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A DEER CULT IN *BUILE SUIBHNE*

INTRODUCTION

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 Suibne 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 :

> "It is tempting to suppose that they may have formed a link in early times between the ancient mantic systems of the southern portion of Eurasia, as the cult of Othin and other features of Norse religion bear witness to an ancient link between Teutonic and Celtic manticism on the one hand and the shamanism of northern Asia on the other[6]."

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, we cannot evidence the equation of a *geilt* with a shaman[7]. However, Nagy writes in his 1982 article "The wisdom of the geilt" that "the *sacerdos* Rónán creates a shaman out of the king Suibne, who is ultimately fostered and guided by another *sacerdos* Moling, a kind of shaman himself[8]". Even if this is conceivable theoretically since shamanism is not a very old phenomenon, it is utterly out of the question on the synchronical level. The common origin which Nora Chadwick is rightfully looking for, epitomized in her blanket word 'Seer', a word which would advantageously replace Mircea

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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: at the University press, 1952, p. 50.

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

[6] *Ibid*., p. 12.

[7] BENEŠ, Brigit. Spuren von Schamanismus in der Sage "Buile Suibhne", in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, Tübingen: M. Niemeyer Verlag, Band 28 Heft ¾, 1961: "Es sei gleich vorweggenommen, daß nicht exakt bewiesen werden kann, daß ein *geilt* ein wirklicher Schamane ist [...]," p. 309.

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

Eliade's encroaching 'shamanism' published in 1951, is to be seeked obviously on the diachronical level.

THE SIBERIAN TRAIL

But in order to make our point, we have to let aside the fictitious character Suibne the geilt, and focus our attention on Fer Benn who speaks to the mother of a herd of deer, which he seems to be the guardian of when he says : "Cidh iomdha dom dhamr*aidh*-si / Though many are my stags[9]", 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"[10].

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". 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 sir*edh* na mbenn".
"before I restlessly / wandered over the mountain-peaks[11]".

maith an t-ionadh foradh*án* (?) / I mullach do bhenn.
"pleasant is the place for seats / on the top of thy antler-points[12]".

Among the Tungus (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[13], namely the mistress-mother of the clan, the so-called *bugady enintyn*, and the mistress of the clan lands, the so-called *dunne mushunin* (*musunin*). The mistress of the clan lands or of the earth, was thought to be anthropomorphic by the Evenks, while the mythical mother of people and animals[14], 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, 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

[9] O'KEEFFE, *ibid*., p. 79.
[10] *ibid*.
[11] *ibid*., p. 70-71.
[12] *ibid*., p. 80- 81.
[13] ANISIMOV, A.F. Cosmological concepts of the people of the North, in *Studies in Siberian shamanism*, Ed. by Henry N. Michael (Arctic Institute of North America anthropology of the North : Translations from Russian sources, N°4. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1963, p. 176.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 168.

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[15]”. This is probably one of the 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” (*ibid*., 74-75).

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” (*ibid*., 68-69).

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 mistress-mother, or mistress of the clan lands. 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. Furthermore, the image of birds on top of antler-tines which we find in this poem, is also the 5th century Scythian artistic rendering of a Siberian mythological theme much wider and more ancient than

> “the animal style of the steppe tribes, [in which] in the first millenium B.C., a central place was occupied by representations of gold-antlered «sun deer»--the reindeer or red deer, the mountain goat *tėkė*—and also by predators, the panther or bear, [whereas] in the art of the forest regions of northern Siberia, beginning with the Neolithic, the old representations of the elk run like a thread as before[16]”.

The rite *shingkelavun* deserves mention here because “the Evenki hunters, like the Paleolithic «sorcerers» portrayed in the Trois Frères caves, wore ritual costumes, with caps made from the skulls of reindeer or elks, imitating the heads of these animals[17].” The object was to perform ritual pantomimes “supposed to bring all the animals of the taiga to the clan's hunting grounds[18].” “This rite lasted many days, and was carried out by the entire clan near the rock, cliffs, and trees sacred to it—the *bugady*. 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[19].” 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[20].” And this is no epiphenomenon since “Siberian ethnographic materials show that the

[15] *Ibid*., p. 182.
[16] OKLADNIKOV, A.P. Yakutia. Arctic Institute of North America, 1970, p. 156.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 97.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] *Ibid*., pp. 98/100.
[20] ANISIMOV, *ibid*., p. 163.

