an assimilation might explain a change *al-* to *el-* : cf. my note above.

<sup>12</sup> See Part 4 above and, e.g., Flutre: 122, note 1; Rostaing 1950: 41ff.. A form in *al-*iu**, like the Cap d’Ail (Dauzat 1978: 104), might give *el-* in a Brittonic context. In Part 4 we hypothesised pre-Indo-European *al-* was closely related to a form *ar-* : note therefore the North Welsh ‘Ar-an’ mountains (Thornhill: 486-7 with note 28).

suggestive (Gould II, 259; Bartrum 1994: 235). A further hint might be that 'Yr Elen' is a subsidiary peak of Carnedd Llywelyn: that is unlikely to have been so named before the time of the famous princes of Gwynedd but there might well have been something about the older name that attracted the name of (one of) the famous prince(s) to this particular peak. It might have borne a similar name based on the - probably solar - theonym 'Lugus' (Llywelyn < Lugubelinus)<sup>13</sup>, that might, itself have been attracted by an earlier solar theonym (in *el-*).

Meanwhile the Eilian of Caernarfonshire folklore whose association with the 'fairy' or 'other' world might suggest that she preserves a tradition that recognised her name ultimately as that of a deity is associated with the hill-name 'Moel Eilio'.<sup>14</sup> It is easy to see the figure of folklore as representing a parallel manifestation of the same ancient traditions that lie behind our saint Eilian/Elian, himself associated with a Mynydd Elian, on Anglesey.<sup>15</sup>

The list of saints' names that we might suggest are in some way derivative of our theonym in *el-* from *al-* could, of course, be considerably extended. In many of these names initial 'El-' might represent the common pre-fix, meaning 'great' or 'many' (Pierce 1968: 261; *GPC* 1203; Doble 1971: 125, note 85, 166-7; Chantraine: 927), although this is not easy to prove beyond doubt. But in any case our approach has depended on the idea that such forms might have been reached by a process of assimilation from a similar sounding name - especially in a context of 'fragmenting cults' and multiplication of cult-names - where 'El-' had originally a different significance. As with the related toponyms the fate of a no longer understood substrate form would be to be gradually reinterpreted out of existence: but in this case there would be continuity of 'theonymic' (or 'saintly') value. Taking into account the common pre-fixes found in saints' names 'Mo' and

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<sup>13</sup> Jackson 1953: 442. The parallel solar associations would be reflected in the parallel literal meanings of *lleu* = 'light' and our *el-* < *al-* = 'white, bright'.

<sup>14</sup> Rhys 1891: 206. Cf. (pp. 207-11) the 'Elan', associated with the place-name 'Tyddyn Elan', one of the three daughters of Don, who escaped 'Caer Arianrhod'.

<sup>15</sup> See Gould II, 437 and 436, note 2, for 'Elian' in the local toponymy: these might represent any name in *el-* (or *al-*), assimilated to that of the saint.

‘To/Ti’ (Lewis 1933-6: 138-4; Padel 1985: 218-9; for *to < dy*, Jackson: 657), even names beginning in ‘Tel’ or ‘Mel’ might be relevant.

One might speculate, for instance, whether, helping to inspire the false etymology that derived Teilo (‘Ti’ + ‘El’ + suffix, ‘iau’), otherwise Eliud (*el* + *iudd* = ‘lord’) from Greek ‘Helios’ (*LL* 98), there might have been some element of genuine tradition actually associating him with the sun. In the Book of Llandaff Teilo’s birthplace was said to be at ‘Eccluis Guinniau’ near ‘Pennalun’, now Penally, in Pembrokeshire and Pennalun was associated with him in the legendary material attached to one of the charters as well as being one of the places that claimed to have his body (*LL* 116, 124, 126; Doble 1971: 166). The other two places to make that claim were at some stage the centre for his cult: Llandaff, and earlier Llandeilo. Pennalun must have been a yet earlier centre, most probably where the cult originated - or if not must at the very least have had some kind of very special association with it. Now ‘Penn-alun’ is a name that takes us back to our widespread hydro-theonym ‘Alauna’ because it evidently contains the river name (from which the personal name), found in Pembrokeshire and elsewhere, ‘Alun’, from ‘Alauna’. This might well suggest that the ‘El-’ in ‘Eliud’ derives from the *al-* found in ‘Alauna’, and related hydronyms (as we have already suggested might be the case for ‘Elian’ and other names). *Al-* plus *iudd* would have given *Eliudd*, (written ‘Eliud’, the older name for ‘Teliau’, ‘Teilo’) by i-assimilation. It may be no coincidence, meanwhile, that that other major cult centre of the area, St David’s, was on the river ‘Alun’: the cult-figure that this place was originally identified with may not have been David but rather one that survives in the form of the river name (and see note 28, below).

