

Mahmoud Shelton

*The Red and the White Dragons*¹

Sufficient evidence was presented in *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun* to identify the so-called “Axis of Saint Michael and of Apollo” as a solstitial alignment associated with the Pythagorean tradition. While this study serves to clarify some aspects of this landscape alignment, as well as of the comparable “Saint Michael Line” of England, it was never meant to be exhaustive. Perhaps its most important contribution is to identify the Pythagoreans as the custodians of knowledge relating to them, which is not to suggest that the “paths of the Sun” originated with them. In a similar way, so-called “megalithic science” involved the application of Pythagorean geometry in its arrangements that are older than Pythagoras himself.² We are indebted to John Michell for his inspired and inspiring work on landscape alignments and megalithic science alike. Michell insisted that the megalithic complexes of Britain belong to a larger system, and this has become demonstrable through advancements in computer mapping technology. Howard Crowhurst in particular has ingeniously revealed the underlying geometry of what he calls the “megalithic plan.” In his recent book with this title,³ Crowhurst observes that Orkney at the far north of Britain and Carnac in France are bound upon a precise north-south axis, and that these principal megalithic sites are further bound by having solstitial azimuths in keeping with the Pythagorean geometry of the 3-4-5 triangle. This again recalls the Pythagorean concerns of the Axis of Saint Michael and of Apollo.

In hoping to discover the purpose for which the megalithic monuments were built, Howard Crowhurst does well to consider traditional lore, and in this he follows the example of his predecessor John Michell. In *The Megalithic Plan*, he quotes in full the story of Lludd and Llevelys from the *Mabinogion*. The pertinent theme of this story, the struggle between a red and a white dragon, in fact reappears famously in the Arthurian legend of Merlin. Crowhurst emphasizes a number of important details in the Welsh account, such as Lludd’s need to measure the length and breadth of Britain in order to determine its center. At this center, Lludd is able to confine the native red dragon and the foreign white dragon together in the form of pigs within a cauldron. Crowhurst demonstrates that Avebury, with its largest of stone monuments, should be considered such a center. Yet the Welsh legend calls this center Oxford, which is not Avebury, and makes no mention of megaliths beyond the building of a kistvaen, or stone container, to inter the dragons within the earth; and Crowhurst fails to give any importance to the site specified as the safe location for this internment, Dinas Emreis (or Emrys) in Wales. According to the story of Lludd and Llevelys, the invasion of the foreign white dragon causes fear and

¹ Unpublished addendum to *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun* (Temple of Justice Books, 2021).

² Even so, Pythagoras has been linked to knowledges of the greatest antiquity through the Islamic doctrine of the Thrice-Great Hermes; see “Idris in Wales” in *Guardians of the Heart: Essays on Sacred Geography* (Temple of Justice Books, 2022).

³ Published by Epistemea in 2021.

barrenness, and Crowhurst interprets this to mean that megalithic science was a European import designed to counteract such negative effects; yet again, megalithic complexes are not relevant to the story, and it would seem that an importation from Europe was the problem not the solution. Crowhurst points out that the struggle of the dragons occurs on the May Day festival, and while he is aware that the Saint Michael Line corresponds to the azimuth of the May Day sunrise, he attributes no significance to this alignment beyond providing the measurement of the breadth of Britain. Given that our subject relates to the Pythagorean tradition, however, it should be recalled that the Pythagoreans were concerned above all with the fate of the soul. For that matter, the dragon is perhaps best recognized as a symbol of the *anima mundi* or World Soul above all.⁴

