

FER BENN AND THE DEER CULT IN BUILE SUIBHNE

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FER BENN AND THE DEER CULT IN *BUILE SUIBHNE*

In his introduction to the 1996 reprint of the middle-Irish romance Buile Suibhne, Nagy writes that Chadwick is the first to "conjure the notion of Suibhne as shaman, of the *geilt* as both possessed by and possessor of supernatural inspiration and power, a practitioner of 'archaic techniques of ecstasy', to use Mircea Eliade's phrase, comparable to similar practitioners both in and well beyond the Celtic world[1]."

When examining her 1942 article "Geilt"[2], nowhere have we found the word shaman[3]. It is true, however, that in her 1952 book "Poetry and prophecy", Nora Chadwick studies different traditions throughout the world related to vision, but more globally, the origin of "the inspiration of the seer" which can be "derived from a variety of sources,[4]" for instance "inspiration received in a vision during a battle" as in Irish and Welsh traditions. But, as Nagy says, she does not confine herself to the Celtic world, she also explores "the most interesting figure in Norse mantic tradition of the God Othin, whose most obvious affinities are with the Siberian shamans whom he resembles in a remarkable degree[5]". This means that shamanistic and Geilt traditions are parallel or comparable to Siberian, Turkish, or even Polynesian ones for instance. It would be more relevant to speak of all these people in their different traditions in terms of Seers, and Nora Chadwick wonders whether these traditions were ever derived from a single one.

One will have to wait for Brigit Beneš' 1961 article 'Spuren von Schamanismus in der Sage "Buile Suibhne"', to realise that in spite of everything, one cannot evidence the equation of a *geilt* with a shaman : "*Es sei gleich vorweggenommen, daß nicht exakt bewiesen werden kann, daß ein geilt ein wirklicher Schamane ist [...]*[6]*."*

However, Nagy writes in his 1982 article "The wisdom of the geilt" that "the *sacerdos* Rónán creates a shaman out of the king Suibhne, who is ultimately fostered and guided by another *sacerdos* Moling, a kind of shaman himself[7]." This is conceivable theoretically even if shamanism[8] is not a very old phenomenon. Therefore, in order to find an answer to this open question, we are going to show that there is a deer cult in the romance Buile Suibhne which originates in Siberia and that we can trace it from there to the Atlantic thanks to archaeological finds. Then with the help of a cylindrical jet seal and the Early Hittites deer cult we'll try to show that the Fer Benn in Buile Suibhne and in Cath Magh Tuired is at the crossroad between two civilisations, the hunter and the pastoralist ones.

THE SIBERIAN TRAIL

But in order to make our point, we have to let aside the fictitious character Suibne the geilt, who grew mad at the battle of Magh Rath (637 AD) and "went, like any bird of the air, in

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[1] O'KEEFFE, J.G. Buile Suibhne (The frenzy of Suibhne) being the adventures of Suibhne Geilt, a middle-Irish romance; with a new introduction (1996) by Joseph Falaky Nagy. London: *Irish Texts Society*, 1913/1996. p. 6

[2] CHADWICK, Nora. Geilt, *in Scottish Gaelic Studies, vol. V, part II.* Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1942.

[3] See also Alexandra BERGHOLM : Academic and neo-pagan interpretations of shamanism in Buile Suibhne: a comparative approach, in *Studia Celtica Fennica II*, 2005, pp. 37-38 [scf2bergholm.pdf] and "The saintly madman : a study of the scholarly reception history of *Buile Suibhne*," 2009-11-14, pp. 103-104 [thesaint.pdf]

[4] CHADWICK, N. Kershaw. Poetry & prophecy. Cambridge, 1952, p. 50.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[6] BENEŠ, Brigit. Spuren von Schamanismus in der Sage "Buile Suibhne", in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, Tübingen: M. Niemeyer Verlag, Band 28 Heft ¾, 1961, p. 309.

[7] NAGY, J.F. The wisdom of the geilt, in *ÉIGSE*, vol. 19, 1982, p. 56.

[8]" Le chamanisme" has been published in 1951.

madness and imbecility[9],” and focus our attention on Fer Benn, Suibhne’s real name, who speaks to the mother of a herd of deer, which he seems to be the guardian of when he says at paragraph 40 : "*Cidh iomdha dom dhamraidh-si* / Though many are my stags[10]", and later on : "*A mathair na groidhi-si / rolíatha do lenn, / ni fhuil damh at dheagaidh-si / gan dá fhichead benn"*
"O mother of this herd, / thy coat has become grey, / there is no stag after thee / without two score antler-points[11].”