Now, our hypothesis requires, of course, a degree of fusion or confusion between cult figures in *el-* from *al-* (like ‘El-iud’, on our hypothesis) and our (pseudo-)martyr as derivative of the closely related (and ‘equivalent’) ‘Albio-’. This is essentially what we have suggested, above all in our hypothesis about ‘Elen Lluydawc’. If our *elv-*, from *albio* typically merged with *el-* from *al(i)-* to create a dominant and widespread theonymic (or ‘saintly’) element *el-*, then *al-* in other forms (of saints’ names or any other names still perceived as embodying some degree of theonymic value so perhaps also river and mountain names) – might have become *el-* by analogy. It will have been, then,

the influence of the *elv-* from *albio-* that would be behind the fact that we have so many important saints' names in 'El-' and so few in 'Al'. It would explain, for instance, why we do not have a 'St Alun'<sup>16</sup>, as the direct Christian successor to a god(dess) 'Alaunus(/a)'. There is, however, an 'Alun Dyfed' of legendary tale (*Culhwch ac Olwen* 185, 725 in Bromwich 1992: 7, 27, 72, 136; G&T Jones: 84, 100, 125, 204; *Beddau* stanzas in Jones 1969: 122-3), who looks likely to represent the euheumerisation of a regional deity, at one time associated with Pennalun and St Davids (on the Alun). The existence of this legendary figure is important evidence that there was indeed at one time a locally important deity 'Alauna/us' along the lines we have implied. One might imagine that (in some, if not all, contexts) this deity would have been syncretically merged with our Christianised cult figure in *albio-/elv-*: all the more so if that cult-figure did indeed represent, in origin, an adaptation of 'Alauna' as a tribal deity of the Catuvellauni, which we have suggested is a possibility. Hence the emergence of an important saint, originally localised in this area, in *El-* (Eliud, otherwise Teilo). As we have seen one could easily see 'Elen' as the result of a merger between 'Alauna' and the *elv* < *albio* (standing behind 'Albanus') and it is important that, as we noted in Part 2, a 'Helen Luicdauc' figures in the Dyfed genealogy: along with, significantly, an 'Eliud' (*Harleian genealogies* 2 in Bartrum: 10)..

At the same time it is highly significant that near St Davids (on the Alun) is St Elvis, while 'Helveus' (Ailbe) was said to have baptised St David (*Vita David* 7 in Wade-Evans 1913: 38; 1944: 153). Of course these facts represent, to a degree, the influence of the later Irish cult of St Ailbe, but they may also reflect the original British associations of that saint, that, as we have seen, are hinted at in his Vita. We have then, associated with this Dyfed/Pembrokeshire region evidence for not only a cult of Alauna but also the cult in *elv-* from *albio-* (=Albanus) that it will have merged with to give a cult in *El-* (represented by El-iud, Elen). We have all the signs we could wish for, then, of the merger of our cult in *elv-* from *albio-*, with one of a localised deity in 'al-',

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<sup>16</sup> Though there is recorded a 'St Allen' ("Ecclesia Sti Alluni" in 1261) in Cornwall (Gould I, 147) where there was also a river "Alan" (so in 1199: Ekwil: 6), now the 'Camel', some ten or fifteen miles East of the village of St Allen. And see note 28.

specifically 'Alauna'. And we will be adding, below, another local Dyfed figure in *el-*, 'Elgan', as well as local district name in *el-*, 'Elfed' as further evidence of our 'localised deity in *al-*' (< *el-*).

A fundamental point here, though, is that we have in all this an explanation for what happened to our British Celtic cult of Alban/Albios: it fragmented, mutated and merged into non-existence. We should expect all kind of assimilations, fusions and confusions to have occurred: involving for instance, quite conceivably, the other two martyrs named by Gildas, 'Aaron' and 'Iulius', or perhaps the pagan figures that stood behind them (see Thornhill 1999). Something like this might explain why an 'Elvan' appears as one of a pair of saints in the version of the Lucius legend that appears in the late (c.1130) and legendary material of the Book of Llandaff ('Eluanum & Meduuinum'; Geoffrey of Monmouth has 'Faganus' and 'Duvianus').<sup>17</sup> A saint, 'Elvan', thought to have played an important role in the early history of Christianity in Britain might seem to quite conceivably represent some kind of distorted memory of the actual importance of a cult of 'Alban' in early British Christianity.