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[21].” Therefore, since everything brings us to the conclusion that the Irish 'mother of this herd' whom Fer benn addresses is an animal mother of the Siberian kind, archaeology should allow us to pass from the one world to the other.

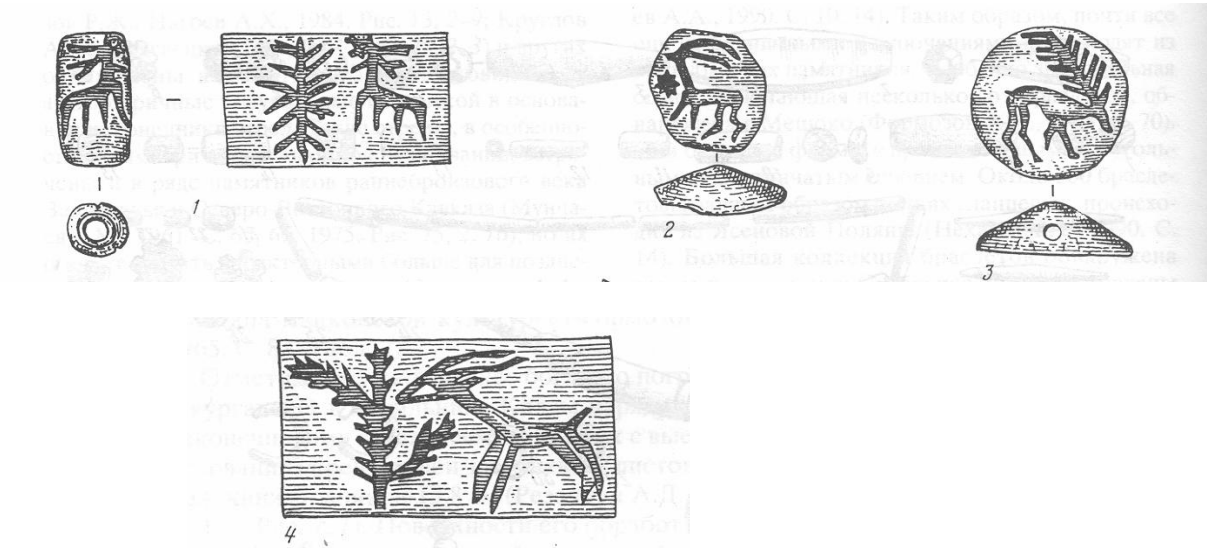
ARCHAEOLOGY / CHRONOLOGY

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 clan can be discerned in the Cis-Baykal even at the terminal phase of the Neolithic, the Glazkovo[22] period of the second millenium B.C." In other words the beginnings of the transformation period between matrilineal and patrilineal clans should have taken place before this period, *i.e* sometimes during the Kitoy[23] period, (third-early second millennium B.C.), which corresponds to the end of the Neolithic on the Lake Baikal area. Therefore, since Fer Benn is addressing a 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 about the third millennium B.C.
This evolution which takes place during the Lake Baikal Neolithic is contemporaneous with the Afanasievo civilisation in the Minusinsk steppe belt which originates in the Repin culture of the Volga-Ural region about 3700-3500 BCE and established itself in the western Altai[24]. “It flourished there until about 2400 BCE, through the Yamnaya period in the Pontic-Caspian steppes[25], and "connections with the Volga-Ural Repin-Yamnaya world were maintained by a continuing round of migrations moving in both directions[26].” This means that the Europoid migrants from Repin met with Mongoloid people of the forest belt and 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[27]." There has been singled out "a migration of the Serovo population of Eastern Siberia into the Kuznetsk basin [in the late fourth to early third millennium B.C.[28]]. Having mastered the territory of the Kuznetsk basin and the forest-steppe Altay, the new population would have been in contact with the Afanasyevo herders inhabiting the Gornyy Altay who originated there in the beginning of the third or even the end of the fourth millennium B.C.[29].” I suggest that this meeting period might have prompted by itself