The Axis of Saint Michael and of Apollo was for the Pythagoreans a pathway for souls, though this has gone unrecognized; at the same time, many of its observable aspects are controversial. Until the publication of *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun*, it was assumed that the alignment proceeded from the Apollonian shrines of Southern Europe to Mont Saint-Michel in France, and beyond to Saint Michael's Mount in England, and even to Skellig Michael at the edge of Ireland. However, it was shown in that book that the trajectory from Mont Saint-Michel to the further sites follows in fact the azimuth of sunset on 8 May, that is, the same day that is referenced by the Saint Michael Line.⁵ But whither then the solstitial axis? Despite the depiction of the alignment as a straight line upon maps, the azimuth of the sunset shifts progressively northward as the alignment reaches further north. Admitting that figure 2 of *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun* provides but an approximation, I suggested in that work that the natural disposition of the Channel Islands warrants consideration for the location of the alignment. Since Blois in France also figures in the text, it may be offered that a solstitial azimuth from Blois does indeed pass very near the Channel Islands, and the "pointing" shape of the Cotentin Peninsula may even be seen as a further indication of sorts, since prominent landforms mark both the midpoint and beginning of this axis.⁶ What matters most, however, is that the alignment from Europe appears to meet the Saint Michael Line after passing through a very significant location, Dartmoor.⁷

⁴ Just as the 7 planets occupy a position between this physical world and the Divine, so does the 7-headed dragon specifically demonstrate a correspondence with the "soul of the world." On this "earth spirit," see especially Michell's *The New View Over Atlantis* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) and *The Earth Spirit: Its Ways, Shrines and Mysteries* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

⁵ Cf. figure 6 on page 93. 8 May corresponds more closely to the cross-quarter day between equinox and solstice than 1 May and is in fact the festival of the Apparition of Saint Michael at Gargano, still commemorated by the Anglo-Catholics of Cornwall.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, page 48. This axis would then appear to bypass Mont Saint-Michel, which seems rather inconceivable. However, if the alignment described above between Skellig Michael and Mont Saint-Michel is extended further, it would in fact intersect with the solstitial axis at Blois, the birthplace, let it be recalled, of René Guénon (Shaykh 'Abdul-Wahid Yahya). The relevance of solar alignments specific to 8 May are confirmed, in a sense, by the Apparition of Saint Michael upon the same date at the very midpoint of the solstitial axis.

⁷ The mystery of the "Three Hares" motif from the Far East by way of the Islamic world seems to be similarly focused upon the churches of Dartmoor.