Another consideration is that not only saints' names might be involved: something (again) we have already suggested in our discussion of 'Elen Lluydawc', since though this figure might sometimes have been regarded as a saint she is, above all, a 'heroine', featuring most significantly in a context of secular tale. In fact on closer examination saints and secular 'heroes' often tend to merge into each other, or at least share similar attributes. Thus just as Elen, the leader of hosts, was sometimes a saint so the prominent saint 'Eltud' (now 'Iltud' of Llantwit in Glamorgan) had been a 'soldier'.<sup>18</sup> More

<sup>17</sup> *LL* 68. Baring Gould and Fisher (Gould III, 362) note that all the other characters of the versions of this tale were represented in dedications near Llandaff: Fagan, Medwy, Dyfan and Lleurwg for Lucius. As we have seen the cult of Aaron and Iulius at Caerleon attracted that of the other proto-martyr, Alban, in the early 12th c.: conceivably Elvan is associated with a popular re-interpretation of this cult under the influence of local traditions. Cf. also John Stow, *The Annales of England*, 1600, p. 37, who gives 'Eluanus' as second 'archbishop of London', citing Jocelyn of Furness.

<sup>18</sup> *Vita Cadoci* 19 (from c.1090, see H.D. Emanuel, *National Library of Wales Journal* 19, 217-227); *Vita Iltuti* 1-2 (from c. 1200-50, Doble 1971: 121); both

important, this aspect of the saint is something which it is easy to associate with the tradition that appears in Geoffrey's *Historia* in the form of the 'brothers', 'Eldad' and 'Eldol' (*Historia Regum* VI.16-VIII.9). In fact Geoffrey's 'monk' and 'Count' are suggestive of a tradition that had divided on the basis of its dual military-secular and religious aspect. It is significant that these characters are intimately involved with Geoffrey's 'Aurelius Ambrosius' and the dramatic events surrounding the initial struggles with the Saxons. One is reminded of the 'Campus Elleti' associated with Emrys/Ambrosius in the *Historia Britonum* (c.41). Most important this is something we might readily derive from the actual role of St Alban (or of his cult) in the conflicts of post-Roman Britain that we have hypothesised above, on the basis of our discussion of 'Elen LLuydauc'. Eltud supposedly came from Brittany: it is significant he was regarded as coming from outside Wales and it may be that, here and elsewhere, 'Letavia' is used for (or has come to displace in the tradition) the once-Celtic Lowland Britain (whence the Bretons, for the most part, originated: cf Doble 1971: 124 with note 82). In this respect it is relevant that 'Eldad', the monkish half of Geoffrey's duo, was almost certainly derived from a St Aldate of Gloucester and Oxford who may well represent an Anglicised remnant of a cult equivalent to that of the Eltud of Wales.<sup>19</sup> The

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Vitae in Wade-Evans 1944.

<sup>19</sup> See Tatlock 1950: 242-3; Gould II, 426-8. Geoffrey's Eldad is bishop of Gloucester, and Eldol, Count, while Geoffrey, himself, lived in Oxford. Aldate's name was evidently reinterpreted as the name of a gate (both churches were quite near gates) : in Gloucester the name is spelt a few times 'Aldgate', i.e. 'Old Gate' (although it also became 'Aldhelm' under the influence of that well known saint) and in Oxford he was latterly known as 'St Old'. Even the form 'Aldatus' may represent an earlier cult name unfamiliar to English ears (i.e. 'Eltud' ?), under the influence of this kind of assimilation. It may be that originally it was the actual gates that were associated with a cult figure in *el-/al-*, bearing in mind the the association of 'El-en' with Roman ruins and defences, and specifically the walls of London (see II, above). On the basis of its cult associations, the name (at Gloucester and Oxford) will then have become associated with (and adopted by) a nearby church: but now 'contaminated' by its association with a gate (hence the Aldate/Auld-Gate form of the name). One can compare the names of the two other Gloucester gates recorded from the Saxon period: 'Ailesgate' (East) and 'Alvinegate'

Anglicised version of this cult-figure, associated with Gloucester, will then have been reinterpreted in Welsh tradition to give a name Eid(d)ael: hence the “Eidoel mab Aer”, associated with Gloucester in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and the forms ‘Eidal, Eidoel’, in the *Bruts* for Geoffrey’s ‘Eldad, Eidoel’. The reference in the *Historia Britonum* to an “Eldad”, son of “Eldoc”, descended from “Gloiu” (eponym of Gloucester), strongly suggests that a form in ‘El-/Al-’ is primary<sup>20</sup>.

