

Origins

in the Two Isles



tukolor

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by

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Contents

Preface.....	9
Origins in the Two Isles.....	10
The World Of Things — Forth from the Steppes.....	28
A Recovered People	29
1. The Discovery	29
2. Farmers or Herders?	30
Farmers.....	34
1. A Language.....	34
1.1. Colonies.....	34
1.2. Homeland	36
2. A Culture	40
2.1. Suns and Queens	40
2.2. Masks	46
2.3. 'The Missing God'	46
2.4. A Cosmos?	54
2.5. Owls, Ducks.....	61
2.6. The Necklace Of Sovereignty.....	65
2.7. The Shaft Of Light	66
2.8. Tlabrys.....	67
2.9. The Sea Of Sky.....	68
2.10. Communitarianism	69
3. A People	76
3.1. Reading Circles.....	76
3.2. Prototypes.....	77
3.3. East — The Core Area	80
3.4. West — Inside the Goddess?	96

3.5. Reusing the Symbols.....	105
Herders	109
1. A Language.....	115
2. A Culture	117
2.1. Communities	117
Material Witnesses	145
1. Farmers, Europe.....	149
1.1. The Neolithic Core	149
1.2. The Old-European Core	152
1.3. A Simple Expansion.....	155
1.4. A Complex Expansion.....	157
2. Farmers, The Two Isles	159
2.1. Early Days	160
2.2. Monuments.....	161
2.3. Land's End	162
2.4. Landscapes	165
2.5. Circles.....	168
2.6. Beakers	170
2.7. Ireland.....	172
3. Herders	175
3.1. The Pontic-Caspian Steppe	175
3.2. Pre-Indo-European.....	177
3.3. Sredny Stog.....	178
3.4. Expansion	180
3.5. Metal.....	191
4. Smiths	206
4.1. WIE In Europe	208

4.2. WIE In The Two Isles	212
4.3. Britain	221
4.4. Ireland.....	226
Interlude	231
1. Farmers and Herders Revisited	232
2. Towards the World of Words.....	233
The World of Words — Back to Himilco	235
Peoples, Problems	236
Ireland	240
1. Gaelic Ireland.....	246
1.1. Scotti.....	249
1.2. Fiana.....	251
1.3. Goídels	254
1.4. Conn and Níall	259
1.5. Eógan	263
1.6. Patrick	266
2. Keltic Ireland	272
2.1. The non-Invasion of Nemed	274
2.2. Kelts.....	276
2.3. Peoples	282
3. The Old Religion.....	326
3.1. Fifths	326
3.2. Sovranty	331
3.3. Emain	334
3.4. Tara.....	339
3.5. Celta and Celtos?.....	340
3.6. Whispers of Old Europe?	343

Britain.....	349
1.1. Brigantia.....	352
1.2. Dumnonia, Pretani	354
1.3. The Others	358
1.4. Britannia?	361
Europe	365
1. 'Gauls'	365
2. Hispanoceltic, Lusitanian	371
Endpiece	379
(And Other Stories)	380
1. 'Rex-Rix'	381
2. The Harpist.....	386
3. Syncing Babylon	401
4. A Rewired Religion?	407
5. Shorts.....	416
6. The English Settlements.....	424
6.1 The Invaders	424
6.2 The Resistance	427
7. Early Irish Kings	430
Afterthoughts, By-thoughts.....	442
Epiface : *Llu[ng]d(n).....	454



THE AMESBURY ARCHER

We hear his patter and his pitch.
He weaves his words across the field of time.
The seed is sown and scattered on the lich,
 Safe in its residue of grime
 And blessed beneath the winter rime.
He lies awake, aflame among the weeds
 Of forgotten deeds.

His arrowbag and arrows lie
Close by him, marrying his eternal grin
 Upon the skull that cannot die,
As if they can supply the soul within
With flight. We see the body not the sin,
 The caller not the cry.

He came to here from over sea
To weather up a profit storm,
His tack a hammer tapping magically
 That only made him seem more calm.
His name and speech and cant we do not know:
 We will not let him go.

Preface

What is this book and who may it be for?

It is not a scholarly book because I am not a ‘scholar’, nor is it a work of pseudo-scholarship because I have no ambition to be a scholar. So, I suppose, it is not for those who seek in it scholarly values it lays no claim to, or ambitions it does not reach for.

The advantages the amateur has over the professional scholar – there are of course disadvantages too – are not insignificant. The amateur is remote from the latest books and journals and ideas, it is true, but also from the echo chamber. The dreaded *paradigm*. They are also freer than the scholar, I think, to wander where they will. No scholar, no scholarly reputation to lose.

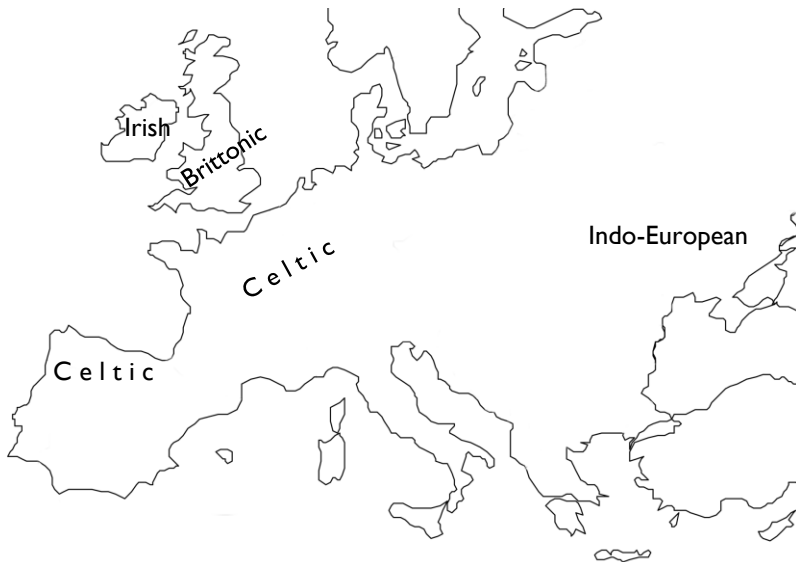
This is not a scholarly work. It answers its questions following its own path. The aim is not to find truths but a way of seeing things about the origins of the people who once lived where I now live and so in turn to approach my own origins. It is about a place called *England* that before that was *Britannia* and before that was ‘*the islands of the Prettanoi*’ and at the beginning of recorded time simply *Albion*, probably meaning ‘the Land’ or ‘the White Land’.

That is what this book is and it may be for others who also want to find ways of seeing things, who also hear the ancient words of the ghosts that whisper, *Gnōthi sauton!*

Origins in the Two Isles

So, origins and two isles. But whose origins?

The earliest inhabitants of the British Isles who can be named are the Irish on one isle and the British on the other. This book is about *their* origins and much of the story takes place *outside* the isles. Irish and Brittonic¹ are Celtic languages and Celtic is an Indo-European language. The language prehistory of Europe effectively terminates with Indo-European, which is as far back as language reconstruction can stretch. The ‘Celts’ and the ‘Indo-Europeans’ are as much our focus as the Irish and British.



Before the Indo-European-speakers arrived in Europe, it was a land of Farmers who developed a complex culture. Farming was introduced all over Europe by a process of

¹ The language of the British. The more poetic earlier spelling Brythonic is now unfortunately deprecated.

colonisation. We do not know the names by which the Farmers called themselves, only that they occupied the Two Isles before the Irish and British and the continent before the Celts and Indo-Europeans. Their culture had an important influence on for example both Greek and Celtic beliefs, so they are part of the story as well.

Irish and British; Celts; Indo-Europeans; Farmers, then. This is our story, of their origins and of how these earliest inhabitants — the Irish and the British — came to the Two Isles they inhabited at a time when the world of things at last gave way to the world of words, and prehistory ceded to history.

* * * * *

There is no generally agreed narrative as to ‘where the Celts came from’. That Celtic languages are Indo-European, it is agreed has a remote significance. Central European archaeological cultures are, it is agreed, of key importance. It is agreed that the Urnfield, Hallstatt and La Tène cultures are linked to the historical ‘Celts’ and the ‘British’ and the ‘Irish’. It is often agreed this Urnfield > La Tène continuum is the context in which ‘the Celts’ arrived in Britain and Ireland.

Whilst these analyses are not entirely wrong, the definitions they employ are too often vague and inadequate. For example, if we say ‘the Celts arrived in the British Isles in the La Tène period’, we should ask *who are these ‘Celts’?* The British *and* the Irish? The plain answer to that is ‘no’. Was the central-European Hallstatt even ‘Celtic’? Hallstatt power centres were *destroyed* by peripheral La Tène groups (who *were* the peoples whom our Greco-Roman sources call *Galatai*). This definition-lack as to what is Celtic or British or Irish provides one reason the problem of origins in the Two Isles seems so intractable.

In this book I attempt a narrative that tries to broach both the *world of things* (archaeology) and the *world of words* (history). It exists in the limbo that lies between these, which is the world of *Prehistory*. In this narrative, it is the *idea* as much as the *data* that is important. A narrative is fluid overall, but its constituent parts must be organised within a solid framework. This combination of fluency and coherency is well suited for such a diffuse and difficult subject as our tale of origins. Each part of a narrative must fit the whole. That is a significant constraint to imagination, which on its own can fly away to Fantasia in the blink of an eye. These *constraints* keep us on the track of what is *possible* or *probable*.

Wherever *proof* is beyond us, possibility and probability are worthwhile aims.

1. Antiquarians Old and New

Early modern antiquarians, such as John Aubrey and especially William Stukeley, not having any other suitable term, declared that the priests of the various henges and stone circles they investigated were Druids. Early philologists discovered, to many people's surprise, that Welsh and Gaelic (both Scottish and Irish) were related languages, and related moreover to the language of the ancient Gauls. As capitalism and reason and empire spread, firstly romanticism romanticised the older pre-industrial 'national' cultures and secondly nationalists delved deep back into the nations (so often, alas, 'races') that the antiquarians and philologists had discovered. Hence 'Celtomania'. Empire, too, imprinted on the mind an immutable image of the conquest of the 'aborigine' undertaken by the 'white man'. The outline of the ancient past was quickly inked in. Because the Irish and Welsh were now 'Celts', their prehistory was the same. They were manly white men fighting and defeating

effeminate aborigines such as the matriarchal Picts and Ivernians (classified as ‘Iberians’, the echt-aboriginals of western Europe). This cult of ‘the Celt’ versus the ‘Aboriginal’ is hard to shake off even today.

Another idea hard to shake off is that, though Celtic groups in the early historical period lived predominantly in the west (even in the island too remote for even Rome), writers often have a fixed idea of ‘the Celts’ as a central European people. It is still common to see maps that show the ‘Celtic core’ of central Europe (labelled ‘La Tène’ or ‘Hallstatt’) and shaded areas representing ‘Celtic expansion’ covering most all of Spain, France, Britain, Ireland, Italy, and eastward as far as Anatolia. In the long view, this is reasonable – the origins of the Celtic languages are tied up with Indo-European itself, which in this book is taken to have been spoken in the Pontic-Caspian steppe region. That is unquestionably to the east, but it dates to long before even the earliest historical period of the Greeks and Romans. The immediate prehistory of the Celtic speaking groups is not likely to relate to the origins of the Celts *per se*. These maps, then, are pure nonsense. They imply both expansions *and language displacements* from east to west and south *in the Gallic period*, even though the attested Gallic migrations were mostly west to east (into Italy-Danube-Thrace-Anatolia) and in any case rarely led to permanent language displacement. The Celtic culture as we first know it is likely to have evolved largely where we find speakers of Gallo-Brittonic languages. *This* is the ‘homeland’. The Britons and Irish are likely to have ‘come from’ here, in the west, Hispanoceltic tribes likewise. It is preposterous that ‘the Celts’ flew out of Hallstattland all of a sudden to sweep-into *all of western Europe and make it ‘polyceltical’*.