This situation is strikingly similar to the Siberian one, in Anisimov's 1959 article 'Cosmological concepts of the people of the north' where “the mistress of the earth has a husband—the nameless shepherd of her herd. Together with assistants, likewise nameless shepherds, he tends countless droves of all sorts of animals which the mistress of the earth has at her disposal[12]". Contrary to Siberia, Fer Benn is no husband since he speaks to a mother, and his name means “man of the peaks”, that is peaks of mountains as well as peaks or tops of antler-points, as this play on words will show :

"*síu nobheinn for udmhaille / ag siredh na mbenn*".
“before I restlessly / wandered over the mountain-peaks[13]”.

maith an t-ionadh foradhán (?) / I mullach do bhenn.
“pleasant is the place for seats / on the top of thy antler-points[14]”.

Among the Tungus (or Evenks) of Siberia, this mistress of the earth is one of the two clan's female spirits who are supposed to be living under the roots of the sacred clan tree[15], namely the mistress-mother of the clan, the so-called *bugady enintyn*[16], and the mistress of the clan lands, the so-called *dunne mushunin* (*musunin*). The mistress of the clan lands, was thought to be anthropomorphic by the Evenks, while the mythical mother of people and animals[17], was conceived in one and the same zoomorphic image of an elk cow or the doe of a wild deer. But as a consequence of the decline of the matrilineal clan structure, the image of the zoomorphic clan mother is transformed by degrees into that of a mistress, loosing thereby its former function of motherhood[18], while her zoomorphic features are gradually displaced by anthropomorphic ones.
Fer Benn is very like one of the Evenk's spirit-ancestors who dwell in the nether world and are linked with the image of the clan tree or cosmic tree: “they sit on its branches, guarding the life and well-being of the clan.” This is exactly what Fer Benn does actually, guarding the stags of the mother of the clan or of the universe: “When necessary, the spirits change their zoomorphic form, transforming themselves into people, kinsmen, assistants of the mythical old woman, the mistress of the clan’s settlement of the spirits[19]”. This is probably one of the

[9] O’KEEFFE, p. 15
[10] O'KEEFFE, p. 79.
[11] *ibid.*
[12] ANISIMOV, A.F. Cosmological concepts of the people of the North, in *Studies in Siberian shamanism*, Ed. by Henry N. Michael . Toronto, 1963, p. 176.
[13] O’KEEFFE, p. 70-71.
[14] *ibid*., p. 80- 81.
[15] ANISIMOV, *ibid.* See also Alexandra BERGHOLM. The saintly madman, 2009, pp. 107, n. 385 et p. 108, n. 389. [http://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/47613/thesaint.pdf?sequence=2]
[16] JACOBSON, Esther. The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia. Leiden, 1993. pp. 188-197
[17] ANISIMOV, p. 168.
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 180-181
[19] *Ibid*., p. 182.

best description one can make of Fer Benn, which suits well the image he gives of himself, feathered and swift like a bird when he says in the poem :

"Fer[a]n eidhinn iomuallach / an tan eirghius duinn, / goirid bhim da ttarrachtain / o rofas mo chluimh.
When the proud turtle-dove / rises for us, / quickly do I overtake it / since my feathers have grown[20].”

And elsewhere :

"A ellteóg, a luirgnechóg, / fuarauss-[s]a do ghreim, / misi ort ag marcaighecht / as gach beinn a mbeinn.
O little fawn, O little long-legged one, / I was able to catch thee / riding upon thee / from one peak to another[21].”

Therefore, now we can say that Fer Benn is originally a spirit turning at will from a zoomorphic to an anthropomorphic aspect, bird or guardian of the herds of the mother of the clan. The analogy between the branches of the tree and the antlers of the elk or maral is quite obvious when we know as we said that among the Evenks the mother animal of the clan is conceived as an elk cow or the doe of a wild deer and that she is supposed to be dwelling under the roots of the sacred clan tree.

The rite *shingkelavun*[22] deserves mention here because “the Evenki hunters, like the Paleolithic «sorcerers» portrayed in the Trois Frères caves, much alike the hunting Amerindian decoy runner, wore ritual costumes, with caps made from the skulls of reindeer or elks, imitating the heads of these animals[23].” The object was to perform ritual pantomimes “supposed to bring all the animals of the taiga to the clan's hunting grounds.” “This rite lasted many days, and was carried out by the entire clan near the rock, cliffs, and trees sacred to it—the *bugady* (sacred objects of the clan). In essence, this ritual corresponded to the legend of the pursuit of the sun-animal by hunters, its killing and death, and then the sacrificial meal, with the subsequent solemn burial of the bones and the miraculous resurrection of the buried animal[24].” The myth of the Cosmic hunt referred to here ”was a form of personification of the sun cycle which corresponded to and reflected the forms of economic activities of primitive man[25].” And this is no epiphenomenon since “Siberian ethnographic materials show that the link of the elk-maral image with the sun is one of the most ancient elements of the cosmological concepts of the peoples of Siberia[26].” Therefore, since everything brings us to the conclusion that the Irish 'mother of this herd' whom Fer benn addresses is a spirit-mother of the Siberian kind, archaeology should allow us to pass from the one world to the other.