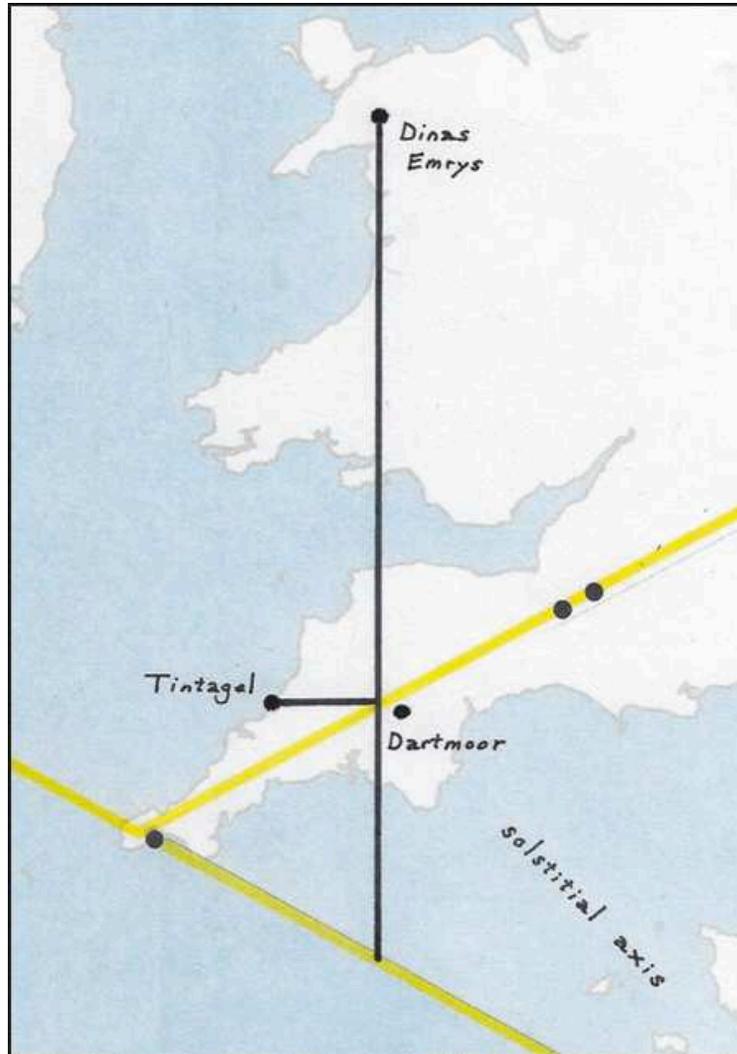
There is perhaps no more fearsome and barren landscape in all of Britain than Dartmoor. Folklore insists that it is a place haunted by the Wisht Hounds and the Wild Hunt, and I already considered the latter in the context of pathways for souls. John Michell quotes an account of a Dartmoor tradition that its stone circles “were first set up at a time when winged serpents basked on the logan rocks and flew around the tors.”⁸ It is appropriate, then, that the leader of the Wild Hunt in Dartmoor is Sir Francis Drake, for while he belongs to a more recent time, his name means dragon. Concerning its stone monuments, Dartmoor holds the greatest concentration of kistvaens, the very structure that is specified in the story of Lludd and Llevelys. Most of these funerary structures are oriented southeast-northwest, that is, in keeping with direction of the solstices, and it has at least been admitted by archaeologists that there is a solar significance to this orientation. The proper role of other monuments has not been recognized, however, in particular the so-called “reaves” or border walls. These are regarded as mundane field divisions, but the strange course and great extent of the “Great Western Reave” clearly marks it as something else. I have recently addressed the matter of the “mystery walls” of America,⁹ and their function should be considered in the context of the reaves, since linear cairns often seem to present a barrier to the straightness of the “paths of the Sun.” Whether in the East or the West, the straightness of these “spirit paths” are understood to hold unseen dangers for the living.

Such psychic dangers threatened the focus of May Day especially, since its emphasis was upon renewal and fertility, and this conflict may easily be compared with the draconian struggles in the story of Lludd and Llevelys. While the proposed meeting place of the two landscape alignments may not be named Oxford, nor even be considered a central point, the Saint Michael Line in itself may easily be considered a center *line* as it passes through Oxfordshire and proceeds to the very end of Cornwall. Regardless, the place where the Saint Michael Line seems to meet the alignment from Europe happens to be due south of a key location in the story, Dinas Emrys in Wales. Now, we have already seen in *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun* that the Hyperborean influence of Apollo finds expression upon the map of Greece by a north-south line linking Tempe and Parnassus, and so may the north-south line between Dinas Emrys and the edge of Dartmoor be understood to express a comparable relationship. In the Greek example, this polar axis further partakes in a geometrical schema involving triangles. In the present context, a triangle is also to be discovered if the polar axis is extended beyond Dartmoor to the alignment linking Cornwall with France. The resulting figure formed by this axis and the May Day alignments suggests an equilateral triangle. As with the example of Apollo, the balancing influence here that relates to the north should likewise be considered Hyperborean. René Guénon has reminded us that the white boar is a principal Hyperborean emblem, and it is as “pigs” that the dragons are safely interred in Dinas Emrys. What is more, since Merlin is attached to another legend of the dragons of Dinas Emrys, it may be recalled that as a Druid he likewise participates in the symbolism of the boar.¹⁰

⁸ *The New View Over Atlantis*, page 68.

⁹ “Some Remarks on the ‘Mystery Walls,’” *Guardians of the Heart*.

¹⁰ Guénon, “The Wild Boar and the Bear,” *Symbols of Sacred Science*, Hillsdale: Sophia Perennis, 2004.