Who then were ‘the Celts’? The ‘Celtic Realms’ exist

perched close to the edge of the realms of history, though the ‘fotonnian²’ palaces of myth and legend lay equal claim to them. We are though in a tangible world of words and names. Here it is not quite really history and this is no place for a hypersceptic. Yet whilst ‘Celt’ and ‘Irish’ and ‘Briton’ are nebulous terms, the mist of ‘Nél’ of the nine hostages has not entirely completed its ritual coverment of them, as it has the people of the Boyne Valley and Windmill Hill cultures. ‘Nél’ is possessed of a name that can still be named, even if we must remain unsure of what his name really was or even if he was a man or a god.

2. Prehistory

Although the term ‘prehistory’ is in common use, it is not usually thought of as a science in-itself. That is a pity. The general meaning seems to revolve around an idea of ‘the time before history’. In other words, it involves the various disciplines naturally belonging to pre-literate times — archaeology, genetics, anthropology, comparative linguistics, mythology, climatology, and so on. These sciences, hard and soft, add up to what we know as ‘prehistory’. This last can be defined as the study of an interwoven *world of things* (archaeology etc) and *world of words* (history etc). In Prehistory, things and words are integrated inside a single narrative. Without words we have only pots and without pots we have no place or time.

So, shouldn’t there be room for a separate science of Prehistory? One that ranges over all its constituent parts? A Prehistorian who is not an archaeologist or a linguist or a geneticist, but who possesses a working knowledge of archaeology and linguistics and genetics? A

2 That is, ‘under the waves’ and off into the Otherworld.

generalist?

One problem with the study of Prehistory — where no one can be expert in more than a minuscule fraction of the syllabus — is that specialisation often leads to a narrowness of vision. The modern world is becoming the realm of the Expert with their expertise in narrow fields of knowledge. This leads to a confusion concerning the nature of science and reason.

Science is a *form* of reason but not reason itself. *Reason* can be defined as a series of *arguments* leading to a *conclusion*. The truth of the conclusion depends on the truth of the arguments. Science can be seen as a particular form of reason that relies on *data* rather than arguments and as techniques of measurement grow ever more accurate and sophisticated, data is becoming ever more refined.

Radio-carbon dating is a good example of this. Before r-c dating, archaeologists created an impressive chain of reasoned statements based on artefacts from dateable contexts found in the literate Middle East and Egypt. These dateable artefacts were then linked into an extended chain of artefacts undatable in themselves that stretched across all of Europe. Thus, a pot found in Wessex could, it was believed, be fairly accurately dated because it was ultimately linked back to an artefact that *was* dateable in Egypt or Mesopotamia. With r-c this complex chain of reasoning is replaced with *data*. A r-c date is data. It is one of the marvels of modern prehistory that has transformed our understanding of the past. Its more recent counterpart is *genetics*, which is currently revolutionising our understanding of ancient population groups as it generates yet more data.

However, this simply shifts the realm of reason up a notch. This science of data is like Berkeley's falling tree

in a wood. Understanding cannot exist until the data is observed and examined. To take r-c dating again, this removes the need for the great chain of deductions from dateable Sumerian pots to far off Wessex pots and provides us with a much firmer foundation with which to try and understand these remote cultures. But beyond the foundation and up above the ground, nothing has changed except our ability to relate cultures according to their dates. A revolutionary change, but it remains the case that understanding is not data. The data must still be interpreted.

The essence of Prehistory is understanding and not data. Data can never replace understanding and science can never simply *be* reason. This is key to understanding Prehistory because that field of study can never be an exact science and it must always work with limited data. The fragments of human life lain buried in the ground or in a reconstructed vocabulary, essential tools for the prehistorian, are like the tea-leaves at the bottom of a cup — but where is the tea?

What science we do have here is *connective*. These small fragments of data can be gathered up and linked into a larger chain of reasoning. Each fragment may be doubtful on its own, but the chain can provide us with understanding. For example, did the people of the Single Grave culture who lived in and around Denmark c. 2800-c. 2300 BCE speak an Indo-European language? How can the question be answered with reference to that culture alone? However, we can place that culture within the context of the larger Corded Ware complex and in turn link that back to the Herders of the Pontic-Caspian steppe. Additionally, the advances in genetics pay off, for they too link the people of the Single Grave people to the Corded Ware people who in turn have close genetic links to the steppe Herders.

Prehistory ought to be a science-in-itself that sifts through the data served up by the zoo of ologies and isms and converts their data into understanding.

3. The Language Lawyers

One of the most important props of prehistory is philology. Indo-European itself dwells entirely within the realm of the philologists. Indo-European — its speakers long-gone — is language and language is all of it.

The rules of language are undoubtedly important. The non-expert can determine this easily. Take *pater* (Latin) and *father* and then *piscis* and *fish*. The ‘p’ in one is ‘f’ in the other in both cases. Now take *discus* and *dish*. Here, ‘sk’ and ‘sh’ follow another rule in both ‘fish’ and ‘dish’. Or take the words *canto*, *chant* and (sea)-*shanty*. The original ‘root’ is found in Latin *cantare* ‘to sing’. The first word, then, from Italian, preserves the original ‘k’ sound of the Latin. The other two are from French (‘chanter’). But *chant* is medieval French with a ‘tch’ sound, and *shanty* was borrowed into English more recently with the modern French ‘sh’ sound. These are strict rules — it is not going too far to say that it is impossible that ‘chant’ would have been borrowed as *shant. Other words also borrowed into English from medieval French show exactly the same pattern — *chair*, *chance*, *chancellor*, *chain*, etc.

To take a more complex example, consider these words for ‘five’ — *coic* (Gaelic), *pump* (Welsh), *quinque* (Latin) and *pāñca* (Sanskrit), not forgetting *five* itself. No one would consider these to be related words *in themselves*. Of course, they *are*, but we know this through comparative studies that take in a large quantity of data. Anyway, given that we don’t have to prove they are related and that we do understand the relationships

between these languages, how do we go about explaining how these numerals fit together in ‘common sense’ terms?

- Observe that Gaelic and Latin — we know Celtic and Italic, the families to which these languages belong, are closely related — share a similar pattern — **c—c** and **qu—qu**.
- Now note how *pump*, *quinque* and *páñca* each have a nasal consonant in the same position. Doing a bit of language-digging, we unearth the German for ‘five’, which also has a nasal consonant in the right place — *funf*. As German and English belong to the same Germanic language family, we conclude that *five* has lost its nasal consonant.
- Welsh is a P-Celtic language and Gaelic a Q-Keltic one. This means that a Gaelic ‘c’ often equates³ to a Welsh ‘p’. We conclude therefore that *pump* and *coic* are in fact similar and that the latter (like ‘five’) has lost its nasal consonant, so we can tentatively reconstruct something like **conc*.
- Comparing our **conc* to Latin *quinque*, we can reconstruct an earlier **quinq[ue]* for **Celtic*. The Welsh *pump* can easily be derived from this root. We conclude that the ‘m’ is there simply because **punp* is hard to pronounce.
- As Germanic ‘f’ < ‘p’, we tentatively reconstruct *funf* <? **punp*. But this, we have seen, is difficult to pronounce.
- To avoid this difficulty, we can return to Sanskrit *páñca*. If we say that *this* has preserved something like the original Indo-European form, our difficulty is removed. If the Indo-European form was

3 For example, ‘head’ is *cenn* in Gaelic and *penn* in Welsh.

something like *pank, we can call up *assimilation* to our rescue. Germanic turned *pank into something like *fank, and then *assimilated* the ‘k’ to the initial syllable > *fanf.

- Meanwhile, we have a Celtic and Italic *quinque which can now be compared to our *pank. Italo-Celtic, we conclude, has assimilated in the opposite direction to Germanic.
- We can refine things a bit to polish off our reconstruction. The vowels of *pinqu- and *pank indicate a form close to the actual reconstructed form of *pénk^{we}.
- So, *pénk^{we} >> coic, pump, quinque, páñca and five. QED.

Leaving aside the complex reconstructions of philology (which of course go far beyond the crude common-sense workings-out above), it is also worth remembering how sophisticated the *natural* — and inherent to us — human understanding of language is. One example should suffice. English speakers never confuse the river-name *Severn* with the number *seven*. The difference between the two names is minimal, yet it is enough for the human ear to perceive them as clearly distinct sounds, as distinct as are pan, pen, pin, (u)pon, pun. **Severn** is a river and **seven** is a number — the general principle seems to be that, as long as two separate sounds are related to two separate meanings, their sound-units (be they word or name) will also be kept separate.

Philology, then, is a good thing and its rules are very real. It is constantly improving our understanding of Indo-European, whose ‘roots’ (e.g. *ǵneh₃- ‘know’) are getting ever more refined — where roots themselves have roots (e.g. *dḱm̥tóm ‘hundred’ < *dékm̥ ‘ten’ ?< *deḱ- ‘take’). Yet it is within this very precision there lies a problem for the

Prehistorian and this lies within the wider problem of expertise. The exactitude with which linguists express themselves leads them far away from our ‘common sense’ view of language and this brings us to the phenomenon of what I call the ‘language lawyer’. Language Lawyers take what was once a welcome precision and convert it into a form of dharma. This dharma operates in two directions — what Language Lawyers do not like is declared ‘impossible’ and what they do like is affirmed by the invocation of what is something like a Natural Law (of which they of course are the custodians).

Take the well-known name of ‘London’. This has an official pronunciation, that of Standard English. However, all the following are also valid pronunciations, depending on who or where you are — Landon, Lendin, Lindun, London (<> *gone*) or indeed Lunden. This takes in each of the five English vowels. There is no Natural Law here. Even if you introduce five ‘little laws’ for each case, there is no one single law. Where we have a plentiful amount of evidence, this is no great issue. In the world of Prehistory though, evidence is rarely plentiful. What about, for example, the pronunciation of *Londinium*? It is true the Roman form was the standard form of the time and this is confirmed by the myriads of later attestations of the name, but were there non-standard variants? If there were, we can never know. We have no way of speaking to a Silurian tribeswoman and recording her dialect. The point is that, while working within the confines of an assumed standard language is often a reasonable thing to do, edge-cases are always possible and the notion of language *laws* seems not only not useful but highly irrational.

As an example of what is harmful about this legalism, in the course of researching this book I came across list of possible ‘pre-Indo-European’ words in Germanic. The list

included most of the basic body parts. Double-checking these etymologies in a dictionary, I found each item had been provided with an Indo-European explanation presented as fact, though clearly none was conclusive outside the Language Lawyer's world of dharma. This use of the ever-increasing number of Indo-European 'roots' looks less and less like reason, let alone science, and more and more like rationalisation. The *idea* of non-Indo-European words in Germanic, it seems, is viewed as unacceptable because it leads to doubt and uncertainty. To fight this, roots must be sought and roots will be found. Every doubt is overcome, root by root. The troubling un-Indo-European words vanish and doubt is defeated.

To a Prehistorian, however, this large *group* of obscure and basic words is exactly the sort of thing that might provide a greater understanding of early Germanic society, for it would suggest the substantial influence of a non-IE-speaking people. Archaeology supports such a model, for it shows the nordic Battle Axe (probably IE) and Pitted Ware (hunter-gatherer) cultures merging into the Northern Bronze Age culture (proto-Germanic), so providing a convincing context for such a level of language-borrowing.

Isolating language from all other lines of enquiry creates blindfolded sages trying to guess what sort of creature the elephant is. Language offers a limited view into prehistory and anyone who tries to understand the past ought to be aware of its limitations.

4. 'Active' and 'Inactive' Names

The earliest peoples of the Two Isles are nameless and languageless. They can only be known through archaeology and similar hard sciences and then only as say 'The Windmill Hill People'. In Ireland, it is the 'Gaels'

whom we can name⁴ and whose language we can understand and it is the origins of these named peoples that provides the subject of our problem.

What's in a name? Names are often based words with an unknown meaning. Pretty much all modern English personal names fall into this category and this is true also of place-names and country-names. It is almost as if a name *ought* to have no meaning. Meaning is for words and not names.

