

# A Theology of Conjunction

or

## *The Cycle as a Metaphor for the Lifespan of Civilizations*

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### Introduction

When in the course of human civilization, we arrive at a point where we are able to sufficiently look back at our own progress, it is inevitable that we will attempt to make sense of our present through our past. Often this takes the form of parabolic tales which are dramatized or viewed through a particular contemporary lens. In the pursuit of historical accuracy, such a narrative – while tempting – is rarely helpful. However, in the realm of other anthropological studies, they can tell us a lot about how a society views itself, or the world in general, and we see this often in literature, tradition, and ritual.

This work seeks to discuss the concept of Divine Conjunction, and offer an example of such a parable. Before I present that I think it is first important to define Conjunction and explain a bit about its relevance. Our modern understanding relates of course to the gods of the Octave and what we call the Cycle. Since the Age of Atavism, we Aislings have not only tracked our periods of time in deochs (named in honor of the patron god of our spark) but also into a series of eight deochs – “Cycles.” And for each individual deoch within that Cycle, we have assigned a representative god of that period of time:

Deoch 1 - Deoch

Deoch 2 - Glioca

Deoch 3 - Cail

Deoch 4 - Luathas

Deoch 5 - Gramail

Deoch 6 - Fiosachd

Deoch 7 - Ceannlaidir

Deoch 8 - Sgrios

followed by the return of the year of Deoch in deoch 9 and the Cycle begins anew. This is the basis for our modern celebrations of Divine Conjunction. Jean gives perhaps the most succinct explanation of what it is:

"The new year is the transformation. It is the Conjunction, where two gods are indistinguishable [...] For example, the Conjunction of Deoch's intoxication with Glioca's compassion is the birth of love. It is almost like a child. It seems so different from its parents, but it resembles their combined parts."

-Jean, Councilor of Loures

He also explains that almost every culture celebrates Conjunction in some form or another. Considering how big of a role the religions of Temuair play in our lives it is quite surprising that modern society has few, if any, formal celebrations of it. However, the marking of the new year has taken many forms, most commonly interfaith collaborations such as Masses, celebrations, competitions, debates, etc. What is important is that the character of the particular Conjunction being celebrated reflects the essence of the blending. In *Sects of Temuairian Faiths*, Aphrodite details many of the different schools of thought that exist. These can have a major impact on how a Conjunction is represented. For example, in describing a sect of Deoch worship "viewed in Sgrios," she writes: "When the end, in Sgrios, meets the beginning, in Deoch, we find the source of one of the miracles of Deoch, rebirth." When describing the worship of Sgrios "viewed in Deoch," she describes it rather differently: "Through the fires of Deoch, guided by the hand of Sgrios, all things are destroyed." We can imagine based on this one example how these two hypothetical worshippers may differ in their conception of a Conjunction of Sgrios and Deoch. A celebration of new beginnings versus a celebration of a fiery end.

Things become more complicated when we start to consider other cultures. For example, the Mukul are fairly insular and secretive about their beliefs and worship but they celebrate some form of Conjunction as well. In the Mukul calendar periods of time are separated into nateshes instead of deochs (similarly named from one of their gods, Natesh). According to Dartanian in *Conjectures on the Mukul Culture and Society* the Mukul worship six gods, including Matrika, Natesh, and four others he was not able to name. It is unclear what each of these gods mean to the Mukul - except perhaps Matrika, who is a goddess of the sun and light and at least according to Dartanian, potentially Danaan herself. We do know that the ritual known as *Mela* in which the flowers of the swamp are sacrificed is deeply important to the Mukul, and we can speculate that this could be a factor in their celebrations of Conjunction as well. Dartanian also mentions that a natesh is longer than our deochs, which is likely a result of having fewer gods in their full cycle. Similar to Aislings and the Mukul, these are reappearing themes in nearly every sentient Temuairian culture, including the Kobolds, Grimlok, and perhaps even the Fae.

But it is not my goal to outline the specifics of every form of Conjunction or its celebration. I am here to offer my own interpretation: A connection of each pair with the next in a sort of secondary cycle which lies between the regular one. In other words, I am describing eight individual Conjunctions which when considered altogether tell a larger story. I am treating this “Cycle of Conjunctions” as a metaphor for the lifespan of civilization – from the formation of the smallest societal units to its eventual downfall.

### **Deoch/Glioca**

Jean refers to this conjunction as “the birth of love.” This is perhaps the most straightforward of all the conjunctions - as both Glioca and Deoch can be considered gods of love, illustrated by Deoch’s love for Danaan (and Aislings) as well as Glioca’s care and compassion for all living beings. The love symbolized by their conjunction is often considered a sensual one, dealing with romantic and sexual love. In terms of the progression of the cycle this can be thought of as the beginning of a greater society - and the birth of the familial unit. In this way, the Conjunction acts as a bridge between Deoch as a beginning and Glioca as a necessary virtue for growth.