Eldad’s claim to historicity rests on the *Vita Samsonis* (c.7) and depends on the view one takes of that work (ed. in Fawtier 1912; trans. in Taylor 1925): suffice to suggest here that Samson might in reality have been associated with (or a novice of) the monastery, rather than the actual person, of ‘Eldad’. It was evidently the traditions of that monastery that were known to the author of the *Vita* and it is typical of such traditions that the ‘familia’ of a saint is personified in the form of the saint, himself.<sup>21</sup> It is true that this earlier source does not mention the tradition of Eldad as a soldier (rather a tradition in which he exemplifies the achievements of his monastery in terms of learning etc..) but it is highly significant that he is here associated (quite anachronistically if he was a contemporary of St Samson) with the St

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(outer North: St Aldate’s was the inner North: Heighway: 363) as suggestive of (corruptions of ?) an original name in Al(v)-. Bearing in mind (H)elen’s association with the walls there are the London gate-names ‘Ealdredesgate’ (now ‘Aldersgate’) and ‘Ealsegate’ (which has developed via ‘Ale-gate’, likewise to ‘Aldgate’) which might be suggestive of a derivation by assimilation (importantly a process clearly at work later) from a name (Celtic and so no longer understood) in ‘El-’ (or actually ‘El-tud’ behind Ealdredesgate ?): See Ekwal 1954: 31-2, 34; Harben 1918: 7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Becoming ‘Eidoel’ by assimilation to *eidol*, ‘praise, shout’, or *eidio*, *eiddio*, ‘defense, fortress’ ?? See Bromwich 1992: 133. This ‘Eldad map Eldoc’ is also descended from ‘Vortigern’ – see further Part VI below.

<sup>21</sup> The deathbed tale related of Eldad, concerning Isanus and Atoclius, looks likely to have to do with a dispute over different standards of discipline in different monastic houses (for Isanus in Lan Issan, St Ishmael’s, Doble 1971: 92, with note 13) - as also the tale of Piro’s drunkenness (*Vita Samsonis* 37) - even if this dispute had lost its relevance by the time the tales were related to the author of the *Vita*. Eldad, then, is used in this tale as a figure of ultimate authority to be appealed to: the notion that his ‘judgement’ was given on his deathbed gives that judgement a kind of ultimate authority.



Germanus who we have seen to have been so closely involved with the cult of St Alban. It is true that other Welsh saints (Paulinus and Dubricius) were associated with Germanus, but none in a source as early as this one : later Saints' Vitae may well have been influenced by this earlier one and although, by the time of their writing, Germanus had become the key figure of early British ecclesiastical pseudo-history, that is not so certain at an earlier date.

Then again the fact that the name, 'Eltud', contains *el-*, plus the element *tud*, from *touto*, 'a tribe, people' is something that makes it particularly compatible with our concept of the cult of Alban as especially associated with the Britons as a 'people', or nation. That the *-tud* element of the name did have some significance might be suggested by the fact that in Brittany, as Doble (1971: 145) notes, Eltud's cult was especially associated with that of St. Tud-wal. It is not completely inconceivable that we might have had here, originally, two different names (or a name and an epithet ?) for the same figure. It is, finally, worth also noting that the name, 'Eltud', is only one very small assimilative leap away from that of that other leading saint of the region, 'Eliud', otherwise 'Teilo'. We are working on the assumption, of course, that at some early stage - and at first at a purely 'popular' and oral level - during the upheavals that accompanied the dissolution of a Romanised Britain, tradition was much less well defined and more fluid than it appears in our later sources.

The 'Llaneltud' in Merionethshire demonstrates that the cult of 'Eltud' was not limited to the orbit of the Glamorganshire Llantwit, while Doble (1971: 142,145) noted that not so far off are the twin islands of St Tudwal, off the Lleyn peninsula. Much closer and more closely equivalent to the latter, however, is 'Ynys Enlli', Bardsey Island: the famous 'isle of the saints'.

The name 'Enlli' has been understood as having reference to the name of a famous figure, but, curiously perhaps for such a holy place, that of a renowned enemy of saints, the 'Benlli' who clashed with Saints Germanus (in the *Historia Britonum* 32-5) and Cynhafal (in a sixteenth century cywydd: Gould II, 254-6). Gruffydd (1928: 179) suggests 'Enlli' is for an original 'Venlli' ('Benlli' in lenition position), with typical loss of the first letter of the second element of a compound. This would seem to deny, however, the singularly