But ancient personal and tribal names were often transparent. They were obviously intended to express a meaning. The names of tribes, for example, were often messages to the outside world. They might make known which deity the ruling dynasty descended from. Examples may include the Senones (< 'the Old One' [Sens]), Sequani (< Sequana [Seine]), Boii (< Bui, the Hag), Aedui (< Aed, the burning one), Bituriges (< Biturix 'king of life' [Bourges]) and so on. Others — this seems to be the norm in Belgica between the Seine and the Rhine — signal possession of the land. The Treveri [Trier] are the people 'both sides of the river [i.e. the Rhine]'. That is a strong signal. To control land separated by such a powerful stretch of water is not easy. Then there are the Remi ('premier people' [Reims]) and Atrebates ('inhabitants' [Arras]). The latter name may seem far more modest but probably indicates a sharply-defined sense of exclusiveness and ownership. Meanwhile, Greek personal names tended to be transparent, that is readily understood by Greek speakers — Herodotus 'gift of Hera',

4 A recent attempt, for example, has been made at identifying a group of names with intervocalic 'f', such as *Liffey* and *Breifne* and *Aoife*, which is taken to be a non-Irish development. This is an interesting theory, but even if this becomes accepted as a canonical lexicon of pre-Irish names, it is still a mere list of vocables spoken by unknown peoples, and in fact serves to illustrate just how 'the Irish' really are the first known 'people' of Ireland.

Platon (> Plato, 'snub-nosed'), Philippos ('lover of horses'), etc.

These names are '**active**' names. Names produced by a living culture to be consumed by the people of that culture. Vercassivellaunus and Vercingetorix are grand names designed to appear grand to lesser men. But when we look at Greek texts, for example, we find legions of names that make no sense at all in Greek. It is doubtful the Greeks understood what the name of a single Olympian god meant, not even 'Zeus'. Many of the names are puzzling even today. *These* names are '**inactive**' names. They date from older layers of a culture, and in Greece there were many such layers. They show how names — not always, but sometimes — persist. How and why they do may be a mystery, but they do. What does the river name *Ouse* mean? We do not know, though suggestions may be made. What can be asked here is, *what language does the name originate with?* Here we have a basic problem of inactive names and thus of prehistory — what does such or such a name *mean*? What language does it originate with? Is the name *Corinth* a *Pelagian* name?, or a *Prehellenic* name? or a *Luwian* name? or *what*?

The era of the Prehistorian is often that of the inactive name. The nameless are beyond reach. They must remain eternally silent. The inactive name remains intact in confused and distorted forms, but does it not test the dharma of the Language Lawyer?

5. Pastimes

Prehistory, thanks to philology, resounds with the ghosts of words, but above all it is a place of *time*. This is so obvious that its significance can easily be missed. For what is time? Time is the past. How large is the past?

That is the question.

The fact is, ‘the past’ has grown in size over the past two centuries to previously unthinkable proportions. In the ‘ancient’ and medieval worlds it was Troy and the Old Testament that defined the primal limits of the past. Bishop James Ussher of Armagh and Dublin counted⁵ up all the begettings in the Bible and came up with a date of 4,004 BCE for the beginning of the world. This gave to said world a little more precision concerning its origins. We now knew that Moses and Agamemnon lived about 3,000 years after Creation. At any rate, early Antiquarians clearly worked within this narrow window. Was Stonehenge built by the Druids? The Romans, even? Or the Danes? But what other options were there as to who built it?

A profound change began with the work of the geologists. It was noticed — the basic principle of geology — that ‘rock’ is not in fact a primordial thing, there are patterns to be observed in it. This was very noticeable — if you had the genius to notice and analyse it — at Siccar Point in south Scotland. Here the principle of ‘unconformity’ was clearly on display. This was what surveyor James Hutton noticed and analysed, observing that the rock at Siccar was layered (and so showed unconformity). It sounds obvious to us, but it showed remarkable insight to conclude that these layers were formed at different times. Moreover, they could be roughly dated, for the lower a layer the older it was. Geologists, as they soon named themselves, now went off hither and thither in search of rocks, soon realising that this rock-layering thing was a world-wide phenomenon — layers over the entire globe

⁵ His findings were first published in 1650. Interestingly, Sir Isaac Newton was engaged in a similar begetting-count at that time. However, it was Ussher’s date that was accepted, not that of the Greatest Scientist Who Ever Lived.

belonged within a single geological system whose ‘periods’ were the same from Texas to Timbuctoo.

The earliest systematic geological studies took place in Wales and Devon, from which work the first geological ‘periods’ were defined — after a period of confusions and broken friendships and more than a little bickering, we ended up with the *Cambrian*, *Ordovician*, *Silurian* and *Devonian* periods. The world discovered it was very old. The latest theory sets its age at about 4.5 billion years.

Meanwhile, others were staring at the stars. When Uranus was discovered in 1781, it upset the notion of the seven planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) that had been the foundation of so many religious beliefs. Pluto was discovered in 1930 as the ninth and most distant⁶ planet⁷. Around this time (1921, in fact) Edwin Hubble noticed that some stars (his Siccar Point equivalent was the *Messier 31 nebula*, or Andromeda) were in fact galaxies, like our Milky Way. It was quickly realised that the Universe was full of galaxies. Cosmologists of today have now reached the point where even the Visible Universe is thought to be a small dot within the Entire Universe. These cosmologists have also calculated the age of the Universe at 13.8 billion years old. I don’t think this is a very secure date, but it is unlikely the Universe is any *younger* than that.

Who built the Universe, then? The Druids? The Romans, even? Or the Danes? That ridiculous question has a purpose. It illustrates vividly how our concept of time and the past has been expanded since the days of the early

6 Except when its curious orbit meant Neptune had that honour.

7 Only to be booted off the list when astronomers found out Pluto lives in a region of space cluttered up with similar lumps of rock, some actually larger than the ex-Planet, which though has now been re-moted to the status of a Dwarf Planet.

Antiquarians. The unequal equation is 13.8 billion versus about 6,000 years.

Within this almost incomprehensibly large space of the past, many other thresholds are now commonplaces. Beginning of life 2 billion years ago. Cambrian Explosion of life 450 million years ago. Death of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. First hominins about 3 million years ago. Neanderthals about 250,000 years ago. Modern humans at least 70,000 years ago. The entry of these into Europe about 40,000 years ago. End of last Ice Age about 10,000 BCE, as also farming. Farming in Britain, about 4,500 BCE. Writing, about 3,000 BCE; and here the world of words begins.

All this is worth considering for the Prehistorian because a sense of how big the past is puts into perspective the relative nature of time which is one of those invisibly obvious phenomena of life.

For example, the earliest inferred Irish book-texts that have survived are thought to date from the 6th Century CE, but the earliest remains of the Irish language, on stones inscribed with the 'ogham' alphabet, date to the 4th Century CE. These dates are, in a sense, very old. The ogham language is often called Primitive Irish (even though it is nothing of the sort). This epithet *primitive* is intended to express just *how* old the ogham stones are. As they indeed are compared to the bulk of even the earliest Irish book-texts. The Book of Leinster dates from about 1160, maybe 800 years later than the first oghams. Yet that great book can itself be considered very old. We alive today are more than 800 years younger than it. But if we look again at my list of 'thresholds', these dates are not so old. Even the foundation of Rome dates to a mere 1,000 years before the first known ogham. Our notion of solid time is tied to writing, and that begins about 5,000 years

ago in Sumer. So even the end of the last Ice Age — 6,000 years or so before that — exceeds the limits of the written tradition of humanity, even in Sumer. When we get to the settlement of modern humans in Europe about 40,000 years ago this period of time is beyond human imagining in terms of ‘solid’ time inscribed into a written record. Yet 40,000 years is hardly a long time compared with the whole expanse of the past, just as a quark is gigantic next to the physicist’s inferred Planck Length.

It is not that we have to think about whether the ‘Celts’ arrived in Britain 65 million years ago or not, or even 40,000 years ago. Even 4,500 BCE is likely too early, for the first farmers were probably not ‘Celts’. It is not the vastness of the past that is important, it is the tininess of that section of it with which we are concerned. No matter how far we go back in our story of the origins in the Two Isles, we must remain in what is in fact the recent past, no matter how remote it seems to us. In the time-frame of this book, nothing is *really* ancient, and that is a very useful perspective to have.

Asterisks

In this book, I borrow the linguist’s asterisk notation both for languages and peoples. For example *Irish means ‘any stage of Irish and all its ancestors’, or in ethnic terms, ‘any ethnic group speaking Irish or derived from such as group at any time’. So, if I write *Welsh, although it is descended from Brittonic, *Welsh strongly implies ‘Welshness’. It stops around about the place that Welsh becomes Brittonic. *Irish, as we know it, begins with Gaelic, but it certainly goes back to ogham Irish. Beyond that, the next certain ‘stage’ is ‘Common Celtic’, and there the idea of *Irish obviously ends. However, between that era and that of ogham Irish, there is the possibility that *Brittonic goes back to a Q-Celtic language similar to *Irish, yet of a later date than ‘Common Celtic’. The asterisk notation for languages themselves removes needless complexities like these. The notation *Irish means ‘an Irish-like language as far back as a specific Irish language existed’. If such a prehistoric language merged into *Brittonic, then *Irish and *Brittonic would simply be the same language. But this would not affect the asterisk notation, for this ‘merged’ language would by definition be *Irish.

The World Of Things —— Forth from the Steppes

A Recovered People

Es war einmal there was a people called ‘The Indo-Europeans’ and they lived, wherever and whenever they lived, in a time and place before writing. This people therefore, who most researchers are sure existed, are a *hypothetical* people who ‘speak’ a *reconstructed* language. This ‘people’ who lived before the pharaohs and Stonehenge are, paradoxically, essentially *modern*. People have spoken languages belonging to the Indo-European family – Romans, Greeks, Dutch, Afghans, Ossetes, Livonians, Irish, etc – for millennia without having the slightest idea that theirs is an ‘Indo-European’ language. To realise that fact, someone not only needed to notice the similarities between a suitably wide range of languages, but also realise *how* these similarities came to exist.

Only then could the ‘Indo-Europeans’ be reborn.

1. The Discovery

The canonical, if not the actual, discoverer of the Indo-Europeans is Sir William Jones (1746-1794). Sir William – Youns Uksfardi, or ‘Jones of Oxford’ – knew a lot of languages. He was born into a Welsh-speaking family and, in addition to the normal classical education, he taught himself languages such as Arabic, Turkish and Persian. The summit of his distinguished career – he was by now an eminent man – was a post in India, where he took to the study of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit led him to the conclusions that were given in a famous speech where he compares Sanskrit very favourably to Latin and Greek. This speech is where he

gave the world two new arguments — 1) that languages from India to Europe are related to each other, and 2) that they are descended from a single parent language spoken at some time in the distant past by a single people.

By the early 19th century, this idea had been made concrete by the early philologists and the language (and people) had acquired a name — *Indo-European* ('Indogermanisch' in Germany, and more informally 'Aryan').

