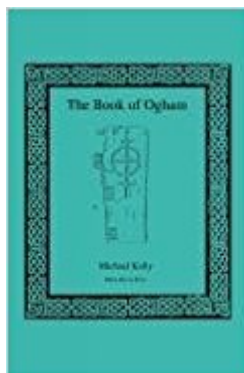


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# The Book Of Ogham



## Synopsis

This is a practical manual for divination using the ancient Celtic characters of ogham writing. However, it is much more than that as well. It opens the doors to the authentic understanding of ancient Celtic cosmology and psychology in ways that have never been done before. This, as much as the divinatory material, opens the reader to vistas as yet uncharted in the fields of Celtic studies. The book contains a complete system of oghamic divination, the lore of each of the 20 ogham characters, a Celtic psychology and Celtic cosmology as well as a complete suggested curriculum for training in Celtic spirituality based on the ogham system. One of the most important new features of this edition is the information demonstrating the fact that the ogham system was not originally a "tree alphabet." This book is a thorough and substantial rewriting of a book by Edred Thorsson by the same name published more than a decade ago. This new edition takes into account important new findings in the realm of ogham studies and must be read and studied by all those who first read the older edition in order that a deeper and more authentic understanding can be reached.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I like this one better than How to read Ogham. It explains a lot more detail.

The definitive work regarding the Celtic Ogham!

XL

Michael Kelly presents us with a revision of "Edred Thorson's" (Stephen Flowers) 1992 work on

ogham. Physically, it is in the standard Raven Press format, with the rough, thin cardstock covers printed in black and white, 5 3/8" x 8 3/8". The printing quality is low, with the diagrams being washed out in the fashion of a photocopy. This low-quality printing allows the small press to survive in this market, though, and doesn't detract from the important information unduly, so it is forgivable (though the page reprinted from the Book of Ballymote is so unreadable that it really should just be removed and replaced with a recommendation to find a picture of it online, but it is not important to the text). More important than the presentation is the content. Kelly gives us an ogham which is based largely on the word-ogham of the Book of Ballymote, rather than the tree-ogham which had dominated the field since the work of Robert Graves, as well as proper translations of the names of the oghams themselves. Using these, he derives a one- or two-word "Inner Meaning" for each, such as "Vitality" or "Insight/Quickening". This is a fruitful approach, though I more strongly recommend the work of Erynn Laurie, *Ogam: Weaving Word Wisdom*, for providing meaning and structure to the ogham. In addition to the meanings of the ogham, Kelly presents a context which is pretty much a reprint of "Thorson's" original work. The cosmology presented is interesting, and would make a fine adjunct to a more focused study of the source materials. It is, however, flawed in a number of ways, such as repeating the old canard about the Cities of the *Tír na nÓg* being in the four directions, rather than all being in the north of the world. This was a late interpretation, provided by William "Fiona Macleod" Sharp, and not a part of ancient Irish lore, but "Thorson" and Kelly present it as though it had the force of antiquity behind it. "Thorson's" novel additions to the lore are much more interesting, such as the figure which places the ogham-fews as liminal aspects of a cosmological model (not to mention the systematizing of several Irish mythological place-names as parts of the Sky/Celestial and Sea/Underworld realms). There is also a chapter titled "Celtic Psychology" which presents a fascinating attempt at an esoteric anthropology, dividing the human into parts of the body and "soul". One of the more entertaining portions of this is the reduction of the "Seven-Part Adam" concept from an Irish manuscript to six *dáile* ("elements"), in order to remove the "soul = Holy Spirit" portion of that doctrine. The authors might have done well to look for one of the eight-part versions extant in order that a final seven-*dáile* model could have resulted, but this one works. They don't go on to explore the implications of this to the cosmological model, though. An excellent, though brief, section of the text explores the creation of ogham strings for magical purposes, along with some other magical practices. This short discussion is nearly worth the full price of the book on its own. Overall, this is an excellent attempt, worth examining for what it can add to the knowledge of Irish cosmology, cosmogony, and magic, but it is flawed. For those new to the ogham and to Irish lore, I'd

recommend Erynn Laurie's book, referenced above, or *The Apple Branch: A Path to Celtic Ritual* by Alexei Kondratiev instead. Those with more experience, though, may find much of value here, if little that explores the implications of the extant lore with any profundity.

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