appropriate literal meaning of ‘Ynys Enlli’, which, with the latter element understood as incorporating the intensive prefix *en-* plus *lli(f)* (GPC 2177, 1211, 104), would mean ‘island of the strong current’. Benlli is consistently associated with fire and heat and has been very credibly interpreted as a solar deity of some kind.<sup>22</sup> The etymology of his name remains obscure but he is closely associated with ‘Beli’ who appears as his son in the *Beddau* stanzas (Jones 1969: 133; Gruffydd 1928: 176, 178-9). ‘Beli’ has been identified as the eponym of the ‘Belgae’ by O’Rahilly (1946: 67) and Koch (1990) and by the former as, again, a solar deity, this time with an appropriate etymology based on the root, *bhel-*, ‘to flash’. O’Rahilly’s explanation (pp.43-74) of the mythological associations of Beli (and parallel figures) is convincing so that even if his is not the correct etymology (so Carey 1988) the name may have been reinterpreted in terms of this root in a mythological context. One might imagine that if Bardsey island was originally associated with a cult figure (as many islands were) then that figure was the solar deity ‘Beli’, and that the form ‘Benlli’ represents some kind of assimilation of this name (or at least one in ‘Bel-’) to *lli(f)* as a word with an appropriate meaning in a local context. On the other hand the root *bhel-* would seem to have a related meaning to our root *el-* from *al-*, and one can readily imagine some confusion, or merger, between deities with solar associations in ‘Bel-’ and ‘El-’; while it is rather easier to imagine a progression along the lines ‘El-’ to ‘Elli’ (El + lli) to ‘Enlli’, than one along the lines ‘Bel-’ to ‘Beli’ to ‘Benlli’, where the final form does not have the highly appropriate meaning that ‘En-lli’ does (which might have motivated the final assimilative leap). However if ‘El-’ and ‘Bel-’ were regarded as closely equivalent and sometimes confused one can imagine how there might have evolved a ‘Benlli’ from ‘Bel-’ to match the ‘Enlli’ from ‘El-’.

One would have to assume a development along these lines, associated with a Bardsey island that was already an important cult centre, well before the early ninth century date of the *Historia Britonum*<sup>23</sup> and that ‘Benlli’ in the topography (like the ‘Moel Fenlli’

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<sup>22</sup> In *HB* 34 he is consumed by fire from heaven; in the *cywydd* (Gould II, 255) he dries up the river Alun; see Gruffydd 1928: 183.

<sup>23</sup> For the evidence, including two 5/6<sup>th</sup> c. tombstones at Capel Anelog on the mainland opposite, a possibly 7<sup>th</sup> c. cross-slab and long-cist graves on the

near Llangynhafal) and associated legends represented an original 'Bel(i)' (or 'El-') that had changed in line with the new form of the name. That new form will have become especially associated with the demonic, and destructive aspects of the deity and ultimately crystallised into an entirely new figure. Of course we may well not have the full story here and there might have been some other factors involved in the genesis of the form 'Benlli', but it does seem, anyway, there was subsequently a degree of confusion/association between 'Benlli', 'Beli' and 'El(i)-'. As regards the latter two, Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Heli' (*Historia Regum* III.20), interpreted as 'Beli-' by the Welsh, might suggest (if it represents the influence of a parallel equivalence between Welsh 'Elen' and Latin 'Helena') an original form 'Eli' that could be regarded as equivalent to 'Beli'. Then again Breton tradition (Fleuriot 1980: 123) has 'Beli' as a son of 'Outham' (with brother Conan) while Welsh tradition (the *Breudwyt Maxen*, see Part 2 above) has 'Elen' as daughter of Outham-equivalent 'Eudaf' (with brothers Cynan and Gadeon). 'Benlli', himself, is associated with a river 'Al-un' in the legend of St Cynhafal (Gruffydd 1928: 180, note 43), while his association with Garmon = Germanus might reflect that saint's association with Alban/Albios even if the relationship between the two has been drastically remodeled to fit in with the demonic and destructive characteristics that had become associated with the name 'Benlli': who might also seem to represent the pagan 'past' of these cults, as it were, as against their syncretic Christianised future. This Garmon/Benlli story is associated with Powys and it is worth noting that various figures in 'El-' occur in the Powys dynasty, including an 'Eli' and an 'Eliud' (comparable to the 'Eliud' in the Dyfed dynasty; and see further Part VI, below).

Finally it is just possible we might have a hint that Bardsey island did indeed have some special association with a cult figure in 'El-' in the form of the curious story about the 'hermit', 'El-gar', whose story is told at some length in the Book of Llandaff and who is said to have resided there (*LL* 1-5). His story involves a genuine ascetic 'Caradog', who no doubt did visit the island but one wonders whether he might have honoured a local cult figure called 'Elgar' rather than actually visited a living hermit; and whether something of his own reputed

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island itself, see Chitty 1992.

lifestyle might have influenced the portrayal of this local figure. At the same time one wonders whether the confused conditions of the period of the Norman invasion of Gwynedd might not have contributed to some misunderstanding about a cult-figure of Ynys Enlli. The story about Elgar as repentant executioner has a slightly fabulous ring and vaguely brings to mind the story about the conversion of St Alban's executioner, whilst his association with Devon might bring to mind the 'Dumnonoan' associations of, for instance, Elen Lluydawc. His Irish association might again reflect some local connection with an 'El'-figure cult (or St Ailbe ?) although it is possible to see in "Restri nepotis Conchor" a real 11/12<sup>th</sup> century individual", just as 'Elgar' might represent a real Devonshire 'Aelfgar'. We might have a real historical hermit here, of Caradog-type (so Chitty: 25-8) but the fact that this figure in 'El-' seems to have some very special place in the religious traditions of the place (and was evidently important enough for his supposed relics to be moved to Llandaff) is quite striking in the light of our hypothesis.