[21] *Ibid.*
[22] OKLADNIKOV, *ibid*., p. 134 et 165.
[23] JACOBSON, Esther. The deer goddess of Ancient Siberia: a study in the ecology of belief. Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1993, p. 91: « 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.»
[24] ANTHONY, David W. The horse, the wheel and language: how Bronze Age riders from the Eurasian steppes shaped the modern world. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 306.
[25] *ibid*., pp. 308-309.
[26] *ibid*. p. 308.
[27] LEVIN, M.G. and POTAPOV, L.P. The peoples of Siberia. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 99.
[28] SHER, Yakov A. et FRANCFORT, Henri-Paul. Répertoire des pétroglyphes d’Asie Centrale. fascicule n° 4, Sibérie du sud 4 : Cheremushny Log, Ust’-Kulog. Stèles de Khakassie. in (*Mémoires de la mission archéologique française en Asie Centrale*, V, 4). Paris : De Boccard, 1999, pp. 5-6: “L.P. Ziablin (1973, 65-73) found out a neolithic site dated from the end of the fourth to the beginning of the third millenium B.C”. See also BOBROV, Vladimir V. On the problem of interethnic relations in south Siberia in the third and early second millenia B.C., in *Arctic anhropology*, vol. 25, n°2. Padison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, p. 40.
[29] BOBROV, *ibid*., p. 42.

the slow decline of the matrilineal clan structure and the apparition later on of a meaningless shepherd spirit. Anyway, this chronology enables the mixed Europoid-Mongoloid population of the Afanasievo-Serovo cultural world to have taken part "some three to five centuries later, about 3300 BC, in the rapid diffusion of the early Yamnaya horizon across the Pontic-Caspian steppes [...], and then about 3100-3000 BC a large migration stream [...] flowed up the Danube valley and into the Carpathian basin during the Early Bronze Age[30]."

Therefore from these archaeological considerations we can draw the conclusion that the 'nameless shepherd and mistress of the earth's husband' can be the root of Fer Benn, and lies ultimately in the Neolithic tribes of Siberia somewhere around Lake Baïkal.



1—Krasnogvardeisk, mound 4; *2, 3*—Tepe-Gawra (after A. Tobler); *4*—Egypt (after P. Amiet).

Skeudenn 1: Sielloù Krasnogvardeisk, Tepe-Gawra, hag Ejipt [Seals]
Epokha Bronzy Kavkaza I Srednei Azii, ed. Kushnareva, Markovin, 1994:

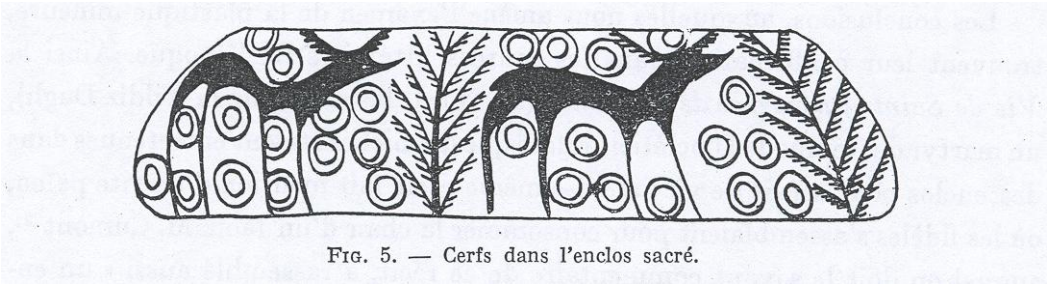
The next step that archaeology enables us to follow is this cylindrical seal found at Krasnogvardeisk near Maikop in the tomb of a man near his skull, with engraved images of a deer and, [...], the tree of life[31]". "The most likely date for grave 4 is evidently the beginning of the third millennium B.C." explains to us Nekhaev[32] because of the technology which cannot be older than that. Besides, when 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[33]", we can but being convinced that the origin of the animal is different from that of the technique of the seal. All the more so as the early Hittites

[30] ANTHONY, *ibid.*, pp. 305-306.
[31] 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 ; and BOUCHERIT, G. L'esprit-mère dans Buile Suibhne : romance en moyen-irlandais, du XIIe siècle. Thèse : Rennes 2, 2009 et *Ibid.*, Lille : ANRT, 2010, pp. 306-318.
[32] NEKHAEV, *ibid*., p. 33.
[33] COLLINS, Billie Jean. On the trail of the deer: Hittite kūrala-, in *Hittite studies in honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr*. / Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003, p. 77.

who will appear in the region farther south a few centuries later will undoubtedly bring with them their totemic deer cult.