ARCHAEOLOGY / CHRONOLOGY

Let us shift now to chronology and place ourselves on the scale of time. Okladnikov is probably one of the first scientists to explain that “the rudiments of this [patrilineal] form of

[20] O’KEEFFE, pp. 74-75
[21] *Ibid*., pp. 68-69
[22] ANISIMOV, pp. 177-178
[23] OKLADNIKOV, A.P. Yakutia before its incorporation into the Russian state . Ed. by Henry N . Michael. Montreal; London: McGill-Queen's university press, 1970, p. 97.
[24] *Ibid*., pp. 98/100.
[25] ANISIMOV, p. 163.
[26] *Ibid.*

clan can be discerned in the Cis-Baykal even at the terminal phase of the Neolithic, the Glazkovo[27] period of the second millenium B.C."

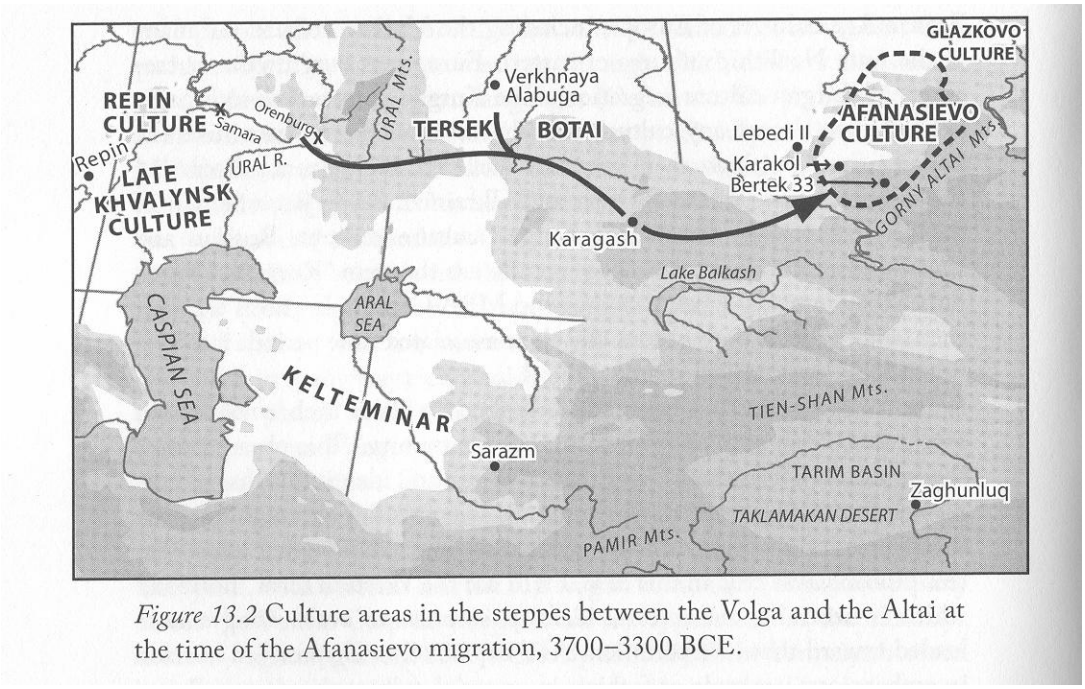


Figure 13.2 Culture areas in the steppes between the Volga and the Altai at the time of the Afanasievo migration, 3700–3300 BCE.

FIGURE 1 : Afanasievo emigration (3700-3300 B.C.E.) (Anthony, 2007, p. 308)

In other words the beginnings of the transformational period between matrilineal and patrilineal clans should have taken place earlier, *i.e* sometimes during the Kitoy[28] period, (third-early second millennium B.C.), which on the Lake Baikal area corresponds to the end of the Neolithic. Furthermore, "According to many investigators, much of the ancient Siberian population changed from using stone to using metal by the middle of that [third] millennium[29]". Therefore, since Fer Benn addresses an (animal-)mother, one can assume that the Irish tradition we are dealing with reflects a clan situation which goes back to a period of the process when motherhood still prevailed, that is probably about the first half of the third millennium B.C.

This evolution taking place during the Lake Baikal Neolithic is contemporaneous with the Afanasievo civilisation, which originates in the Repin culture of the Volga-Ural region about 3.700-3.400 (sic) BCE and established itself in the western Altai[30]. "It flourished there until about 2.400 BCE, through the Yamnaya period in the Pontic-Caspian steppes[31]. It must be stressed that "connections with the Volga-Ural Repin-Yamnaya worlds were maintained by a continuing round of migrations moving in both directions." "It is clear that populations continued to circulate between the Ural frontier and the Altai well into the Yamnaya period in the Ural steppes", bringing many Yamnaya traits and practices to the Altai[32]." It is also clear

[27] OKLADNIKOV, p. 134 et 165.