### **Glioca/Cail**

If the Conjunction of Deoch and Glioca is the birth of a familial building block of society then Glioca and Cail represent the maintenance of it. I call this conjunction “The Stability of Union.” Romantic and sexual love may be sparked through passion alone but what ignited it must come into balance so that it may survive and thrive. In some ways, this is embodied by Cail and Glioca’s relationship as mother and son. When a child is born it is up to the caregivers to provide support and stability - the nurturing required to thrive alongside the discipline required for temperance and well-adjustedness. When the parent has grown into old age the child helps to take care of the parent in turn.

### **Cail/Luathas**

With a basis of individual life established and a growing network the need for a greater understanding of the world around us grows. It is through study and the sharing of wisdom that we learn to tend to the land in a way that sustains us and our kin as well as the land itself: the conjunction of Cail and Luathas. But it is not simply the knowledge of how to live with and utilize the world around us for our benefit that is important in this combination. It is also what I call “The internalization of The Affronts.” Though these Affronts are specifically related to

Luathas and the Academie Arcanus, I believe that their lessons fit well into this conjunction: a being who understands that it is not in their best interest to pursue greed at the expense of others, enact senseless violence unto others and the land, or to misuse magic to extract an inordinate sum from it.

### **Luathas/Gramail**

Building upon the foundation that has now been fairly well laid by the previous conjunctions, we now begin to see the fruits of this foundation begin to scale. As this society grows it is necessary for the knowledge of that society to be codified. The smaller societal units which have been developed and governed by previous lessons must be more tightly decided and enforced. I call this conjunction “The Establishment of Society.” In some ways, I see this step in the cycle to be the one where the golden ages can begin. Like all things these ages must continue to progress and begin to atrophy - but for a time there is comfort and security as long as this social contract is maintained and respected.

### **Gramail/Fiosachd**

With society in full swing we reach the point at which the greatest aspects of ourselves as individuals and families can begin to grow. We can take advantage of the boons and comforts which a greater society can generate. Whether by virtue of this security or a boredom born of this comfort, the desire for adventure and to make a name for oneself becomes commonplace. This is also the stage at which concentrations of wealth become more common. I call this the “Conjunction of Abundance”, because it can offer opportunities for more people to pursue and build it. Depending on the exact nature of the society which reaches this stage it may slow or accelerate the eventual decline. If the stratification and inequality of wealth becomes too great, it will almost certainly fall into decline.

### **Fiosachd/Ceannlaidir**

What happens when people begin to gather wealth and power? Almost inevitably, conflict. Whether through aggression or self-defense, it becomes necessary to protect that which has been gained, which leads to a fracture of the social order. I call this the “Balkanization Conjunction.” However, this Conjunction is not merely about maintaining what one has. One of the unfortunate realities of gaining wealth and power is that it often compels one to desire more of it. Wars are often driven by this greed. This is not to say that this Conjunction is a purely negative one. Wars can be fought over more than simply wealth and power – to take up arms in defense of

the downtrodden and exploited can be a noble endeavor. What is true, however, is that a society which has reached a point where this sort of defense is necessary has already begun to break down. The push and pull of the forces of conquest vs justice will eventually tip the scales, and determine society's fate. The bonds and virtues which held us together have begun to fray -and it may or may not be possible to salvage.

### **Ceannlaidir/Sgrios**

If a society fails to mend itself it will continue to spiral. Once the ravages of war have reached a critical mass it becomes nearly impossible to return to a safer age. This is unsustainable. The Conjunction of Ceannlaidir and Sgrios is one of the simplest. I call it "The Divine Equalizer" because it represents the only outcome that can be attained at the end of such an extreme level of conflict. None can escape the touch of death, and eventually the truth will be obvious: No matter how much wealth or power you have, none of us may escape death.

### **Sgrios/Deoch**

At the end of the cycle, we return to where we started. At the end of war is destruction: if not in totality, then at least of the bonds of community we once had. We have seen this happen in our own history: First the fall of Aosda, then the drowning of Hy-Brasyl. Whether it was through luck, persistence, or divine intervention, we still endure. In the ashes of our past mistakes are buried the seeds which with time and tenacity will blossom again. There is a hope in this final stage of the Cycle that there can be a new chance for us to learn from the mistakes of the past. This is the Conjunction of "Rebirth" - and of second chances.

### **Summary**

Ordinarily, we treat each new Conjunction as its own distinct entity - but it makes sense in my mind for there to be a larger, more cohesive cycle. In the same way that the Octave may represent the progress of life itself, this "Cycle of Conjunction" can represent a lifespan one order higher. My goal is to inspire thought and discussion. I hope it is clear from this work that I do not see this as a *definitive* view of Conjunction – but a view through which to understand ourselves a bit better. I would love to see a revival of discussions and celebrations of the Conjunction. It is a rich subject that can be deeply personal or wildly abstract. Embracing it can not only enrich our own faith but also inspire greater relationships between shrines. Through this discussion and celebration, we may also happen upon some insight which could expose some universality hidden from plain view - or opportunities to strengthen bonds between all the societies of this world.