THE HITTITES

A brief study of the early Hittites (2.300-1.900 B.C.) will strengthen our analysis : « 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[34].» 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 :



Skeudenn 2: Kirvi er c'hloziad nevet [Deer in the sacred enclosure]

> « 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[35].»
>
> [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]

The author goes on saying that there are numerous other similar cases in different cultures, for instance the bear among the Ainus, but he could also have mentioned the maral-red deer among the Tungus. Moreover the hinds are milked within the Hittite sacred enclosures as attested on Puşatly altar of the fifth century A.D. reminding of Pedachtoe enclosures for sacred animals[36] 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, Boghazkeuï and elsewhere[37]. Therefore we can safely say that the deer among the ancient Hittites is a sacred animal, that is their totem animal or ancestor (mistress-)mother of the clan or tribe.

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[34] 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.

[35] CREPON, P. 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.

[36] 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.

[37] PRZEWORSKI, Stefan. Le culte du cerf en Anatolie, in *Syria: revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie*, vol. 21 / Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient. Paris: P. Geuthner, 1940, p. 68.

Skeudenn 3: Goro un heizez nevet[38] [milking a sacred hind]
(Thierry, 1987, p. 76).

As for the bull now, later on as we know, it 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[39].” In a first step this male principle will appear associated with the male deer :

> « Un bas-relief hittite de Malatia en Cappadoce, aujourd’hui au Musée de Constantinople, figure le dieu Teshoub, tenant l’arc et le foudre (l’ancêtre direct du Zeus Dolichénos) debout sur un cerf qu’il conduit au moyen d’une laisse […]. Il semble qu’à cette époque reculée le cerf fût consacré au dieu mâle, la biche à sa parèdre féminine[40].»
>
> [A Hittite bas-relief from Malatia in Cappadocia, today in Constantinople museum, pictures the god Teshoub, holding the bow and the thunderbolt (the direct ancestor of Zeus Dolichenos) staying on a deer it keeps on the leash [...]. At this remote epoch, the hart would be dedicated to the male god, the hind to its female companion.]

Later on, the hart has been replaced by the bull :

[38] « Autel de Puşath (Ve siècle). Musée archéologique de Kayseri. Scène de traite d’une biche sacrée évoquant les enclos des bêtes sacrificielles a Pédachtoé . Au revers est représenté l’Ascension d’Elie. »
[39] GONNET-BAĞANA, Hatice. Le disque solaire Hittite d'après les documents archéologiques, in *Anadolu*, 11. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1967, p. 173.
[40] CUMONT, Franz. L'archevêché de Pédachtoé et le sacrifice du faon, in *Byzantion*, vol. VI, n° 2. Bruxelles: secrétariat de la revue, 1931, p. 528 et 529.

> « 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[41]."
>
> [Finally at Doliche in Commagene, in the Hittite cult which originates in Anatolia, Hadad, the thunderbolt god, pictured staying on a bull, is accompanied by a goddess, staying often on a hind.]

Still later on during the Empire, the male principle will overcome and it is probably the previous goddess Hatti, namely the sun-goddess of Arinna, turned into Juno Dolichenos whom the Hittite tutelary deity of the field standing on his sacred deer may have replaced[42]. Anyway this evolution of the male principle associated with the male deer and later on with the bull 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 the Caucasus Mountains, some other Indo-European groups went westward, and one of them in eastern Hungary could have spawned both pre-Italic and pre-Celtic: « Bell Beaker sites [...], west of the Yamnaya settlement region, are dated about 2800-2600 BCE. They could have been a bridge between Yamnaya on their east and Austria/Southern Germany to their west, through which Yamnaya dialects spread from Hungary into Austria and Bavaria, where they later developed into Proto-Celtic[43].»