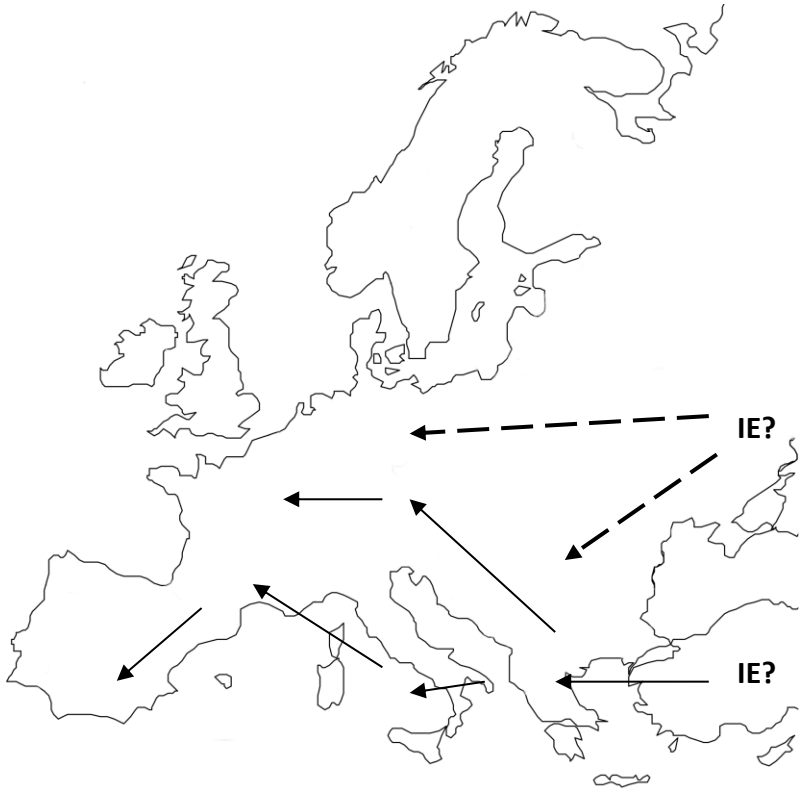
These early pioneers – such as Rasmus Rask, Franz Bopp and August Schlegel – conducted a rigorous examination of an increasingly well-defined Indo-European language family. They reconstructed the grammar of the 'parent' as well as its vocabulary and its 'root' words. Schlegel even composed a little parable in the reconstructed 'Indo-European'.

As the 19th century turned into the 20th, Indo-Europeans and Aryans became a key part of European culture. The negative aspects of the 'Aryan' cult are all too obvious, but the discovery of this prehistoric 'people' was generally positive, for it offered a profoundly expanded understanding of the distant past.

So, if we ask ourselves, *Who were these Indo-Europeans, then?* we will likely conclude that they were, as Sir William Jones suggested, both a *language* and a *people*.

2. Farmers or Herders?

There are two contending theories as to where the parent Indo-European was spoken. One theory would place it in Turkey, the other in the Pontic-Caspian steppes.



The first scenario is based on the generally-agreed idea that farmers crossed over from Turkey into Greece and colonised it, and new farming ‘pioneers’ spread out from Greece in two directions — **1)** north into the Balkans and then westward into central Europe, and **2)** west along the Mediterranean coast. At about the same time, one group reached the mouth of the Rhône and moved up into France along the Loire into Brittany, while the central European group moved into north-eastern France. Small groups of colonists then moved into Britain and Ireland.

The second theory of horse-backed warriors riding from the steppe across into Europe is a much older one and was favoured in the first place because the warlike setting conformed to the 19th Century imperial self-image of the

superior Aryan and, more soundly, the geographical location of the steppes between Europe and India is one of the most plausible locations for the parent Indo-European language.

In what follows I take the steppe theory to be the right one. The ‘farmer’ model does seem at first to be very promising. It is simple and seems to offer a single explanation for the Indo-European expansion. In contrast, the steppe model requires a complex analysis of how the ur-culture expanded out of a steppe ‘homeland’. As the simplest explanation is often the best one, surely the farmer-model is the best one?

The problem is that it only *appears* to be simple. The idea of farmers colonising Neolithic Europe is generally accepted. If Indo-Anatolian⁸ was spoken in Turkey and Indo-European in Greece, it follows that the daughter languages must follow the path of the migrations. So Greek must ‘be’ Indo-European, simply because Greek is spoken in Greece. All the other Indo-European languages, if the simplicity of the model is to be maintained, *must* be descended directly from Greek. No philologist would agree to this. There is no school of thought that thinks *Greek is Indo-European. Worse for the farming model, few think these Farmers colonised the steppes and prevailing opinion believes a strong barrier existed between the *Farmers* and *Herders*. How then did Indo-European languages come to be spoken in Iran or India or the Tarim Basin?

In addition, archaeological evidence, backed by the miscellaneous and much later literary evidence, indicates the Farmer cultures of Old Europe and the Herder

⁸ Ancient languages spoken in Anatolia, such as Hittite and Luwian, are related to the Indo-European languages, but are probably descended from an earlier ‘pre-IE’ stage of the proto-language.

cultures of the steppe were fundamentally different and that the reconstructed Indo-European culture seems a far closer match to the Herders than the Farmers. It is therefore a good deal easier to explain the cultures of these Neolithic colonist peoples if they did *not* speak Indo-European languages, surely a good indicator they did not speak them. So, if Greek is not proto-Indo-European and the steppe cultures were not Farmers, the simplicity of the simple model vanishes.

This book is based on a model that assumes **1)** there was a colonisation of Europe by non-Indo-European speaking Farmers, that **2)** the farmers sparked off a Pontic-Caspian steppe culture of Herders who spoke the pre- and proto-Indo-European language and **3)** the Herders moved in their turn across Europe so that, from the earliest written evidence, the continent spoke almost exclusively Indo-European languages. In the far west, these languages included those members of the Celtic language family that, within the Two Isles, came to be named *Irish* and *Brittonic*. Before the days of the Irish and the British, largely belonging to the world of words, our story is set in the time of the Farmers and Herders and belongs largely to the world of things.

With just two core cultures, however — the Farmers and the Herders — our task is at least greatly simplified. We will discuss the Farmers first, for they arrived in Europe first, and then turn to the Herders.

Farmers

1. A Language

It can only be a matter of guesswork who the Farmers were in terms of their language. They exist for us in a world of things and not a world of words. They are an archaeological people, not a historical one. What guesses can be made about their language can only be made from whatever may have survived into the written record — whatever echoes survive in the world of words. In practical terms, that means **1)** the non-Indo-European languages that are attested (or inferable) in the colonised lands and **2)** the non-Indo-European languages attested (or inferable) in the homeland.

1.1. Colonies

There are four ⁹ more or less certainly non-Indo-European languages known in Europe. These languages are Basque, Iberian, Tartessian¹⁰ and Etruscan¹¹. All of these are located towards the south and west of Europe and three in Spain. Basque is known chiefly because it is still spoken today, whilst the Tartessians, Iberians and Etruscans were literate peoples who left inscriptions. It is important to note, though, that these languages are almost certainly unrelated to each other.

⁹ Aside from Hungarian, whose speakers are known to have arrived from the Urals into Europe during the post-Roman period.

¹⁰ Recently argued to be Celtic, but this idea does not seem to have gained much acceptance.

¹¹ There is a minority opinion that Etruscan is in fact an Indo-Anatolian language.

Beside these, other attested languages may be non-Indo-European — *North Picene* (north-east Italy, known mainly from a single inscription) and the language of *Linear A* (Crete). The one certainty regarding these languages is that their inscriptions cannot be understood, which means that no one has proved they are *not* Indo-European. Some argue Linear A is a form of Luwian (an Indo-Anatolian language spoken in southern Turkey). As for North Picene and its one remaining leaf of text, it could just as well be Indo-European as not.

Then there are the inferred languages. It is generally agreed there are non-Indo-European language fossils scattered throughout Europe, in particular in Greece. However, all these disconnected words produce is something that is simultaneously *no* language and *many* languages — there is no grammar as per a real language and, as the evidence is spread throughout Europe, it can hardly come from a single source.

However, at least one claim may advance us beyond the starting post. If the model of the Farmer colonisation of the Mediterranean is correct, the speakers of Etruscan and Iberian and Tartessian were situated on the Mediterranean coast and the Basque region¹² also lies just beyond the land of the Iberians. It seems more than reasonable — highly likely in fact — that at least one of these languages is descended from the language of the colonists. However, the starting post is still close behind us because there are significantly more languages than colonisations.

Iberian is perhaps the best candidate to be the language of the Mediterranean Farmers — there *is* cultural

¹² Which includes south-west France, for the inferred language Aquitanian, spoken between the Garonne and Pyrenees, is either related to or the parent of Basque.

continuity in that region from the time of the first farming colonists. Basque could then be explained as a survival from the Palaeolithic. Etruscan too is perhaps the result of a later movement into Italy from the north and so maybe represents the language of the central European Farmers. Tartessian can be treated as a remote outlier. This at least makes sense as a theory. But it is just a theory. It belongs to the world of words without things — without material evidence — and exists outside of place and time.

1.2. Homeland

The lands colonised by the Farmers offer little conclusive evidence of their language, so let us look at the areas in and around their homeland.

Firstly, we can consider *Hattic*, for this non-Indo-European language was spoken in north-central Turkey, close to the early Neolithic sites of Hacilar and Çatal Hüyük. Was Hattic, then, the language of the Farmer colonists? It must be pointed out that it is only attested from about 1500 BCE, millennia later than the colonisation of Greece. In general, Hattic is not of much help. It has no relationship with the non-IE languages of Europe. Hattic and Iberian, for example, share few similarities. There is though something that might be named the ‘Hattic hypothesis’ for Greece, for one of the properties of Hattic is the plural marker *le*. This may explain the Greek name *Lerna*, which was certainly an important place at least in the Early Bronze Age. The great Hattic religious centre was named *Arinna* (‘the spring’), and the Greek name could be explained via Hattic as *le-arinna* — ‘the springs’. The etymology would certainly be appropriate for Lerna. However, it is the flimsiest of evidence for a grand theory of a Hattic-speaking Old Europe.

Next, *Hurrian* This language was spoken in Syria, northern Iraq and Turkey. Hurrian origins are obscure, though it is probably to be located around Urkesh, an early-attested Hurrian city in northern Iraq. However, during the 2nd millennium BCE a Hurrian presence is felt in ever-expanding areas of the Middle East. A kingdom called Mitanni appears in Syria around c. 1,500 BCE. This was a Hurrian kingdom many of whose kings bore Indic names. But prior to Mitanni, few traces of the Hurrian language are found in Syria. The rise of this kingdom occurs at around the same time as an intrusive Hurrian presence in Turkey. The Hurrian religion had a significant influence on the Hittites and even on the later Greeks. Although Hurrian is a non-Indo-European language spoken in the region of Çatal Hüyük itself, it intruded into the region in the relatively recent past. The people of Çatal Hüyük never spoke *Hurrian.

What about *inferred languages*? In Greece the existence of a non-IE ‘prehellenic’ language has long been recognised. But, as with the inferred languages of the rest of Old Europe, words are all we can expect to find in the Greek language and in place-names and we cannot be sure how many ‘prehellenic’ languages this evidence goes back to. Additionally, ‘prehellenic’ words generally cannot be understood. *Aphrodite* for example is agreed to be a ‘prehellenic’ name. Its meaning is, and will probably remain, obscure.

In Mesopotamia, both early Sumerian and Elamite texts contain names that represent unknown languages. Peoples such as the Lullubi, Gutu and Kassites — all from the mountains to the east of Mesopotamia — spoke unknown¹³ languages. This tells us of ‘little peoples’ who

13 Although there is a tempting argument that Kassite is related to Hurrian.

spoke 'little languages', but offers us 'little help'.

Another approach might be via the Syrian god Kubaba¹⁴, whose name is obscure. It may therefore belong to another inferred 'language', perhaps the 'banana language' found throughout Mesopotamia. The name *is* likely to represent an unknown language and Kubaba *is* located close to the homeland of the Farmers. The name could at least be an echo of the language of one of the first Neolithic peoples in that region, perhaps even *our* people. Still, the meaningless name of an almost unknown deity is vaporous stuff.

At once the most absurd and most promising approach is to consider Afroasiatic¹⁵. This is a line of enquiry that at least makes a substantial promise, albeit without much intention of keeping it.

There is ('is' in the pale and ghostly sense that is always threatening to be 'is not') a certain amount of agreement in the long-lasting continuity of culture in the early of Levant. Here we have the Natufian culture beginning around 12,000 BCE, preceded by the Kebaran (c. 25,000 BCE), preceded in turn by the local Aurignacian (c. 35,000 BCE). Within the period of this long sequence — again there is some agreement within all the room for doubt — the Levant region can plausibly be thought of as Afroasiatic-speaking. Now, the Levantine languages at the dawn of history¹⁶ were predominantly Semitic. Was the language of Jericho et al, founded many thousands of years before said dawn of history, also Semitic? The Levant is, throughout that long proto- and pre-Neolithic

14 Possibly (but as usual possibly not) found later in central Turkey as the head of the Phrygian pantheon, Kubileya.

15 A language family that includes Berber, Egyptian, Chadic, Semitic, Cushitic and Oromo.

16 Eblaite, Ugaritic and Canaanite.

sequence, closely linked to North Africa, the probable Afroasiatic homeland. As the Natufian culture had strong connections to the early Neolithic in Turkey — the immediate homeland of Old Europe — the language of the Farmers may have been a Semitic, or at least an Afroasiatic, one.