If that hypothesis is broadly correct we have another parallel for the island of Ailbe (conceivably even 'model' for this), island of Albion, etc..., though in this case an island of a figure in closely related 'Al-' (whence 'El-'). On this subject of islands it is also worth noting that 'Pennalun' was opposite the island of Caldy, the site of an important early Celtic monastery (under abbot Piro in the *Vita Samsonis* 37): though the '-alun' (< Alauna), here would seem to refer to the headland it is just possible that it originally applied to the island and its presiding deity. Likewise St Davids on the Alun is just opposite Ramsay island : which might conceivably have been the original sacred site of a local deity, 'Alauna' (after whom the river was named). This is a theory, anyway, which is compatible with our suggestion that 'Alauna' in Britain typically displaced an earlier name in *al-* (from which, however, it might itself have been derived or was related to) which though often associated with rivers and water was, most typically - or in ultimate origin - an oronym, or 'theo-oronym'. Arguably it will have been originally an 'Earth-mother' name as characteristically associated with rocks, mountains etc.:( just possibly derived ultimately from *Kal*, as an ancient name for the 'Earth-mother', related to *kal*, variant *kar*, 'a rock', as argued in Part IV above): if we are thinking of a

progression from earth-mother to solar, water-associated, deity, then islands occupy a pivotal position, being both oronyms, and associated with water.

Our hypothesised form, 'Elli', anyway, is in fact, found elsewhere appropriate to a cult figure and it is important that 'Llanelli' is situated on the river 'LLiedi', which contains the same root, \**lei-*, 'to flow', that we have assumed to be present in 'Enlli' (Thomas 1938: 157). Once again we would assume a close relationship between river name and cult name. It might be that the word, *lli(f)*, itself, acquired some theonymic value on the basis of the associations that rivers and water had in pagan religion. In any case we would explain this cult/saint's name on the basis of some kind of assimilation or merger between our element *el-* and *lli*, from \**lei-*.

In an early source, the *Vita Finniani* (c.10 in Heist 1965: 98), this saint's name evidently appears in the form 'Elni' and Katherine Hughes (1954: 365-6) had to propose a rather complicated sequence of scribal errors to explain it : Eliuus > Elinus > Elnius (although the form 'Elinus' does actually appear in the *Vita Cadoci* for 'Eli'). Moreover she does not really explain the final stage whereby a Latinised 'Elnius' became an apparently undeclined non-Latin 'Elni': of course one expects Latinisations in Latin Saints' Lives but de-Latinisations are rather harder to explain. One might explain the form 'Elni', however, as the result of some confusion between the form 'Enlli' (of widespread fame) and the closely related form, 'Elli'. 'Elni' in the *Vita Finniani*, and 'Eli' in the *Vita Cadoci*, evidently are the focus of some special legends: the latter is not only Cadoc's immediate successor but also the son of a queen from the mysterious islands of 'Grimbul' (c.14 in Wade-Evans 1944: 54-7, see also 37-8, 102-7). Whatever the origins of the legends 'Eli/Enli' has some important place in hagiographical legend and perhaps the pagan myth it derives from.

To return to the relationship between saintly and secular figures, we can note that one of the recorded forms of the name of the 'Elian' we discussed above in a cult-context, is to be found in a secular context. The poem, *The Dialogue of Myrddin and Taliesin*, found in the Black Book of Carmarthen (Jarman 1951; trans. Jarman in N. Tolstoy's *The*

*Quest for Merlin*, 251-2), features an ‘Elgan’ who is evidently a military hero-figure of some kind, the leader of a ‘host’:

“Soon the host with Elgan will be seen  
Alas for his death, they have come a great journey”