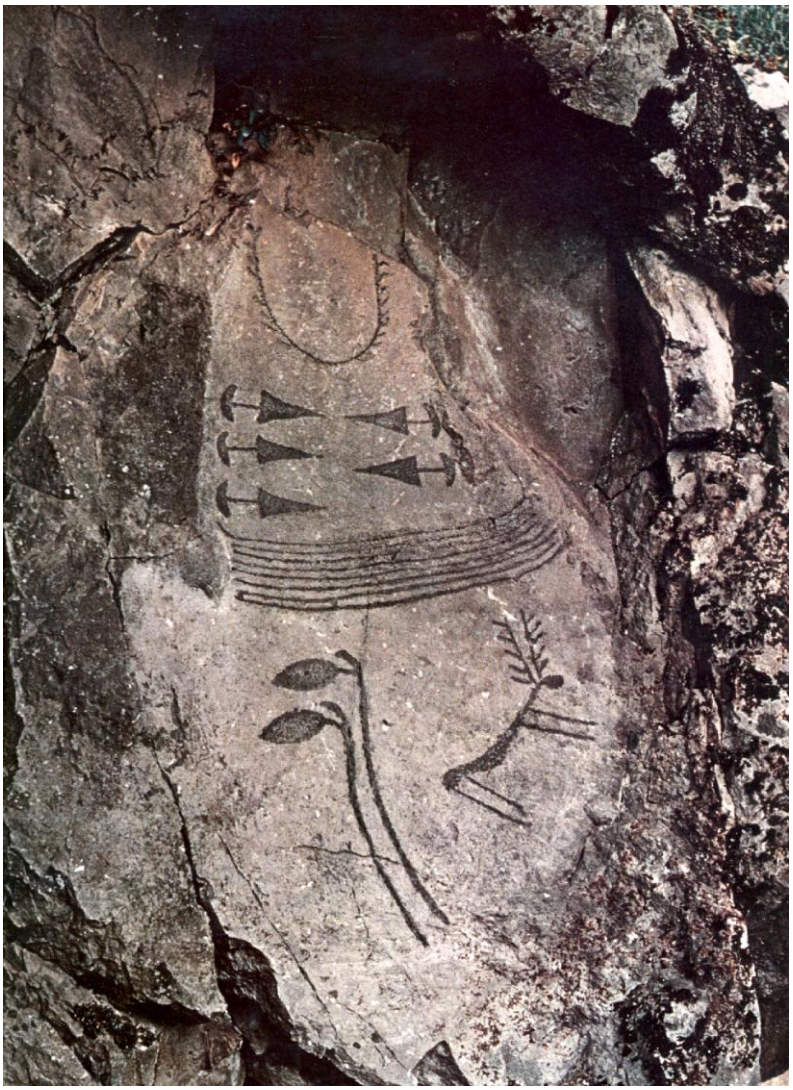
a

Skeudenn 4 : Kirvi en ur vag [Deer in a ship]
(Gelling, Davidson, 1969, fig. 40a, p. 83)

Therefore from now on, following the deer trail means following the Indo-Europeans to the Atlantic, to begin with the catacomb-grave tradition, as in the Usatovo tumuli: "The bull and stag were the chief animals in burial rites [...] in the Crimea and the district of Odessa[44] (...).» Even more important "the general character of the symbolism is reminiscent of Val Camonica and south Scandinavian rock engravings[45]." In Polonia there has been found a deer in a burial at Pikutkowo[46] brought there by the Corded pottery (or Battle Axe) people before the complex reached Scandinavia. There, in the Bronze Age "the stag was involved in the general complex of ideas which surrounded the ship[47] [...], and sometimes [it] replaces the horse as the sun animal, so the appearance of antlers on a ship need cause no surprise[48].» In the Val Camonica,

[41] *Ibid*., p. 528.
[42] THIERRY, ibid., p. 66 et CRÉPON, *ibid*., p. 147.
[43] ANTHONY, *ibid.*, p. 367.
[44] GIMBUTAS, Marija. Bronze Age cultures in Central and Eastern Europe. The Hague : Mouton, 1965, p. 468
[45] *ibid*., pp. 494-495.
[46] GIMBUTAS, Marija. The civilization of the goddess. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, p. 369
[47] 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., 1969, p. 94.
[48] *ibid.*, p. 82.

only from the end of the Bronze Age did the deer appear on the rocks: “The religion of the deer-god developed therefore during the first millenium B.C.[49].” Again 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[50].