[28] JACOBSON : « Okladnikov has divided the Baykal Neolithic into a number of stages : the Isakovo stage (fourth millenium) ; the Serovo stage (fourth-third millenium) ; Kitoy stage (third-early second millenium B.C.). The great petroglyphic representations of elk and in particular of female elk are dated to the Serovo stage; during the Kitoy, that image lost its impressive monumentality,» p. 91.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 32

[30] ANTHONY, David W. The horse, the wheel and language: how Bronze Age riders from the Eurasian steppes shaped the modern world. Princeton and Oxford, 2007, p. 306.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 308-309.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 311

that the Europoid migrants from Repin met with Mongoloid people of the forest belt and that the boundary between them was by no means permanent. For instance, "the neolithic population of the taiga west of Lake Baïkal, in particular, shows a Europoid admixture. In their turn, the Mongoloid elements penetrated into the steppe regions[33]."
This chronology enables the mixed Europoid-Mongoloid population of the Afanasievo-Serovo cultural world to have taken part "[...] about 3300 BC [to] the rapid diffusion of the early Yamnaya horizon across the Pontic-Caspian steppes" and "after a pause of only a century or two, about 3100-3000 BC [to a] large migration stream [which] flowed up the Danube valley and into the Carpathian basin during the Early Bronze Age[34]," which we'll find again later on.
Therefore, from these archaeological considerations we can draw the conclusion that the Siberian trail is confirmed by chronology.

THE CYLINDRICAL JET SEAL

The next step that archaeology enables us to follow is this jet cylindrical seal found in Krasnogvardeisk near Maikop Northern Caucasus, in the tomb of a man near his skull, with engraved images of a deer and, [...], the tree of life[35]".

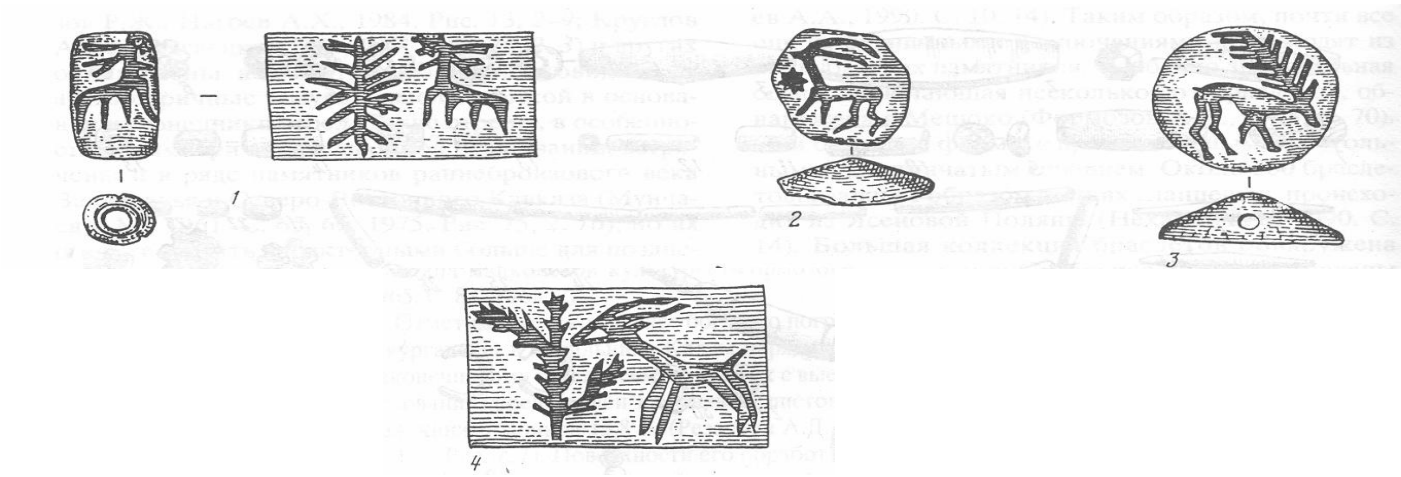


FIGURE 4 : *1*—Krasnogvardeisk, mound 4; *2, 3*—Tepe-Gawra (after A. Tobler); *4*—Egypt (after P. Amiet).
Epokha Bronzy Kavkaza I Srednei Azii, ed. Kushnareva, Markovin, 1994.