Such an *Afroasiatic or *Semitic language can now be linked to *Celtic. Gaelic in particular displays certain remarkable similarities to *Semitic, if not also *Afroasiatic. Unfortunately, the arguments comparing *Celtic to *Semitic and *Afroasiatic tend to refer to features of the insular languages that are very late — as late as c. 1,000 CE. However, any *actual* interaction between *Celtic and a substratum language would have occurred thousands of years before the battles of Hastings and Clontarf. It is also less than clear how far *Celtic itself (as opposed to Gaelic) can be compared to *Semitic.

So, this idea offers much promise, but many would say it fails to keep its promise in a quite spectacular way.

Finally — and in a magnificently limited variation on the previous theme — we can observe that the words for ‘bull’ and ‘wine’ are similar in the Indo-European and Semitic parent languages. As the origins of viticulture are dated to around 6,000 BCE in the Taurus region of southern Turkey, this is in the right region at what seems to be a suitable time. But is it? Wine seems to have been introduced into both Greece and the Levant around 3,000 BCE, long after the first farming colonists crossed over.

However, given the centrality of bulls in early farming culture, this does leave us with the word ‘bull’, maybe the only reasonably convincing non-material remnant of the language of the early farmers.

2. A Culture

As soon as it is uttered, spoken language is vanished. Culture, as if it were the bones of language, is more permanent. Egypt and Mesopotamia provide the earliest written evidence, the Levant and Turkey also furnishing us with early texts. Greek and Irish literature, though dating from much later, offer us another key collection of information. Evidence, then, from east and west.

In these cultures — these writings — lie buried the bones of the beliefs of the Farmers.

2.1. Suns and Queens

In many areas of the early Neolithic core area, we encounter what may perhaps be best described as male ‘sovereign’ gods. For example, the chief god of Sumer was *Enlil* (‘lord air’, i.e. the weather). In Babylon, we find *Marduk*, in Assyria *Ashshur* and in the Levant *El* the Father and Bull. In the mountainous regions to the north of Mesopotamia, the Hurrian weather god *Teshshub* ruled. In Turkey itself, although the Hittite state pantheon consisted of ‘a thousand gods’ incorporating many local traditions, the chief of them all was also The Weather God. Luwian peoples, inhabiting the former Neolithic core area in Turkey, put another ‘weather god’ — *Tarhund* (*tarh-*, ‘mighty’) — at the head of their pantheon. In Greece, the Indo-European ‘father sky’ mutated into the Greek *Zeus*, who was both a weather *and* a sovereign god.

This preponderance of male sovereign gods is interesting because it indicates that in many regions close to the departure point of the Farmers, the religion is not a good fit to the beliefs of Old Europe whose major deities appear to have been female.

We begin to find a closer fit in Egypt. *Ra*, the sun at his midday peak of power, was closely linked to the Pharaonic cult. According to the Egyptian priests, morning is his time of youth, at midday his strength is greatest (when he is *Ra*), and each afternoon he ages, ending the day as an old man. In the Levant, a region close to the Farmer homeland, the Semitic male sun *Shamash* is here a female *Shapash*. In Turkey itself, the chief deity of Hatti was the female sun. Her name was *Eshtana*, her title *Wurushema*.

Because the chief Indo-European god was Father Sky, and the Indo-European sun was male¹⁷, a female sun who doubled as chief god is a good diagnostic with which to distinguish Farmer from Herder. However, looking at the land that the farmers first colonised — Greece — it would seem that a wider context of *heaven* rather than the *sun* is a more useful frame of reference for the religion of the Farmers, for whom the female sun was likely an aspect of a heavenly (or ‘sky’) deity. To see this, we can compare two Greek deities with a significant Old European component — *Hera* and *Demeter* — and a third who is transparently Indo-European — *Helen*.

2.1.1. Hera

The Olympian Hera, like the other Olympian deities, is a complicated composite. Stating that Hera *is* such and such makes little sense. It is generally believed, however, that her Olympian status as sister and spouse of Zeus is a contrived one and that in parts of Greece she may once have been the main deity and was worshipped without a Zeus. In these areas she was ‘Queen’, or ‘Lady’ (as one etymology of her name suggests) — in fact she was Queen of Heaven. It is probably of great significance that she is

17 For example, *sol* in Latin, *Helios* in Greek and *Surya* in Sanskrit.

linked with *Hebe* — that is, ‘Youth’ — and it may be that Hebe and Hera are one and the same. A statue of Hera was bathed in the spring of Kanathos every year, and in this way, she was ‘reborn’ and her youth revived. Perhaps there Hera *became* Hebe.

2.1.2. Demeter

Mother and ‘daughter’ are met with more vividly in Demeter. Demeter’s name is obscure. Perhaps she is simply a *zemes-mate* (Latvian, ‘earth-mother’), or perhaps the corn (*de*, an old Cretan word for corn, we are told) mother. To the ‘classical’ Greeks, she was the mother of ‘the girl’ (*Kore*), also known as Persephone. If Hera *was* Hebe, it may be that Demeter also *was* Persephone. Demeter and Hera however are clearly differentiated in the Olympian religion. Though they both represent the power of *fertility*, Demeter’s is that of *the earth* and Hera’s that of *women*. They may however in earlier times have been regarded as two *aspects* of female power. The roots of the both of them, at any rate, lie within the bones of Old Europe.

2.1.3. Helen

It is likely Helen was originally a deity. Her name has a good Indo-European etymology and means something like ‘the shining one’. We can examine the origins of Helen-the-deity using a technique I call ‘clustering’. Greece had a great many legends and the characters in them often fall into recognisable *clusters* that have been rationalised into family groupings and complex genealogies. Clustering simply brings these characters together without the groupings/genealogies. So, if we *cluster* the characters associated with the birth of Helen, we end up with the following characters — *Leda*, *Zeus*,

*Tyndarus, Helen, Castor and Pollux, Klytemestra*¹⁸ and *Agamemnon*¹⁹. Cluster in place, we can see the outlines of the following myth —

- Leda is the swan who pulls the sun and she couples with Father Sky (i.e. Zeus). She gives birth to twin sons ('tyndarus'), day and night (the Dioskouri), and 'the shining one' (Helen — the dawn).

The second element in both of the names Klytemestra and Agamenon can be related to the root *med-* and this can in turn be linked to Indo-European terms for queen (Medea | Medusa) and king (Midas | Mita). So *Klyta[med]-* ('the renowned queen') and *Agamed*²⁰ ('over-king?') could be either the earthly representatives of Leda and Zeus or simply titles for them. The twins (day and night) and their sister 'dawn' are deities with clear Indo-European origins, even if the swan-sun may be an Old European element.

These three figures offer a contrast between Farmer and Herder, between two Old European deities and an Indo-European one. Although Demeter is in part the Mother Earth of the Herders, she is far more an Old European deity. In addition, Hera and Demeter *complement* each other even while their identities are separate. We only encounter them at a time when Old Europe was long-forgotten, when they were complex and composite members of the Olympic team of twelve and fitted into the Olympian religion. Despite all this, we can see that **1)** they represent two aspects of 'female' generative power, mundane Demeter in the earth and heavenly Hera in women, and **2)** this power was seen in terms of the human

¹⁸ Better known as Klytemnestra.

¹⁹ Husband of Klytemestra.

²⁰ Literally 'the very-much-king'.

life-cycle and the cycle of the seasons.

Demeter and Hera belong to the Farmers far more than the Herders and they provide a good foundation for understanding the religion of Old Europe, for if Hera was the Queen in Heaven (or the sky), Demeter would be her earthly counterpart and we can begin to understand that Hera and Demeter are in a sense a reflection of each other.

Perimede

If the legendary early Greek couple mentioned above were once Klyta[med]- and Agamed²¹-, it is surely of note their daughter (usually called Iphigenia) was named Perimede. There seem to be two separate stories concerning Iphigenia/Perimede, both told in grand poetic form by the Greek tragedian Euripides. One of these is set in Aulis and the other in Tauris.

Now, in Euripides' time the Tauri (who occupied the Crimea region) seem to have worshipped a deity associated with Artemis. This people made a barbaric sacrifice of sailors unlucky enough to be shipwrecked in their land. From Euripides, we gather that Iphigenia had a priestly role there and that she was a devotee of this local 'Artemis'. This version of the story seems to depict beliefs very alien to Old Europe.

The story set in Aulis, however, is of greater interest. The Aulis and Tauris areas may have been linked by Black Sea colonists from Greece who, due to the common theme of sacrifice, connected the Tauris cult to the much earlier Aulis version (which was set at the beginning the Trojan War).

In the Trojan tale, Agamemnon offends Artemis before the Greek fleet has set sail from Aulis. The miffed deity shuts down the winds, so the Greeks are now stuck. Those who know about such things inform Agamemnon that, to placate Artemis, he must sacrifice his daughter. Klytem(n)estra therefore arrives in Aulis with Iphigenia,

21 The female name *Agamede* is in fact attested in the Greek legendary record.

whom she has fooled into thinking she is there to be *married*. Then follows the drama of the sacrifice.

This looks to be a clear example of a *hieros gamos* ('sacred wedding') tacked on to the epic traditions of Troy and altered to suit the epic narrative²². It can be seen as a presumably very old story of the couple *Klyta[med]* and *Agamed* and their daughter *Perimede*. It must be of great antiquity in Greek (that is, presumably, Mycenaean) terms. It may however have its ultimate origins in Old Europe and represent the ritual in which the old god 'dies' and their Youth 'reborn' — the archetype of Iphigenia's sacrifice. It may also reference the, unfortunately widespread, Indo-European practice of the ritual death, where the retinue of the Big Man joined him in the hereafter. But sometimes, archaeology indicates quite clearly, he was not joined by a retinue, just a girl, or young woman. The notorious continuation of this, a useful propagandist tool for the Imperialists of that time, was the Indian practise of *sati* ('suttee'), in which the favoured wife followed her husband to the after-world by burning herself to death on a pyre.

Another example from this *cluster* of characters is Iphimedia, whose name links to both Perimede and Iphigenia. Iphimedia's story, as it has come down to us, intimates a coupling (sacred wedding) with Poseidon. A daughter name *Pankratis* was the result, whose name recalls that of *Eurydike*²³. The husband of Pankratis is called *Agassamenos* which, if we account for corruptions in transmission, is comparable to 'Agamemnon'. Is this a warped variant of the core tale about *Klyta[med]*- and *Agamed*-?

In summary, perhaps an Old European ritual of a sacred marriage, combined by early Indo-European-speakers with the idea of a ritual death, developed into the story of the Lord and Lady sacrificing their daughter. In the tale of Troy, this would be the Lord and Lady of Mycenae — Agamemnon and Klytemestra. This

22 The story does not of course appear in *The Iliad*, because that poem is set long after the setting forth from Aulis.

23 The names mean 'All-powerful' versus 'Wide-justice' [= 'Wide-ruling'].

already-revised narrative was now inserted into the grand story of Troy to provide a tremendously dramatic and tragic start to things before even the Greeks set their sails to the sea.

2.2. Masks

Another Neolithic characteristic to note is the mask. Greek tragic actors were masked, and the religious origins of Greek tragedy are clear. The mask is central to the famous story of Medusa ('queen'), the *gorgon* whom Perseus encountered. There is a probable connection here to the word *persona* (Latin, meaning 'mask'), *phersu* (Etruscan) and perhaps *prosopon* (Greek) and also to the names Perseus and Persephone (<> Persephatta / -assa). These may mean 'the masked one'.