Skeudenn 5: Roc'h Capitello dei Due Pini, Paspardo[51]
(Anati, 1982, fig. 228)

Now Cernunnos, whose etymology is the same as Hittite Kurunta and Runt(iy)a, from PIE **ker*[52], is by far the most famous deer related deity in Gaul, for instance “on a monument dedicated by Parisian sailors [Nautes pillar] in the reign of Tiberius[53]”, or on the Gundestrup cauldron.

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[49] ANATI, Emmanuel. La civilisation du Val Camonica. Paris: Arthaud, 1960. 1960, "la religion du dieu-cerf s'est donc développée dans le courant du Ier millénaire,” pp. 171-172.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[51] Le rocher aux cinq poignards, au Capitello dei Due Pini, près de Paspardo. Composition monumentale de la période III-A (Calcholithique : 3200-2500 av. J.-C.).
[52] COLLINS, *ibid.*, p. 81.
[53] GREEN, Miranda J. Exploring the world of the Druids. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997, pp. 59-60.

Nevertheless, deer rock drawings had appeared in the Iberian peninsula as early as 2000 B.C. in Galicia[54], and consequently but not necessarily related, the deer cult became widespread in the whole of the pre-roman peninsula where "the deer was considered the mythic ancestor of the Celts and Germans[55], since it is one of the most popular symbols of fecundity, as the funeral animal, and the guide of the dead."

From Galicia the rock drawings will sail to Ireland and Scotland : « But the vast majority of non-megalithic scribings in Ireland belong to what is here termed the "Galician" series, often termed "cup and ring" carvings[56] ». In Scotland the deer carvings are linked with the Food-vessels like in Galicia, and there are other possible sites in Alba for a deer cult coming from the continent in the first millennium B.C.

FER BENN / DAGDA

This being said, we cannot fail to mention the other Fer Benn, namely the Dagda in Cath Maige Tuired : in both situations Suibne 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 is two lines long[57], the words of which have not all been deciphered satisfactorily. Let us focus on the first name of the list which therefore has to do with a hunter deer cult. We have just seen that the Hittite Teshoub is the direct ancestor of Zeus or Jupiter Dolichenos the god father, or should I say the Daghdha Ollathair. Interestingly we have also mentioned that previous to the roaring bull, the so called Teshoub (or Tarhunt) will appear riding a male deer, which is quite coherent with the ancient Hittite deer cult. So that this name Fer Benn stuck to the Dagda, does not look that unexpected after all. We may have here the remnants of a popular tradition different from the learned one with its canonic epithets Eochaidh Ollathair, Ruad Rófheasach and Aodh Abaidh[58]. This popular mythology indeed could well be an additional testimony of that period when those Mongoloid-Europoid hunters will join with the pastoralist Kurgans and their symbolic animal the roaring bull. On this occasion Fer benn could well have been used as a graft for this new syncretism all the more easily so as in a first stage Teshoub is married with the sun-goddess of Arinna in the same way as the Tungus mistress of the earth has a husband, the nameless shepherd of her herd.

The very name of the Dagda, Celtic **Dago-dēwos* means good god[59], but also good day since *día* god and *día* day come from the same **deiwo-s*, "the Celtic name of the day is obviously linked to the Indo-European name of the blue sky and the day god[60]."

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[54] BUHÍGAS, Ramón Sobrino. Corpus petroglyphorum Gallaciae. A Coruña: Seminario de estudos Galecos, 2000, *Fig.* 122/126.

[55] 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.

[56] MACWHITE, Eoin. A new view on Irish Bronze Age Rock-scribings, in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarian of Ireland*, vol. LXXVI, Part II, July, 1946, p. 59.

[57] 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.

[58] STERCKX, Claude. Les dieux protéens des celtes et des indo-européens. Bruxelles : Ollodagos, 1994, p. 115.

[59] KOCH, John T. An atlas for Celtic studies, 2007, p. 553.

[60] LAMBERT, P.-Y. Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien de J. Vendryès, 1996, p. D-65.

This way the link of the Dagda with the sun becomes obvious, "the sky god, storm god, earth god, and the sun[61]," rising sun but also setting sun wherefrom he gets his association with death and regeneration[62], even with the sea which he probably crosses by boat during the night.

The possible graft played by Fer Benn, afore mentioned, is not only apparent in the name of the mistress-mother of the clan *Bugady Enintyn* but also in the name of the mistress of the clan lands *Dunne mushunin* since "the synonym for *buga* is *dunne* (*dunda*)."

