

LEGEND AND FOLKLORE SYMBOLS: Basque Myths

The Basque pantheon consists mainly of spirits rather than deities, but those gods and goddesses that are mentioned are very powerful, such as Mari.

The primary Basque deity, Mari, offers a unique insight into the Mother Goddess worshipped throughout Neolithic Europe. Hidden and mysterious places are named after her, including wells, mountain peaks, caves, standing stones and dolmens (prehistoric tombs). She has titles, such as Mari of the Oven and Mari of the Cavern, that link her to regeneration, birth and fertility. She is often pictured as a woman of outstanding beauty with bird's feet, standing crowned by the full Moon behind her head.

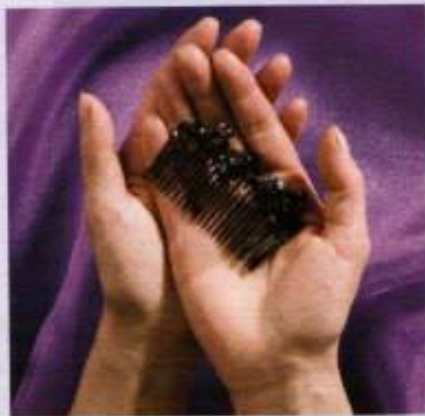
A figure of respect

According to legend she governs wind, thunder, fire, travellers, spinning and herds. It is important not to sit in her presence, to honour her holy places and to never cheat or steal; a wealthy woman once stole Mari's comb only to discover her arable land covered with stones. When leaving Mari's presence, never turn your back, as this is a mark of disrespect that will incur ill fortune.

Mari is the primary goddess of Basque myths, a version of the Great Goddess.



THE SYMBOLISM OF MARI



You can choose to use any of these symbols of Mari in your own spell casting, either at your altar or as charms, but remember to always use them wisely, never forgetting to obey the Basque traditions of politeness and respect for the goddess, and to avoid offending this

All combs are sacred to Mari, not only the special ones used for weaving.

powerful deity and incurring her wrath.

Mari is said to travel through the sky in a chariot pulled by four horses or a ram and in this way she symbolises both the Sun and the Moon. The horses in this image are the elements and the ram, with his long, spiralling horns, represents rebirth and renewal.

Owls and ravens are sacred to Mari, who is herself sometimes depicted as a bird of prey. This aspect of her relates to the death crone, who heals by destroying obstacles and limitations.

As a weaver, the comb (which in the art of weaving is used to prepare stalks of flax) is a magical tool of Mari, symbolising order, ritual and magic.