That is not all: the apparent meeting place of the Axis of Saint Michael and of Apollo with the Saint Michael Line is also due east of Tintagel, the legendary birthplace of King Arthur. There is an equinoctial relationship, then, between Tintagel and the meeting place of the alignments, since the east-west axis pertains to the equinoxes, whereas the solstices involve considerations belonging to the north and south, as Guénon has explained.¹¹ This distinction places the solstices in correspondence with the northern or Hyperborean dimension in contrast with the western or Atlantean aspect of the equinoxes. Concerning the meeting of Hyperborean and Atlantean currents in the Celtic tradition, Guénon devotes an entire article to the subject.¹² He observes that Arthur's name means bear, and that the bear belongs to Atlantean symbolism just as the boar is properly Hyperborean. With all this in mind, it must be seen that these two currents are perfectly expressed by the two axes that intersect at the location at the edge of Dartmoor,

¹¹ Cf. Guénon, "The Solstitial Gates," *ibid.*

¹² "The Wild Boar and the Bear," *ibid.* Guénon offers the relationship of Merlin and Arthur as an example of the proper order of things.

the Hyperborean current from Dinas Emrys and the Atlantean from Tintagel. What is more, just as white is associated with Hyperborea, red is associated with Atlantis,¹³ and so the reconciliation of the red and white dragons suggests a deeper significance.

As for Lludd (or Nudd) who accomplishes this reconciliation, it is important to consider the source of his authority. He is in fact equivalent to the Irish Nuada, the first king of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and so his Hyperborean origin is beyond doubt.¹⁴ As indicated by the designations “Lhaw Eraint” in Wales and “Airgetlám” in Ireland, his principal attribute is a supernatural “white hand.” Very remarkably, this same emblem figures in the Holy Qur’an among the Nine Signs given to the prophet Moses.¹⁵ Indeed, the presence of this shared symbol opens up further comparisons between Lludd and one of the highest spiritual personalities in the Abrahamic traditions. A principal event in the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh involves the magicians of the Egyptian court and the serpents conjured by them. As a sign of Moses’ authority, these serpents are vanquished by the staff of Moses that miraculously assumes a comparable form, although Islamic accounts insist upon the rather superior form of a dragon; and so we have here a conflict involving a dragon. Another remarkable correspondence exists in relation to the kinship of Lludd and Llevelys. Just as Moses received support from his brother Aaron, Lludd seeks out and obtains the wise counsel of his brother Llevelys. Even the context of this support is comparable, since Llud is facing three “plagues,” including the plague involving the red and white dragons, while the role of Moses in Egypt likewise involves “plagues.” Such comparisons might be passed over, were it not for the unavoidable detail in the story of Lludd and Llevelys that Dinas Emrys had been formerly known as Dinas “Ffaraon,” that is, Dinas “Pharaoh.”¹⁶

Given this last indication, we must assume that the correspondences between Lludd and Moses were in some measure understood by the compilers of the *Mabinogion*. This is not to presume that their knowledge included the Qur’anic symbolism of the “white hand;” nevertheless, its mysterious presence in this context is easily accounted for by spiritual affiliation, as well as by the singular and suprahuman origin of the Hyperborean currents that belong to the Celtic and Abrahamic traditions alike.¹⁷ John Michell explored themes shared by these traditions in his *Twelve-Tribe Nations*, as the title indicates, and this work also provided him with an opportunity to weigh in on the mystery of the Axis of Saint Michael and of Apollo. In *Sacred Geography and the Paths of the Sun*, I considered the Pythagorean and therefore Hyperborean context for this mystery; moreover, I concluded that the spiritual aspects of the alignment suggest its role as an “Axis of the Awtad.” Now, according to Islamic esoterism, the Pole (*qutb*) is among

¹³ Cf. for example René Guénon, “The Place of the Atlantean Tradition in the *Manvantara*,” *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles*, Hillsdale: Sophia Perennis, 2003.