"The most likely date for grave 4 is evidently the beginning of the third millennium B.C." explains to us Nekhaev[36] because of the technology of the seal from Mesopotamia which cannot be older than that. David Anthony speaks of radiocarbon post-Maikop dates, 3000-2800 BCE[37]. This chronology coincides with the pre-transformational period in Siberia, when matrilineal tribal life still prevailed. At the same period on the Middle Don there happens "the

[33] LEVIN, M.G. and POTAPOV, L.P. The peoples of Siberia. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 99.
[34] ANTHONY, p. 305.
[35] NEKHAEV, A.A. A burial of the Maikop Culture from the Krasnogvardeisk Village Mound, in *Soviet anthropology and archaeology*, 30, 3. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, p. 32.
[36] NEKHAEV, p. 33.
[37] ANTHONY, p. 290.

second spread of the Repin culture" at the final Eneolithic of the Black Sea steppe[38] in several directions, especially to the North Caucasus at the Novosvobodnaya[39] or post Maikop period which is exactly that of the jet seal.
The association in a tomb of these two symbols Tree and Deer recall the mother animal dwelling under the roots of the sacred clan tree, with yet no shepherd. Besides, since we know that "the ranges of the red deer and European fallow deer do not extend into the Mesopotamian lowlands, and Mesopotamian fallow deer are not found in Anatolia[40]", we can but being convinced that the origin of *Cervus elaphus* on the jet seal with its well developed antlers is different from that of the technique of the seal. All the more so as the early Hittites who will appear a few centuries later in Anatolia will bring with them their totemic deer cult. Moreover, for historians, before their identification as Indo-Europeans, "The Hittites were an "ugly" people "with yellow skins and 'Mongoloid' features," with "receding foreheads, oblique eyes, and protruding upper jaws[41]."

THE HITTITES

A brief study of the early Hittites (2.300-1.900 B.C.), precisely between the middle of the third and the beginning of the second millennium B.C., will strengthen our analysis of the deer and tree jet seal since : « The richness and grave type of the Maikop royal tomb is comparable to that of Alaca Höyük in northern central Anatolia, which itself probably belonged to an Indo-European (pre- or early Hittite) ruler[42].» It appears quite clearly that if the 9 figurations of deer at Alaca Höyük are associated with sun discs, this is not the case for the bull. This means that the symbolic function of the two animals is different :

> As a hunted animal, the deer is paramount, as well as symbolizing a deity. These two aspects for us seem to be the two faces of a unique function where the sacred animal is killed and sacrificed, and the hunted animal is deified [43].

The author, Pierre Crepon, goes on saying that there are numerous other similar cases in different cultures, for instance the bear among the Ainus. But he could have mentioned the red deer among the Tungus as well.
On top of that the hinds are milked within the Hittites sacred enclosures as attested on Puşatly altar of the fifth century A.D. reminding of Pedachtoe enclosures for sacred animals[44] of the third century A.D., being themselves a very old heritage going back at least to the middle of the third millennium B.C. as testified on numerous painted pottery found at Alishar Höyük,

[38] 3500/3400 BC – c. 3000/2900 (?) BC. RASSAMAKIN, Yuri. The Eneolithic of the Black Sea Steppe: Dynamics of Cultural and Economic Development 4500-2300 BC; *in* LEVIN, Marsha. *Late Prehistoric Exploitation of the Eurasian Steppe*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monographs, 1999, p. 122.
[39] *Ibid*., Figure 3.49, p. 124.
[40] COLLINS, Billie Jean. On the trail of the deer: Hittite kūrala-, *in* Hittite studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr. Ed. by BECKMAN, G. BEAL, G. McMAHON, G. Winoma lake (Ind.): Eisenbrauns, 2003, p. 77.
[41] COLLINS, Billie jean. The Hittites and their world. Atlanta : Society of Biblical Literature, 2007
[42] GIMBUTAS, Marija. The Kurgan culture and the Indo-Europeanization of Europe: a collection of papers, ed. by Miriam Robbins Dexter and Karlene Jones-Bley. In *Journal of Indo-European Studies Monographs*. Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man., 1997, pp. 89-90. See also MACQUEEN, J.G. The Hittites and their contemporaries in Asia Minor. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, p. 18.
[43] CREPON, P. « Le cerf est en effet l'animal chassé par excellence et il est aussi l'animal symbolisant une divinité. Ces deux rôles nous semblent cependant être les deux pôles d'une même fonction où l'animal sacré est tué et sacrifié, et l'animal chassé est déifié» *in* Le thème du cerf dans l'iconographie anatolienne des origines à l'époque Hittite, in BCILL, 21: *Hethitica*, IV. Louvain-La-Neuve: Peeters, 2002, p. 149
[44] THIERRY, Nicole. Le culte du cerf en Anatolie et la vision de saint-Eustathe, in *Dossiers Histoire et Archéologie*, n° 121. [S.l.]: [s.n.], 1987, p. 76.