This leads to a comparison with the Gaelic *cailleach*, literally 'the veiled one'. It connects in turn to both Hera and Demeter as symbols of the human life-cycle, for the Cailleach is a *hag*. The hag is equivalent to the Old European *grandmother* (to be formally defined as a 'mother of a mother'). The evidence is abundant that there was a ritual in which an apparently 'old' woman removes a veil to reveal a 'Youth', that is to say a Kore | Hebe. Such a 'hag' figure, for example, features in one of the stories of how Níall of the Nine Hostages came to be king. The name of this cailleach was *Mongfind*, or 'the white-haired'.

2.3. 'The Missing God'

A descent into the Under- or Otherworld seems to be one of the core myths-cum-rituals of the Neolithic. A more or less template version is found in the story of Inanna's descent into the Underworld and the subsequent fate of her husband, the youthful shepherd Dumuzi. Inanna descends to the land of Death in order to visit her sister Ereshkigal. Inanna and Ereshkigal are a dualism,

perhaps the morning and evening stars once believed to be distinct²⁴. Although the meaning of this Sumerian myth is not entirely clear and other Sumerian descent-myths have survived which further confuse the issue, there is a fundamental theme of Upper-/Underworld and a Youthful (male) consort.

There is an Egyptian ‘version’. The two brothers Set and Osiris quarrel and Set kills Osiris. Isis, sister and husband to Osiris, casts a spell in order to revive him a brief while. After Osiris has been revived, Isis and he couple, from which act the child Horus is conceived. Re-deadified, Osiris now dwells in the Underworld as judge of the newly-deceased. This variant shares common themes with Sumer — 1) the pairing and 2) the removal to the underworld²⁵.

The Greek ‘borrowed’ cults of *Aphrodite and Adonis*, and *Kubele and Attis* also belong to this family of myths.

2.3.1. Adonis

The Adonis cult is clearly a continuation of the Inanna/Dumuzi myth, in which the most important shared element is *the coupling*. The story is generally thought to originate in the Levant, but a more likely place is Cyprus, the home after all to Aphrodite (or Venus, ‘the Cyprian’). The most famous telling of the story is that of Ovid, which of course means it is not only told in a poetic way, but is inevitably a long way from the actual cult itself.

The start of the story involves the parents of Adonis,

24 In fact they are both the planet Venus.

25 The Greek biographer Plutarch’s version adds the details that Set casts Osiris adrift on the Nile in a chest, and after the chest washes up on the shores of Byblos and Isis retrieves it, he dismembers the body — the enclosure and dismemberment both being common themes in this family of myths.

Myrrha and Cinyras. Ovid's narrative seems to depict what was originally the mating of a divine couple. It is a ritual. The parents represent two components of the ritual — perfume (*myrrha* in Latin; as usual borrowed from Greek *múrrā*; and comparable to Hebrew *mōr*, Hebrew being closely related to Phoenician) and song (*knr* — 'stringed instrument', but especially 'harp', in Phoenician). The coupling, in Ovid's story, is between daughter and father. The notion of Myrrha's mad lust for her father is unlikely to be a part of the original ritual, which is of course comparable to the coupling of Inanna and Dumuzi and of Isis and Osiris. The former of these are husband and wife, the latter brother and sister, so it seems reasonable that the Cypriot(?) ritual was performed by a 'father' and 'daughter'. Another version of the story, told less poetically by Apollodorus of Athens (or rather, 'Pseudo-Apollodorus', *Pseudo* being one of the most prolific ancient authors) introduces the figure of Aphrodite, who seems to be the cause of the lust which enflames Myrrha (here called Smyrna, a dialectal version of the more popular form of the name).

Just as Horus issues from the coupling of Isis and Osiris, so Adonis is conceived by Myrrha and Cinyras²⁶. In our stories Myrrha turns into the tree her name represents, and Adonis is born from the tree. This points to another aspect of the original ritual.

According to Ovid, Cupid accidentally fires one of his infamous arrows at Venus (i.e. Aphrodite) herself and so she falls in love with the beautiful Adonis. She and he, Ovid tells us, live their lives hunting the softer of the gods' creatures. But alas Adonis decides to hunt boar and is duly killed in the chase. Pseudo agrees that Adonis meets this fate, but adds an important intermediate

26 It is interesting that Inanna and Dumuzi do not seem to conceive a child.

narrative. Here, Aphrodite *protects* Adonis from his own beauty by *hiding him in a chest*, just as Plutarch has Isis hide Osiris *in a chest*. Adonis, however, is not set out to sea, but delivered to Persephone in the underworld. When the time came for Adonis to be given back, Persephone refuses. Zeus was brought in to judge, Pseudo tells us, and Aphrodite and Persephone were obliged to ‘share’ him, each for one part of the year.

It seems to me that Aphrodite and Myrrha, and Adonis and Cinyras, are each one and the same — the one *is* the fragrance and the other *is* the harp. The story is the story of the cycle of seasons, of Inanna (Aphrodite) and Ereshkigal (Persephone) and Dumuzi (Adonis).

In Greece there were women’s festivals in honour of the dead god, and women planted ‘Adonis gardens’, which were pots sown with fast-fading flowers.

2.3.2. Kubele

Kubele was originally a Phrygian deity named Matar (or *Matar kubileya*, probably the equivalent of Greek *Mētēr oreia* or ‘mother of the mountains’). It is thought she was probably head of the Phrygian pantheon and also likely to be descended from the Neolithic goddesses of the region. The Greeks adopted her as *Kubele* (and then the Romans adopted *her* as *Cybele*).

The worship of Kubele and Cybele (known especially from Catullus’ lurid depiction) seems to have been dominated by priests called *Galli* by the Romans. In Rome, to become a Gallus meant to undergo self-castration on the *dies sanguinis* (‘day of blood’). The Galli dressed as women, just like the gallus who ended his life in the Yorkshire town of *Cataractum* (> Catterick, where his remains have been found). The Romans seem to have found the cult both fascinating and disturbing, but the cult they knew

was framed in Roman terms and in these frameworks it was transgressive.

The original cult seems to have remarkable parallels with that of Adonis, albeit with significant differences. It may represent the survival of a Neolithic androgyne deity widely worshipped in Old Europe, here deeply distorted after their encounter with *romanitas* ('Roman-ness').

What was the original meaning of the cult?

The Adonis myth illustrates the importance of the coupling of the consort and the goddess of earth's fertility. If there is no coupling, all is wasteland. An extension of this idea of the couple is the symbol of the androgyne. Being both male *and* female, the androgyne bears fertility within themselves. Certain Old European figurines depict the androgyne as a female with a phallic funnel for a head. Other figurines, however, show a sexualised divine couple who are *not* androgynous. The androgyne is ultimately an *aspect* of the couple, and the 'Cybele complex' of myths and rituals represents this aspect.

The core of the cult may have been the sacred stone²⁷ named Agdus. It is here the Matar Kubileya ('mother of the mountains') comes in, for this stone was her stone. The mountain on which the stone was found was named after it — *Agdistis*. We now see a couple, Kubileya and Agdistis, and this couple was the basis of the cult. It had a priesthood whose head was the *attis* (=? 'father'). This is the cult conflated into the Greco-Roman tall stories.

A good starting point is the story which begins when Zeus is sleeping and ejaculates the semen that creates the androgyne Agdistis. This creation myth is in some sense paralleled in Egypt, where Atum, according to some

27 So comparable the Lapis Niger in Rome and the Ka'aba at Makkah.

traditions, created the primordial gods Shu and Tefnut out of his semen.

Agdistis is then castrated, according to Pausanias because the other gods feared him. An almond tree (symbol of light and awakening in the Old Testament) grew from the phallus and the tree impregnated the 'daughter of the River Sangarius', from which coupling Attis who is 'more than human' and possessed of surpassing beauty is born. The similarities to the Adonis myth are striking, though the details differ (almond rather than myrrh for example). Just as Myrrha is part of the ritual, it would seem likely that the almond tree was too, in addition to the spirit of the river. In another variant²⁸ of the tale, it is a pomegranate tree, reminding us of Persephone. In this telling the daughter is named *Nana*, where the similarity to *Inanna* hardly needs pointing out.

In Pausanias' narrative there follows what is clearly a sacred marriage in the cult centre of Pessinus (situated near to the River Sangarus). Agdistis 'fell in love' with Attis and when he appeared at the marriage ceremony Attis 'went mad' and castrated himself. In Arnobius' version it is the 'mother of the gods', i.e. Kubileya, who is besotted with Attis — Kubileya and Agdistis seem to be combined into one being.

According to Arnobius, Attis (like Adonis) dies and Kubileya and Agdistis lead the wailing and lamentations (as per Tammuz and Adonis).

Now, if we consider that Attis is the chief priest of the cult, we seem to have a confused account of a ritual whose outline at least is clear. The core of the ritual is the coupling of the androgyne themselves, a ritual presided over

28 Told by the North African Christian writer Arnobius.

by the Attis. The underlying component of castration is, moreover, comparable to the myth of Kumarbi and Anu (and probably of Kronos and Ouranos), for there Kumarbi castrates his father. That myth signifies in part the chain of being (father-son-father-etc), but it also has to do with the year-cycle. It is equally concerned with fertility — the coupling of the god and the goddess brings fertility and castration represents infertility. The castrated Anu is *infertile* and the intact Kumarbi *fertile*. The castration in the Attis myth is clearly also concerned with fertility, here the fertility of the androgyne. But how? It is the castration that *makes* the androgyne self-fertile, simply because *it creates the androgyne*. The gallus, before his castration, is simply a man. *After* the act he is a man without his manhood. That the galli dressed in female clothing indicates that by castrating themselves they *became* women. But they were not women — they were *half-women*. They were also *half-men* — in the eyes of the cult, androgynes. In this state, they and they alone could represent the androgyne deity. They alone could represent fertility (or, if you prefer, self-fertility).

Another myth from Turkey is the Hattic tale of Telipinu, a true missing god. Telipinu (‘reverenced son’) disappears. The land is now infertile. Where is he? The gods seek him out, including *Hannahanna* (‘grandmother’). She sends out her bee who merely stings Telipinu and makes him angrier. In the end, magic spells remove his anger, which is dispersed by casting it down into the earth. A similar myth is told about an Artemis-like deity named Inara and a third about Hannahanna herself who like Telipinu is angered and disappears and her anger too at last cast into the earth.

In these Hattic versions there appears to be no consort, but there are points of significance — the *life-cycle*, the *bee*, and the motif of the *barren land*.

In Greece, we find the myth (and ritual) of Demeter and Persephone — that is, the life-cycle. In this famous story, Hades abducts Persephone while she is picking *flowers*, and down she goes to the underworld. Her mother, Demeter, seeks for her, but while she is seeking the world becomes infertile. It seems likely that *Hades* ('the shades') is a place and that the notion of abduction is late. Also, Demeter and Kore are probably in a sense both aspects of the fertility of the earth. Kore is *Youth* and Demeter is *maturity*. If we refer to Hannahanna from the Telipinu myth, we find the *third* stage in life. There are, then, three 'aspects' — **1) a Youth who has not given birth**, **2) a Mother**, and **3) a Mother of a Mother**. Rhea, indeed — and she is indeed a grandmother, being mother to Demeter — like Hannahanna is sent to console Demeter.

As for the bee, in Greek this is *melissa*. There are various Greek figures linked with this word. There is *Melisseus*, eldest of the nine Kuretes and father of Adrasteia to whom Zeus awarded the cornucopia. He is to be identified with an obscure Melissus, an ancient king of Crete who had a daughter Melissa. She nourished Zeus with goat's milk. Another *Melissa* — that is, the same one in a different story — discovered how to use honey and that was how she nourished the infant Zeus. For in Crete, more or less a blasphemy to other Greeks, Zeus was born and died. Cretans celebrated his birth and mourned his death. The word *melissa*, or in the plural *melissai*, in fact became the Greek word for 'priestess'. The Melissai were especially linked to Demeter and Persephone.