¹⁴ See *The Red and the White*, Temple of Justice Books, 2019, page 39.

¹⁵ Cf. Qur’an VII, 108. Cf. *Alchemy in Middle-earth* (Temple of Justice Books, 2003, page 5) for Tolkien’s use of this emblem.

¹⁶ Perhaps the place name of Oxford refers more to the spiritual centrality of Moses than English geography; after all, motifs relating to the ox or bull have been recognized in accounts of Moses (e.g. the Golden Calf, the Medieval conception of his “horns,” etc.).

¹⁷ The matter of “British Israelism” is a result, apparently, of confusing these traditions, akin to the notion of the “Welsh Indians” of America (cf. “The Modocs and a World’s Heart” in *Guardians of the Heart*).

the Awtad and is the chief of the saints, whose title brings this rank into correspondence with the North Star (*najmul-qutb*); the influence of the Pole must therefore be considered synonymous with a Hyperborean influence. Concerning Moses specifically, Guénon notes in *The King of the World* that "the Islamic tradition regards Moses as the "Pole" (*al-Qutb*) of his age."¹⁸ Of course, the influence of Moses during his age relates to the Palestinian origin of the landscape axis, and so this influence would have reached Britain from the south-east, not the north. However, it must be recalled that this axis aligns not only to the summer solstice sunset, but also to the winter solstice sunrise, and it is the latter that is faced from Britain; and Guénon has always insisted upon the northern significance of the winter solstice, despite the actual position of the Sun: "the winter solstice is in a way the north pole of the year."¹⁹

All this enables us finally to comprehend how the foreign dragon of the story of Llud and Llevelys, associated above with the solstitial axis from Europe, may nevertheless be seen as representing the Hyperborean influence, in keeping with its white attribute. If the red dragon is native, this might be compared to the example of Pharaoh in Egypt. In the confrontation with Moses, the authority "native" to Egypt was pitted against spiritual authority. Of course, both the Celtic and Egyptian traditions – and indeed the Hebraic – were formed through the confluence of Atlantean with renewed Hyperborean elements.²⁰ This confluence is demonstrated within the Celtic tradition by its emphasis upon the cross-quarter festival of May Day that occurs between equinox and solstice, including in the alignments relating to it. However, an original fusion of elements certainly does not negate the need for subsequent renewals to be accomplished through interventions by the spiritual hierarchy.²¹ Celtic Christianity may be considered such a renewal, and it should be recalled how its establishment at Glastonbury was attached specifically to the Saint Michael Line. On the other hand, resistance to renewal may very well result in "plagues," as the story of Moses in Egypt demonstrates.²² It is important to remember that the solution to the plague of the two dragons does not involve defeat for either the red or the white, at least in the Welsh account, but rather their reconciliation. This was accomplished by the owner of the "white hand" in a northern stronghold, and so talismanic protection was brought to all of Britain. Clearly the renaming of Dinas Pharaoh as Dinas Emrys signifies that the reconciliation of the dragons constituted a renewal. Of course, all this may be beyond the concerns of researchers like Howard Crowhurst, yet he was no doubt correct to suspect the importance of the story of Llud and Llevelys. The ancients understood the nature of the physical, psychic, and spiritual domains, and in our approach to the mysteries of the past, the spiritual domain must always be sought; in fact the spiritual domain provides the *raison d'être* for the other two. No matter our tools, we will fail to understand what the ancients were up to unless we are open to spiritual renewal.

¹⁸ Page 21.

¹⁹ "The Solstitial Gates."

²⁰ Cf. *The Red and the White*, chapter 2.

²¹ The current use of the white dragon as a symbol for native English nationalism only confuses the symbolism here.

²² Recall that Apollo was both the bringer and dispeller of plagues; cf. "The Divine Apollo and COVID-19."