Boghazkeuï and elsewhere[45].Therefore we can safely say that like the Tungus, the deer among the ancient Hittites is a sacred animal, that is the zoomorphic epiphany of the spirit-mother dwelling under the tree, as *totem* centre of the clan or tribe.

As for the bull now, later on as we know, the "roaring bull" will be associated with thunder, "but may be at this phase of symbolism the manlike storm-god picturing the male principle did not still exist in Anatolia[46]." In a first step of the hibridization process the male principle will appear associated with the male deer. Later on, the hart will be replaced by the bull, and :

> Finally at Doliche in Commagene, the cult of which is linked to Anatolia by its Hittites origins, Hadad, the thunderbolt god, pictured staying on a bull, is accompanied by a goddess, staying often on a hind[47].

In the final phase coinciding with the Empire, the male principle will overcome. This evolution of the male principle will strengthen our forthcoming hypothesis about Fer Benn as Dagda's first name in Cath Magh Tuired.

THE DEER TRAIL

But contrary to the Hittites who reached southward the Caucasus Mountains, some other Proto-Indo-European of the Yamnaya groups went westward, and one of them in eastern Hungary could have spawned both pre-Italic and pre-Celtic.
Therefore from now on, following the deer trail means following the Indo-Europeans to the Atlantic, as in the Usatovo tumuli: "The bull and stag were the chief animals in burial rites [...] in the Crimea and the district of Odessa[48] (...). » "The general character of the symbolism is reminiscent of Val Camonica and south Scandinavian rock engravings[49]." In Polonia there has been found a deer in a burial at Pikutkowo[50] brought there by the Corded pottery (or Battle Axe) people before the complex reached Scandinavia, where "the stag was involved in the general complex of ideas which surrounded the ship[51] [...], and sometimes replaces the horse as the sun animal[52]."
In the Val Camonica, the relationship between the deer and the sun will prove fundamental although mysterious, as shown by a figure carved in Paspardo whereon the symbolized beams of a sun take the shape of antler-tines[53].
Now Cernunnos, whose etymology is the same as Hittite Kurunta from PIE **ker*[54], is by far the most famous deer related deity in Gaul, on the Gundestrup cauldron for instance.
In the meantime, deer rock drawings had appeared in the Iberian peninsula as early as 2000 B.C.E. in Galicia[55], and consequently, the deer cult became widespread in the whole of the

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[45] PRZEWORSKI, p. 68.
[46] GONNET-BAĞANA, Hatice. Le disque solaire Hittite d'après les documents archéologiques, in *Anadolu*, 11. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1967, p. 173.
[47] *Ibid*., « Enfin à Doliché en Gomagène, dont le culte se rattache par ses origines hittites à [celui] d'Anatolie, Hadad, le dieu de la foudre, figuré debout sur le taureau, a pour parèdre une déesse, qui souvent est supportée par une biche." p. 528.
[48] GIMBUTAS, Marija. Bronze Age cultures in Central and Eastern Europe. The Hague : Mouton, 1965, p. 468
[49] *Ibid*., pp. 494-495.
[50] GIMBUTAS, Marija. The civilization of the goddess. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, p. 369
[51] GELLING, Peter and DAVIDSON, Hilda Ellis. The chariot of the sun: and other rites and symbols of the Northern Bronze Age. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1969, p. 94.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[54] COLLINS, *ibid.*, p. 81.

pre-roman peninsula where "the deer was considered the mythic ancestor of the Celts and Germans, since it is one of the most popular symbols of fecundity, as the funeral animal, and the guide of the dead[56]."
From Galicia the rock drawings will sail to Ireland and Scotland : in Scotland there are deer carvings at Ford, and they are linked with the Food-vessels like in Galicia[57].

FER BENN / DAGDA

This being said, we cannot fail to mention the other Fer Benn, namely the Dagda : both Suibhne and the Dagda have a problem with their real name which actually is Fer Benn, or should I say which begins with Fer Benn concerning the Dagda, since his written full name with its 22 terms[58] is two lines long[59].
We have just seen that the Hittite male principle is the direct ancestor of Zeus or Jupiter Dolichenos the god father, which corresponds in Ireland to the Daghdha Ollathair (*i.e.* universal father). This male principle will appear in the first place standing on a male deer, holding the bow and the thunderbolt staying on a deer it keeps on the leash [...]. So that this name Fer Benn stuck to the Dagda, does not look that unexpected after all. We may have in Ireland the remains of a popular tradition in which "Fer benn" could have acted as a kind of graft in the course of the hybridization process along the centuries between the matricentered Siberian hunters and the patricentered Kurgan pastoralists, the origin of which is to be seeked in the Yamanaya horizon. I suggest that the male principle would have appeared in an early phase of the evolution as the son of the animal-mother, whereas in a later phase this male principle would have turned into an insignificant husband of the mistress of the earth *Dunne mushunin*. Interestingly, among the early Hittites, "the Mother Goddess came before her spouse, the Storm God. Whether this situation reflects a matriarchal system has not yet been settled, but certain scholars accept this idea[60]."
Even in Ireland the Dagda's symbolism is close enough by some aspects to the deer one, in so far as his very name, Celtic **Dago-dēwos* means good god, but also good day since *día* "god" and *día* "day" come from the same **deiwo-s*: "the Indo-European name of the blue sky and the day god[61]." This way the link of the Dagda with the sun becomes conspicuous, "the sky god, storm god, earth god, and the sun[62]," rising sun but also setting sun wherefrom he would get his association with death and regeneration. And this is another common feature the Dagda shares with the deer symbolism, which relation with the sun and the nether world is