There are, then, many variants of the Myth of the Missing Deity in and around Old Europe, Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The fundamental *logic* of the myth, as we have seen, may be Sumerian. Inanna and Ereshkigal are two sisters, the

morning and evening stars. Inanna reigns *above* as Queen of Heaven, and Ereshkigal *below*, in the Underworld. A *male consort* is key, as is his *youth*. In Egypt, Osiris the ruler of the Underworld is male and *brother* (not consort) to Isis — the myth has been profoundly *reworked*. Adonis illustrates a three-way relationship as per Sumer — Inanna / Dumuzi / Ereshkigal versus Aphrodite / Adonis / Persephone. The Adonis and Attis variants both foreground the ritual of a coupling (represented by Myrrha and Nana).

The Telipinu version offers a new logic — no longer is it the Queen of Heaven threatening the Queen of the Underworld. Telipinu is a young man like Dumuzi and Adonis, if not Attis. He is a ‘son’ and does not appear to be a consort. But he is closely linked to the fertility of the land — he ‘goes missing’, the land wastes away.

With the Demeter and Persephone recension, a consort is also eliminated and the Telipinian motif of a wasteland adhered to. Here, earth’s fertility is a *female* power seen in terms of a daughter~mother dyad that is a curious complement to the Sumerian original. But it was no longer a tale of two sisters. Old Europe had evolved a story of the ever-renewing cycle of power that lies locked within the earth and symbolised by this dyad who, year after year, are re-born and so re-make the corn to go gold.

Greece was the ‘homeland’ of the Farmers of Old Europe, it is this myth in this version that I believe lies at the heart of their religion.

2.4. A Cosmos?

What was the basic *structure* of the Old European religion?

A deity of female fertility seems hard to deny, nor her *aspects* of maturity and youth. She likely had a consort

(or son?). Her fertility itself seems to have ‘aspects’ — there is Hera (fertility in *women*) and Demeter (fertility in *the earth*). Fertility seems to be a mirror of *infertility* — the upper-world a mirror to the underworld. Life (Kore) a mirror to death (Persephone, the masked Kore). Hera is the ‘upper’ deity of heaven or the sky and Demeter is the deity of ‘middle earth’, an *aspect* of the underworld deity.

Old Europe had three core symbols — the curling *snake*, the curling leafy *branch* and the curved *horn*. The *snake* and *tree* and *bull* (or cow) may have symbolised the lower, middle and upper worlds respectively and been combined conceptually into a *cosmic* symbol. Were the deities, or aspects, similarly combined into such a cosmos? There *was* an Old-European cosmos in which its three components were placed in a complementary and not oppositional role. In the cosmic system, the underworld *was* the middle-world which *was* the upper-world. The snake *was* the tree *was* the bull (or cow). There is no simple *dualism* like the *sun* and *moon*. Rather, while the sun is a *not-moon*, it lives *in* the sky. The sun and the sky *complement*, not *oppose*. The cosmos therefore was interconnected and interlinked. It is this interconnected cosmos of which Hera and Hebe — and Demeter and Persephone — are the faint embers.

Demeter in the Underworld

The Olympian religion of the Greeks involved a worship of gods who were 1) composites and 2) multiples. In this section, we will examine Demeter in her ‘cosmic’ role to see what this means.

We have seen that Demeter’s main myth was the ‘missing deity’, and in this myth she is linked to Kore/Persephone. It would seem that Demeter and Kore are aspects of each other, representing two of the canonical stages of a woman’s life, mother and youth. This mother/daughter variant of the myth is not found in other

versions, and the lack of a consort is also unusual.

It is here the idea of ‘multiples’ becomes important. This is because there is the ‘Olympian’ Demeter, but there is also an ‘Arcadian’ Demeter, and older ‘Pylian’ Demeter of the Linear B texts, a ‘Spartan’ Demeter, a ‘Cretan’ Demeter — etc. These are local deities who are called ‘Demeter’, but each local deity has her own characteristic.

A striking example of this phenomenon is the Cretan Zeus, who is obviously an older ‘Minoan’ god who has acquired the Olympian name. The core of the nature of the Cretan god was that he was born, died and then resurrected. In a sense, then, he was not ‘Zeus’. But then, as he was *called* Zeus, it cannot be denied he *was* Zeus. For by assuming the name, he assumed all the Olympian characteristics of Zeus.

We can gain an insight into this mode of thinking by considering the Old Testament commandment — *Thou shalt worship no other God but me*. The meaning seems on the surface entirely obvious, but makes little sense when you examine it. In Christian terms — in terms of a universal deity — there are no ‘gods’. They do not exist. But the commandment clearly implies they do. The explanation lies with the context in which the commandment was made, not that of the Church Fathers but the ancient Israelite tribes. When the Israelites swore allegiance to their god Yahweh, they bound themselves to him and him alone, but they did not deny the existence of other gods. Yahweh was not a universal god. For example, a Moabite²⁹ stele dating from c. 700 BCE boasts in the name of the great god Chemosh — the great god of the Moabites — how Israel has been destroyed forever. The people of Israel might have disputed the boast, but not the existence of Chemosh. When the commandment was created, it was the worship of Chemosh and all the other gods that Yahweh was forbidding. If you as a Yahweh-worshipper traced your way across the Middle East, you would encounter countless local gods, not to mention the big gods. They were not your gods but you would

29 The kingdom of Moab neighboured the kingdoms of Samaria and Judah.

not deny they existed.

This leads us to the Roman game of ‘god picking’ — pick the Roman god to match the ‘native’ one. One example should suffice, from the north of England near Hadrian’s Wall. This is *Mars Toutatis*. Here, Mars has been picked to match the British deity Toutatis, familiar to every Asterix fan. There is no reason to criticise the ‘pick’. Presumably the martial element of both gods influenced it. Historically, though, we can go back to the first iteration of the Capitoline Triad³⁰ of Rome — Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus. This probably indicates a link between Jupiter and Mars that was later lost, particularly as the latter became linked to the Olympian god Ares, who represented discord, violence and war. Originally, though, Mars was probably the god of what might be termed *male power*, the power expressed in young men. He seems in part to have been a god of the fields, of agriculture. A better ‘pick’ for Mars might therefore be *Maponus* (‘the son’). Quirinus, on the other hand, was the god of the ‘people’, the *quirites*³¹. The ‘pick’ here might better have been *Quirinus Toutatis*. Historically. Anyway, the picking game shows how all kinds of different gods could be linked when they shared a couple of common characteristics.

One last comparison may be mentioned. A French traveller in the 19th Century, a man of the city, ventured out into the rural village

30 Later replaced by the canonical iteration consisting of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.

31 Which itself come from *curia*. I should note this highly significant derivation — in which ‘curia’ comes from a *co-virius (‘collective of men’ as it might be translated), and that therefore Quirinus comes from something like *Covirinus — is now questioned. The other derivations seems to me not only unconvincing, but illustrate the danger of seeing etymology primarily in terms of philology, that is relegating meaning and context to a minor role. The major opposing theory — that the quirites were *curetes*, this being a Sabine term for ‘spearmen’ — ignores the context of Quirinus entirely, it seems to me. He is a third of the earliest triad of Romans. Why would a Sabine god be in this triad? The Volscian word *couehriu* seems to support an analysis of co+vir, and this approach to the etymology makes much sense in the context of our triad. Cf also Lucan’s Celtic trio (perhaps triad) of Taranis, Hesus and *Teutates*.

world of the *paysan(ne)* and he observed a curious thing. A woman in a small village was praying for a woman in the next small village to be cursed. That is not the curious thing. In the terms of Christianity — the universal religion — what is curious is that she was praying to *her* Mary. Not a universal Mary, but *the* Mary of her village. Her curses were carefully aimed at *another* Mary — the Mary of the other woman's village. *Her* Mary would, she obviously hoped, defeat the other woman's Mary and then the other woman would suffer her wrath. Compare, then, the Yahweh of the early Israelites and the Chemoshes of their neighbouring peoples.

The Olympian Demeter is comparable to the universal Mary, but just as there were Marys of each small village, there were local Demeters, each of whom will have had local origins but who will also have been tied to the 'national' Demeter. Just as the Cretan not-Zeus became tied to the Olympian god when his worshippers began to equate him with Zeus and name him Zeus. In short, there is Demeter and there are Demeters, just as (to people of small villages in 19th Century France) there was Mary and there were Marys. Just as there was a *ba'al* ('lord') called Yahweh and another called Chemosh.

When we consider these Demeters and Athenas and Heras and Zeuses (etc), we start to see how they often contrast with the relatively singular Olympian form.

Demeter, for example, has no consort. But which Demeter? In Hermione, Demeter is linked to Hades. In her fundamental myth, it is Persephone who is linked to Hades. However, as Demeter and Kore are effectively a dyad, the link to Hades is unsurprising. Here, though, we have what looks like a consort. Demeter and Hades rule the underworld. In Sparta, Demeter is Demeter-Chthonia, which seems to link her again to death and the underworld. But elsewhere, Demeter is linked with Poseidon. Poseidon himself is in some regions linked with the underworld, and also with Demeter.

These confusing links can be explained if we consider one important idea underlying the Olympian religion. It was believed

that, after the Titans had been defeated, Zeus and Poseidon and Hades divided the cosmos between themselves into sky and earth and underworld. Precisely as the older goddesses had once divided it. Each of these goddesses was an 'aspect' of the other. Each third of their cosmos was an 'aspect' of the other two. We can also discern a *dyad* of 'earth' and 'sky' within the greater cosmos in which 'earth' stood for the under- and middle-world. Hence, we can infer, the dyad of Persephone and Demeter. These 'aspects' explain, then why these local Demeters and Hadeses and Poseidons came to be so entangled in each other.

It must never be forgotten too how much history lies behind the Olympian religion. Old Europe lay a long way back in the past. The Mycenaean tablets were written around 1000 years before Herodotos and the Greek presence in Greece presumably began centuries before that. The remaining influence of Old Europe on what, for example, the 'gazetteer' writer Pausanias tells us about local cults is an echo of an echo of what is unlikely to be the primal echo. In other words, it is unlikely the tale of the Titans and its conclusion of the three male gods taking over the cosmos represents a patriarchal subversion of any Old European triad. Greece was clearly a patriarchal Indo-European society long before the era of the Hellenes, let alone classical Athens. However, it is equally clear that the male triad usurped any earlier female triad *at some point* and that in doing so is likely to have adopted and adapted at least some of its beliefs.

Continuing with our tour, let us note Hesiod praying to a Zeus called Zeus-Chthonios, whom he relates to Demeter. This Zeus reminds us of the local Demeter-Chthonia. Now Demeter has links to *each of the guys* in the male triad: to Hades and to Poseidon *and* to Zeus. But if an earlier female triad was based around a similar idea of the cosmos, why not?

In some traditions Zeus and Demeter *couple* and from this Dionysus is born. We are far removed here from the myth of Demeter and Persephone, but close to Isis and Osiris (in their begetting of Horus) and Myrrha and Cinyras (in their begetting of Adonis) and Agdistis and Kubileya (in their begetting of Attis). In

the coupling of Zeus and Demeter, the gods turn themselves into snakes.

Demeter also couples with Poseidon, in yet another local tradition. Here, the gods metamorphose into a horse and mare, obviously an Indo-European element imposed on an earlier variant. The snake — representing the underworld — is likely to have been the original creature. This Arkadian version also introduces the figure of Demeter's daughter Despoine, and also points to the most plausible explanation for the name 'Demeter'. The meaning of 'Despoine' is for once perfectly clear. It means 'mistress' or, more exactly, 'lady of the house'. If the first element of Demeter's own name is *dem-* and means 'house' (cf Latin *domus*, and *dominus* and English *timber*), then she herself is the 'house mother' or perhaps more meaningfully, also 'lady of the house'.