> "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)[63]."

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[64]."

> "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 [...][65]."

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 is an important element of the reality of a deer cult in the Celtic countries, coming from Siberia.

FINN

A deer cult is not unknown in the Finn or Leinster Cycle, since we have a ritualistic slaughter of a deer when Fionnchadh one of the aged survivors of the Fianna instructs a king how to get 'success in hunting' (*sén sealga* / *conách sealga)* :

> "The king is told to go hunting on the following Wednesday. The first deer he kills is to be dismembered and given to his retinue and pack of hounds. The deer's blood is to be smeared on the hands and weapons of the retinue and blood is to be smeared on the teeth of the hounds[66]."

This is typical of a hunter tribal society and is to be paralleled with the Hittite deer cult. As far as Finn is concerned, Weisweiler thinks that *Demne*, Finn's name when he was young, may be

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[61] KOCH, John T. Celtic culture, 2006, p. 553.
[62] KOCH, John T., 2007, p. 554.
[63] VASILEVICH, G.M. Early concepts about the universe among the Evenks (materials), in *Studies in Siberian shamanism*, Ed. Henry N. Michael, University of Toronto Press, 1963, p. 49 et 77, n. 6. "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."
[64] PEB, CW, in KOCH, John T. *Celtic culture: a historical encyclopedia*. 2007, p. 569.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Ó BRIAIN Máirtín. Oisín's biography : conception and birth, in *Text und Zeittiefe*. Tübingen, 1994, p. 483.

analysed as a derivative from *dam* with a diminutive suffixe –n(i)jo-[67],” a buck. Furthermore, “the knowledge that Oisín’s mother was a deer was part of the common oral heritage of Ireland and Gaelic Scotland[68].” On top of that :

> “During a hunt, Finn and five of his men go in pursuit of a lone deer and are separated from the rest of the fían in the fury of the chase”. They finally enter a síd. “Once his guests are made comfortable, Donn, the fénnidi’s host in the síd, explains to Finn and his companions that the deer that brought them to the otherworldly dwelling was actually a supernatural female who had been sent out by Donn to fetch them. [...]. The tale of Finn in Donn’s síd [ends] with this remarkable statement : [...] “From that time on, the fíana of Ireland [that is, Finn and his men] spent as much time in the company of the Túatha Dé Danann as they did in the company of human folk[69].”

The Fenians kept the Túatha Dé Danann company, in the same manner as the Siberian hunters formed a new community with the Kurgan pastoralists as observed among the Hittites, and this is quite a good case indeed for our hypothesis of the subsequent syncretism of Fer Benn and Dagda’s traditions, the first one however being more popular than literate.

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 shown from the Celtic point of view that in order to explain these connections, one does not need the help of a shaman[70], a Siberian personage which is not very much older than the second part of the first millenium B.C[71]. We have also shown 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 ancient Hittites, going back as far as the end of the fourth millenium B.C. in Western Siberia, and involving beyond Europoid, Mongoloid people as well. It is true however that if the pre-Christian Celts are not concerned with shamanism, they are concerned with totemism and ancestors cults, the deer cult being one of them. In the same time, we 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 vision is the accomplishment of a Seer, whether he’d be a shaman, a *file* or whatever. As far as this research theme is concerned, there is another cultural realisation originating also in Siberia as early as the 14th millenium B.C. which is quite appealing, I mean the Native Northern

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[67] WEISWEILER, Joseph. Die Kultur der Irischen Heldensage, in *Paideuma*, vol. 4. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1950, p. 158.
[68] Ó BRIAIN Máirtín. *Ibid*., p. 460.
[69] NAGY, Wisdom of the outlaw, 1985, pp. 32-33.
[70] 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.
[71] 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.

American civilisations in which visions[72], dreams and magical songs[73] are often central in the relation with the spirits, and as in the Celtic countries never involved a shaman.

Da BER DENEZ (1921-2011), tad ar c'helenn brezhoneg.

[72] TURNER, Geoffrey. Les Indiens d'Amérique du Nord. A. Colin, 1985, pp. 63-65, 168, 177-178.
[73] Le grand livre des Indiens d'Amérique ; trad. Anne Sladovic.209 Paris : Atlas, 1996 ; London : Salamander Books, 1995, p. 209.