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[55] BUHÍGAS, Ramón Sobrino. Corpus petroglyphorum Gallaciae. A Coruña: Seminario de estudos Galecos, 2000, *Fig.* 122/126.
[56] MAIA-BESSA, Katia. Recherches sur les différents aspects du syncrétisme religieux dans la Lusitanie romaine. Thèse sous la dir. de Jean-Pierre Martin. [S.l.] : [s.n.], 1999, p. 110. "Enfin, pour convaincre de l'importance du cerf, il suffit de nous rappeler la lutte très dure et prolongée de l'église contre les rituels de déguisement du cerf (*cervulo facere*)" pp. 111-112.
[57] There are 2 or 3 other possible sites on Great Britain for a deer cult coming from the continent in the first millennium B.C.: Scotland about 800 BC and Yorkshire about 500/400 BC. See CUNLIFFE, Barry. Iron Age communities in Britain. Routledge, 2010, pp. 83-84.
[58] SAYERS, William. *Cerrce*, an archaic epithet of the Dagda, Cernunnos and Conall cernach," in *Journal of Indo-European studies*, Washington, 1972, vol. 16, 3-4, p. 344.
[59] GRAY, Elizabeth A. ed. [and transl.] by. Cath Maige Tuired : the Second Battle of Mag Tuired. Dublin : Irish texts society, 1982. " Fer benn Brúach Brogaill Broumide Cerbad Caic Rolaig Builc Labair Cerrce Di Brig Oldathair Boith Athgen mBethai Brightere Tri Carboid Roth Rimaire Riog Scotbe Obthe Olaithbe", p. 49.
[60] KARASU, Kem. Why did the Hittites have a thousands deities? *In* Hittite studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr. *Ibid*., p. 227
[61] LAMBERT, P.-Y. Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien de J. Vendryès, 1996, p. D-65.
[62] SIMMONS, Victoria; SJÖBLOM, Tom, *in* Celtic culture: a historical encyclopedia. Ed. John T. Koch: Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2006, p. 553-554.

pervading. To such an extent as one may ask whether the Irish Dagda is the same god as the Gaulish Taranis[63], whose association with the thunder of the roaring bull is complete.

This possible part played by Fer Benn as a graft with the pastoral kurgan mythology represented in Ireland by the Dagda of the Tutha Dé Danann, is given more potency by the name of the (mistress-)mother of the clan *Bugady Enintyn* and the mistress of the clan lands *Dunne mushunin*. First, "the synonym for *buga* is *dunne* (*dunda*)," and moreover :

> The stem *dun* || *don* is apparently of very ancient origin, and existed before the crystallization of the linguistic stocks [which form the basis of] modern language families. In Sanskrit the word *dhuni* meant "river." A. Afanasyev points out that [the] word *dhuni* was introduced into the Slavic languages from the east ("Don," "Danube," and, in general, "river" in the songs of the Poles and Galicians)[64].

The name of the river Danube is said to come from the older form **Dānouio,*"The Welsh river-name *Donwy* reflects this same original form *Dānouio-*, which is thus shown to have existed in Proto-Celtic[65]."

> The Slavic river-names *Don*, *Dniepr*, and *Dniestr* are borrowings from Scythian **dānu*, **dānu apara* 'upper river', **dānu nazdya* 'lower river'. Although these three river names are loans from Scythian [...], Welsh *Donwy* leaves no doubt that Celtic and Iranian had the same inherited river-name [...][66].

If this common inherited word as it seems was the Tungus "*dunne*," it would appear therefore that there is a linguistic link between Tungus "*dunne*," Proto-Celtic *Dānouio-*, and Welsh *Donwy*". This of course would be quite a strong case for a deer cult in the Celtic countries coming from Siberia.