As A.O.H. Jarman (1951; also Bartrum 1993: 239-40) has shown this ‘Elgan’ has his roots in local Dyfed tradition, along with other figures in the poem. The fact both a local ‘giant’ and ‘ancestor-figure’<sup>24</sup> bare the name might suggest that, in origin, it derives from a local deity or cult-figure: clearly he and other heroes have been used to represent Dyfed in a clash with Maelgwyn of Gwynedd but there is no reason to assume the battle, or at least their participation in it, is historical. It is possible to see ‘Elgan’ as another derivative of our solar theonym, perhaps of related or parallel origin to our saint Elian/Elgan, and perhaps specifically to do with the ‘Al-aunos/a’ we have hypothesised as a localised Dyfed deity, above. At the same time his military character could be seen as parallel to that of Elen Lluydauc and others on the basis of the conflation of a local deity in ‘El-’ with our pseudo-martyr in military-symbolic role. One could see his death (which is mentioned as soon as he is introduced in the poem) in battle as a memory, or adaptation of, the - likewise famous and violent - death of a martyr. This might be no more than one possible interpretation but it is by no means impossible if we envisage a general pattern of interrelationship between the ‘saints’ and ‘heroes’ of Celtic legend, that parallels the one between cult-figures and heroes in, for instance, Greek legend. One can compare, for instance, the multiplication of our figures in El- to those in Alc-, associated with Alcaeus/Heracles (see Part IV, above).

Another figure we might consider in this light is ‘Elidir Mwynfawr’. Supposedly named after this figure was the ‘Mynydd Elidir’ (now ‘Elidyr Fawr’) of Snowdonia (Lloyd-Jones 1928: 77) and this brings us back to our theories about *el-* from *al-* as an early oronym. If we see the first part of this name as representing that then we might see the second part as derivative of Irish *leitir*, ‘side of hill, steep ascent/descent’, added as a descriptive or qualifying element, or

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<sup>24</sup> “(C)elgan gawr” in Peniarth MS 118, see *Y Cymmrodor* 27 (1917) p.77; “Elgan Wefl Hwch”, see Bartrum 1966: 106.

perhaps assimilated to the *-lid* of a form, *EL-id* (with the same suffix as ‘Elen-id’). This Irish word features in other local toponyms (Bromwich 1978: 114, 344). There were evidently stories about the death of Elidyr at a particular locality in Arfon : this kind of thing would be typical of pagan deities or ‘mythological figures’ about whom there were, very frequently, celebrated traditions about their ‘death’, often localised at a particular place, on the basis, probably, of a related toponym. If our mountain name was also that of a solar deity in the way that we have suggested then it could be that the name of the latter was remodeled in line with the former so that ‘Elidir’ became, on that basis, the name not only of a mountain but also of a local ‘figure of mythology’ (and thence a personal name). This is not to deny that other factors might have been involved too, that I have not been able to illuminate, here. This figure, anyway, was evidently euheumerised in later Welsh legend. In this context he appears as a hero of the Old British North: if there was a similar ‘Elidir’ (from *el* + *leitir* or *elit* > *eleitr*) place-name in the North, as a variant of one of the Triads suggests (Bromwich 1978: 109-10, 114), then that might explain the existence of an ‘Elidir’ amongst the legendary heroes of the North (incorporated therefore into the genealogical scheme in which these were placed: Bartrum 1966: 73). A conflation of the Northern Elidyr with an Elidir of Arfon might lie at the root of the legend about the death of an Elidyr from the North on an expedition to Gwynedd (Bromwich 1978: 109, 344, 501-2): even if, clearly, there are other elements of the legend that require further explanation.

It may be significant that the Triad about ‘Elidir’ also features another character with a name in ‘El-’, one ‘Eliffer’, another hero of the Old North, who was otherwise actually confused with ‘Elidir’. Thus the *De Situ Brecheiniauc* (Bartrum 1966: 14) actually gives the name ‘Elidir’ to this character (identifiable by his epithet and family associations). The *De Situ* is a potentially early source (from the 11th century or earlier) and, moreover, seems to be following a tradition known to Geoffrey, who gives the name ‘Elidurus’ to an apparently equivalent figure.<sup>25</sup> In our earliest source, the Harleian genealogies

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<sup>25</sup> *Historia Regum* III.17-19. ‘Elidurus’ has younger brothers ‘Peredurus’ and ‘Ingenius’ : cf. Eliffer with sons ‘Peredur’ and ‘Gwrgi’ in Triad 44; *Annales Cambriae* (in Morris 1980) s.a. 580; *Harleian genealogies*, Bartrum: 1966:

(from the mid tenth century: Bartrum 1966: 11), the name appears as 'Eleuther'. We may doubt, therefore, whether early tradition was consistent as regards the exact form of this name, and whether this figure was originally clearly distinguished from 'Elidir'. His epithet, 'Gosgorduavr', 'of the Great Warband', is reminiscent of that of Elen 'Lluydauc'. It has also been seen as a reminiscence of the Roman legions and therefore as something which might associate him with their base at York: such an association is also hinted at by the patronymic of the 'Peredur' of the Romances ('Efracw') who may be ultimately identifiable with the Peredur recorded as Eliffer/Eleuther's son (in Geoffrey his younger brother) and associated with the Yorkshire town of Pickering by Stowe.<sup>26</sup> One is reminded of the association of 'Helen' with York and the North East (see Part 2): one might question whether this was purely the result of the historical association of the Empress's husband and son (Constantius died there to be succeeded by Constantine) with this place, especially if we are thinking of a native figure with whom the Empress was conflated. Finally, worth noting in this context, is the 'El-' in Elmet, a name that has not so far received any very satisfactory explanation<sup>27</sup>, and which was also appropriate to a region of Dyfed, which we have seen, above, to have had an especially close association with our figures in *elv-/el-/al-*. Elmet excluded York and yet it comprised territory one might well have expected to have fallen under the control of this important regional and military centre, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Roman withdrawal. It might be that Elmet represented the remnants of a British polity originally based on York until that centre fell, perhaps to rebellious Germanic 'federates' based there (as the archaeology might suggest: e.g. Myres 1986: 196). This still leaves the precise derivation of Elmet unexplained<sup>28</sup>, but we can at least make

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<sup>26</sup> My note above; Bromwich 1978: 488-92. Koch (1997: 86-7, 203-5) thinks the Peredur of *Y Gododdin* represents a late addition of a hero known to Welsh tradition.

<sup>27</sup> See Hamp's critique (1982/3) of Hind 1980. See further R.G. Gruffydd 1994. We would have to assume that the fifth century 'ELMETIACO' represents (along the lines suggested above) *al-* > *el-* by analogy (under the influence of cult assimilation) to *elv-* < *alb-* because internal (= "double") affection will not yet have occurred (Jackson 1953: 591-2, 614-8).



the suggestion of some kind of connection with our cult-names (and related toponyms) in *el-*.

The basic idea, here, is that York will, initially, have been an important military centre for the Britons (part of their inheritance from Rome) and that (on the basis outlined above with reference to ‘Elen LLuydauc’) St Alban will have been a figure intimately linked with the military efforts of the Britons: on that basis our *El-iffer/euther/idir*, ‘Of the Great Warband’, would represent a localised derivative (a kind of re-euheimerisation) of that figure.<sup>29</sup> This would, again, place Elen LLuydauc - as we have interpreted her - within the broader pattern of associations that we should expect, and show that the manifestations in later legend of the one-time prominence, and historic role, of our ‘pan-British’ cult, were - again, as we might expect - many and various.

Of course we have not exhausted the search for the manifestations of that cult in later legend, especially where other localised contexts are concerned, but the intention has been to at least show the kind of way it found expression in our late, legendary, sources and in so doing to offer some kind of coherent theoretical approach to the relationship between the latter and actual post-Roman history - to a closer investigation of which we shall now return.

<sup>28</sup> With reference to the other ‘Elfed’ in South West Wales might the ‘-met’ of ‘Elmet’ have to do with the ‘-met’ of ‘Demetia’: so that if the ‘De-’ of that name represents a compressed *dewo-* (or equivalent in a pre-Celtic but Indo-European language; or ‘mis-pronunciation’ of the Celtic by pre-Celts), it might represent a parallel name of divine value to ‘El-’. It might also have influenced the later regionally important cult name ‘Dewi’, ‘David’: if ‘Dewi’ was the original form reached by assimilation (motivated by the appropriateness of the Biblical ‘David’ as a credible personal name for a saint) from *duy* (< *dewo*), or similar. In Cornwall an alternative name for the river Allen (< Alauna) is ‘Devy’, “Deuy” in 1326. Ekwil (125) equates this name with the Welsh ‘Dyfi’ (Dovey) but this is on the basis of a doubtfully identified ‘Pendyfig’ (so in 949 but Pendavid in 1086, Pendewy in 1302)) and the assumption that *v* has (apparently typically) been confused with *w*. But if he is wrong we might have evidence that either the name ‘Dewi’ (for this in river names my note 8) or one derivative of British *dewo* (cf, the Cornish river Dewey, Ekwil: 125 and the Dee) was regarded as somehow equivalent to Allen < Alauna: parallel perhaps to the succession of a cult of *Duy* > *Dewi* > *David* to one of Alun < Alauna at St Davids on the river Alun. One might

further note the Carnedd 'Dafydd' that is close to the Carnedd Llewellyn that we suggested above might have earlier borne a name in *el-* < *al-* : one might doubt, in any case, that it owes its name purely to the (by no means comparably famous) Dafydd brother of Llewellyn.

<sup>29</sup> 'Elidir' is associated with Strathclyde (e.g Bromwich 1978: 239) and one can see him as representing our 'El-' cult as associated with that region, by contrast with Eliffer as associated with the area round York. Most probably we do see here a reflection of the ancient association of an El- (< Alban) cult with both regions but the regular differentiation of the two El- names on this regional basis would represent the schematisation of storytellers and genealogists at a later date: hence the lingering confusion between the two forms.

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