CONCLUSION

All this brings us back to Nora Chadwick's analysis of the mythological situation in North Western Medieval Europe where connections between Celtic and Norse mantic traditions for example can clearly be evidenced. We have just shown from the Celtic point of view that in order to explain these connections, one does not need the help of a shaman[67], a Siberian personage who cannot be older than the Bronze Age[68], that is the first half of the second millennium BCE, and whose name is not attested before the second part of the first millenium

[63] SAYERS, William. *Ibid.* p. [341].
[64] VASILEVICH, G.M. Early concepts about the universe among the Evenks (materials), in *Studies in Siberian shamanism*. *Ibid.* : "As it developed further, its original meaning, "surrounding nature" (mountains, rivers, forests) was restricted differently in the different linguistic stocks: in some to "land" (mountains, forest), in others to "river." p. 49 et 77, n. 6.
[65] PEB, CW, *in* KOCH, p. 569.
[66] *Ibid.* See DEXTER, Miriam Robbins. Reflections on the goddess *Donu. In *The mankind quarterly*, vol. XXXI, N° 1&2, Fall/Winter 1990
[67] MEILLET, Antoine. Le Tokharien, in *Indogermanishes Jahrbuch*: *im Auftrag der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1914. See also MALLORY, J.P. ADAMS, D.Q. The Oxford introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indian-European world. OUP, 2006, pp. 134-137 and 356, 357.
[68] DIÓSZEGI, Vilmos. Tracing shamans in Sibiria. Oosterhout: Anthropological Publications, 1960, pp. 194-199.

B.C[69]. Our opinion is justified by the fact that beyond the pastoralist tradition originating in the Kurgan civilisations from the steppes as shown by Marija Gimbutas, there is also connected to it a hunting tradition very much apparent among the Early Hittites, and among the Irish with Fer Benn and also in the Leinster or Finn cycle. This tradition, I think goes back as far as the end of the fourth millenium B.C. in Western Siberia, involving Europoid and Mongoloid people as well. It is true however that if the pre-Christian Celts are not concerned with shamanism, they are much concerned with totemism or ancestors cults, the deer cult being one of them.
In the same time, I feel very much concerned with Nora Chadwick's theme of research 'the inspiration of the seer', neutral and universal as it is because it takes into account a wide range of completely different traditions throughout the world. After all, seeking a vision is the accomplishment of a seer or seeress, whether he or she be named locally a shaman, a *file* or whatever :

> The Ket [for example] are broadly similar to other early hunter-gatherers across the globe, where certain members of the tribe are regarded as being endowed with special powers to heal the sick through spiritual intervention, normally accomplished through magical singing[70].

In this respect, the Native Northern American civilisations, in which visions[71], dreams and magical songs[72] are central in the relation to the spirits, as in the Celtic countries never involved a shaman.

E koun PER DENEZ (1921-2011), tad ar c'helenn brezhoneg

[69] MIRONOV, Nikolaï D. et SHIROKOGOROFF, S.M., "Śramaṇa-Shaman : etymology of the word "Shaman", in *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. LV. Shangai: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924, pp. 105-130.
[70] VAJDA, Edward J. *Ibid*. : "The Ket are broadly similar to other early hunter-gatherers across the globe, where certain members of the tribe are regarded as being endowed with special powers to heal the sick through spiritual intervention, normally accomplished through magical singing," p.145.
[71] TURNER, Geoffrey. Les Indiens d'Amérique du Nord. A. Colin, 1985, pp. 63-65, 168, 177-178.
[72] Le grand livre des Indiens d'Amérique ; trad. Anne Sladovic.209 Paris : Atlas, 1996 ; London : Salamander Books, 1995, p. 209.

DINNEEN Foclóir gaedhilge agus béarla

GEALT, *g.* –eilte, *d.* –eilt, *pl.* –a, geilte-(anna), f. : a madman or lunatic, a crazy person; a preternatural being in folklore, a sylph Génie de l'air de la mythologie gauloise et germanique (petit robert 1989, p. 1903)

Suibhne geilt S. The mad

A GEILT : one who goes mad from terror ; a panic striken fugitive from battle ; a crazy person living in the woods and supposed to be endowed with the power of levitation ; a lunatic ; translated volatilis

Magh Rath Dal Riada Domnall Brecc, Lough Neagh
Ui Neill Domhnall son of Aedh

Fer Benn adresses a prayer to a mother of a herd of deer...

The **Yamna culture** (Ukrainian: Ямна культура, Russian: Ямная культура, "Pit [Grave] Culture", from Russian/Ukrainian яма, "pit") is a late copper age/early Bronze Age culture of the Southern Bug/Dniester/Ural region (the Pontic steppe), dating to the 36th–23rd centuries BC. The name also appears in English as *Pit Grave Culture* or *Ochre Grave Culture*.

Dana mère mythique de la dernière génération des dieux qui régnèrent sur l'Irlande.
pre chretiens

TDD / Fomoire
2 Cath Maigh Tuired