This interpretation may be supported by Linear B tablets from the important Mycenaean political centre of Pylos. There we hear of *wa-na-ssoi*, *wa-na-ka-te* ('two queens and a king'), to whom sacrifices were to be made. The *wanax* is likely to be Poseidon and the 'queens' may be the dyadic form of Demeter. There is also the title *po-ti-ni-ja* (πότνια, 'potnia') found in Pylos and Knossos and meaning 'lady'. Demeter was associated with this title in classical times. The title provides an interesting link with Athena (also a *potnia*) and may even suggest a suitable origin for her cult. If Demeter is, etymologically, 'lady of the house', and Athena appears to have been 'lady of the citadel' > city), then as Athena is hardly likely to, as it were, appeared out of thin air, it seems plausible that her earlier role in Old European times was as a 'demeter' and that Demeter and Athena can be traced back to the same Old European goddess. This would moreover explain the *nature* of our archaeological data — the many household figurines that have been found. Although this Indo-European derivation of the name 'Demeter' cannot go back to Old-European times (unless we believe the theory that Indo-European was the language of the farmers, which is not the view taken in this book), the name indicates the *spirit* of the earlier goddesses. Perhaps the *demeter* encapsulates the very nature of them — she is the deity presiding

over the lives of women, the women who lived in the Old-European tells³² and who made the figurines and pots we (generally) admire today.

A final point regarding the singular and plural Demeters. It is significant that in Arkadia the local Demeter Melaina ('black') is depicted with snake hair. This is not only chthonic, it brings the figure of Medusa the gorgon to mind. The Medusa whose gaze no mortal could withstand. This provides further evidence for a fundamental link between the eye and the *mask*. In that context, it also supports the derivation of 'Persephone' as 'the masked one'. Perhaps the 'queen' (i.e. the *medusa*) was simply Persephone without her mask³³ and the reason for that is, Persephone is the lady of the land of Death. You only get to see her when you are dead. It is by definition death to gaze on her. Her gaze perhaps also *delivers* death, just as the Demeter of earth delivers life to the earth and Hera [the Demeter of the sky?] delivers life to women.

2.5. Owls, Ducks

One of the most widely recognisable symbols of Neolithic Europe is the Owl-Eyes. Presumably this is the underworld-deity, the deity of the *night*. She does not seem to have survived very well, at least in her owl form. The symbol of Athena was the owl, though the Athena of classical Athens is hardly an 'owl goddess'. Moreover, much later European folklore associates the owl with curses, death and witches. The Greek *ορνίξ* ('owl') was directly borrowed into Latin *strix*, which referred to a type of owl. That word begat *striga*, meaning 'witch' or 'nightmare'. This is still the meaning of Italian *striga*. The Owl Deity, or her ghost, probably survives in these beliefs. As 'strix' is probably a pre-Indo-European word —

32 That is, the remains of the OE settlements all piled up into the great mounds known by that name.

33 At the Arkadian town of Φένεος ('Pheneos'), Demeter's priest dons a mask for the Greater Rites of her festival.

presumably with the same meaning ‘owl’ — it may even preserve the name of the Owl Deity.

Another bird in the Neolithic pantheon was the duck. This may have survived into literate times. The problem here is that the Bronze Age of Europe is replete with water-bird symbolism. The people of bronze certainly spoke Indo-European languages in the main, so the influence of the much earlier Neolithic cultures must remain unclear. That said, the deity of the Seine was *Sequana*, whose symbol was the duck, and the meaning of her name is obscure. It is a classical ‘inactive’ name. Two Raetic inscriptions, from the Alpine region, may be germane to it, however — 1) *ihamnagalle* and 2) *sqnnagalle*. These are presumably two names — Ihamna and **Sqnnna**. Could *Sequana* and *Sqnnna* be one and the same? If Raetic (that is, the language of the inscriptions) and Etruscan are closely related, one of the few secure Etruscan words we know is *sech* (‘daughter’). So could Sequana be ‘the daughter’ and therefore be comparable to Hebe and Kore? The name³⁴ may be compared to the nearby *Marne* (< *Matrona*, ‘mother’). It can be noted that even today there is a department named Seine-et-Marne — still daughter and mother?

34 Possible Indo-European comparisons — 1) the Ligurian(?) tribal name *Ingauni* (cf Gaelic *ingen* ‘daughter’) and 2) the Illyrian tribal name *Dassaretii* (cf *daughter*). Also compare the Germanic *Ingaevones* confederation and *Ynglinga* dynasty, both derived from the deity Ing-Yngvi (‘son’? — the father of Yngvi is *Mannus*, that is the great ancestor of humanity).

The Last Owl?

In Greece, the owl was strongly linked to Athena. In the complex, developed Olympian form familiar to us, the owl was a symbol of *wisdom*. One facet of Athena indeed was as a deity of wisdom (which is even the name of her mother, *Metis*). However, Athena's well-known status as a 'virgin' — that is to say, in Old European terms, *Youth* as opposed to a Mother or Grandmother — links her to both Hebe and to Kore/Persephone.

Now, as Walter Burkert comments³⁵, 'Athena is everywhere the pre-eminent citadel and city goddess'. Such a role can only have been acquired with the development of the city (or citadel) itself and Old Europe had no cities or citadels. A useful point of comparison to Athena in this context is Lug, perhaps the most important deity in the Celtic-speaking area, for Lug is, like Athena, *samildanach* ('many-skilled'). Lug is likely a 'new' god (which means of course he is an old god renewed). As Celtic-speaking society became more complex, leading to more complex political relations within it, so Lug became the god who did the overseeing — the *episcoping* or 'bishopping', if you like. The nature of Athena must have passed through a comparable transformation.

One prototype of Lug may be the Germanic (specifically Norse) Loki. The main characteristic of Loki is his sharp intelligence, albeit generally used for mischievous or destructive purposes. Loki is in addition an 'in between' figure, loyal neither to the Æsir nor the Vanir (the two factions of gods in the Norse religion). Lug too is essentially an 'in between' figure. Although he allies himself with the Tuatha Dé Danaan against the Fomorians (the two factions of the gods in Ireland), he is not of them. Loki, I suggest, is a sort of prototype of Lug³⁶.

If we subtract Athena's city/citadel characteristics — that is, to try 'find her Loki' — we can suggest wisdom or *judgement* was a core characteristic of her prototype. This allows us to connect Athena

35 Greek Religion, p.141.

36 They bear essentially the same name — 'the bright one'.

with Medea and especially Medusa, the Indo-European root of whose names means ‘wisdom’ or ‘judgement’. Medusa, at least — the *gorgos* — seems to have strong roots in the Old European religion. With her snakes and connection with *masks*, Medusa is clearly linked to the underworld. If the name Persephone means something like ‘the masked one’, then we have a connection between Medusa³⁷ and Kore (youth, or ‘virgin’). Athena as a ‘virgin’ implies she was originally a ‘Youth’ — a *kore* in Old European terms. In other words, although the meaning of Athena’s association with the owl is enigmatic, if it is ancient, we can believe Athena to be a particular development of the Owl Deity. If so, it is striking one of her epithets is *shining eyes* (γλαυκ-ᾠπις / *glaukopis*), and that the first element of this epithet is related to γλαύξ (*glaux*), meaning ‘little owl. Another epithet is Τριτο-γένεια / *Tritogeneia*. This is obscure in meaning, but if the interpretation ‘triple-born’ is correct, it again offers a link back to Old Europe and the three-ness of its goddesses.

However, Athena is not a deity of the underworld. It is possible nevertheless to link her to the Owl Goddess, to the complex mesh of the Old European goddesses and their aspects of threes (youth, maturity, eld / under-, middle-, upper-world / beginning, middle, end season). These are evident in the goddesses of Ireland, for instance via the Morrígan’s encounters with the hero Cu Chulainn in *The Cattle-Raid of Cooley*. She appears to him at one point in the form of a beautiful young woman and at another as a hideous old hag. In other words, she is young and old *at the same time*. She is no *older* in hag (*cailleach*) form than she is as a youth. Her aspects do not appear to be *temporal*.

If the Owl Deity was of the Underworld, she may be broadly comparable in terms of prototypes to Ereshkigal. Ereshkigal, as we have seen, is the counterpart to Inanna. The Underworld is the counterpart to Heaven. In a similar fashion, the Owl Deity is likely to be the counterpart of both the Earth Deity and the Sky Deity.

37 To whom Athena is related in myth. Medusa was a beautiful young woman who offended the deity and was transformed into a hideous *gorgos* (monster).

In Greek terms I have linked the latter two to Demeter and Hera. Athena, with no Underworld links, is closer to Hera than Demeter in that respect. However, Demeter is closely linked to Persephone and — though this would represent a very long journey back in time — both Athena and Demeter share the same prototype as the *Earth* or ‘*Lower*’ Deity, and the Underworld and Earth deity were linked at an early date in a similar way to Demeter and Kore. If we consider also that the Deity seems to have the three aspects of youth/maturity/eld, this early form of Athena may have been a Youth of the upper world with aspects of the Owl Deity who, as lady of the land of the dead may have been seen as the wise judge of the underworld (as per Osiris and Rhadamanthys, for example). This combined deity was perhaps seen as a wise guardian over her people. She was certainly adopted by the Greek-speakers soon after they arrived, for *Atana* is an important deity in the Mycenaean Linear B records. Here, indeed, she seems to be *potnia* (‘lady’) of the citadel, just a short step away from being *potnia* of the *polis* (‘city state’), and in the end of course the *potnia* of Athens itself.

Aspects of this polished and finished Athena can be linked to various Egyptian and Middle Eastern deities. For example, Athena the weaver is similar to the Egyptian Neit the weaver, and Athena the warrior similar to Ishtar the warrior. We can see these accretions as being attached to an already-important deity, in an increasingly complex world a world apart from the Old Europe in which the prototype of Athena existed. In just such a process, we see Lug moving ever further away from the primitive Loki.

A case can be made, then, that the Owl Deity, and her glittering eyes, survived hidden in plain sight with the Athena of classical Athens and classical Greece. But then, as one theory of the goddess and her owl goes, maybe it was simply the case that an awful lot of owls inhabited the area around and about the neighbourhood of Athens.

2.6. The Necklace Of Sovereignty

One attribute of the Neolithic goddesses is the *necklace*, which clearly has more than a decorative use. It is clearly

a symbol of power. In the Theban sequence of legendary kings, we see the king gain power when he has the necklace, then relinquish it with its loss. By marrying *Harmonia*, he wins the symbol of power. If he separates from her, his power is foregone. This is remarkably similar to what we find in pre-Christian Ireland. A king 'marries' Medb (to take one of her names) and in so doing *becomes* a ri. Medb *is* Sovereignty. Harmonia too *is* sovereignty.

The direct connection between Thebes and Old Europe and Old Ireland is not a clear matter. However, it is simple enough if we conclude that, in these places at least, the Old European goddess was transformed into a symbol of sovereignty for the King.

2.7. The Shaft Of Light

In what may or may not be a related building-tradition, 1) the Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) admitted light into the central chamber through a cleverly-designed passage in wall of the building, 2) the great passage tomb of New Grange in the Boyne Valley admitted sunlight into its central chamber at the midwinter solstice, 3) as did the monumental tomb of Maes Howe in Orkney.

The intention may in part have been to inspire awe in worshippers, but the main point was to admit the power of the god (whichever god it happened to be) into the holy of holies. This power perhaps was seen to revive, even resurrect. The 'shaft of light' is found in both Greece and Ireland and is surely a continuation of Neolithic traditions.

In Greece, one example may be mentioned — *The Case of Danaë*, as Dr John Watson might call it. King Acrisius (*un-ræd* 'of bad judgement', Acrisius the Unready) has but one daughter and she is destined to have a son who

will kill him. Acrisius – what else could he do? – entombs Danaë, with only a ventilation shaft to connect her tomb to the outside world. Zeus sees her and desires her and enters the tomb in the form of a shower of gold. From this union is born Perseus (whose name, as I have pointed out, may mean ‘the masked one’).

Deducing from the shaft of light at New Grange and Maes Howe, the Greek case is easy to solve. It is an old ritual — the masked king enters the sacred chamber of the female Youth and, blessed by the power of the rays of the sun, emerges revived, or resurrected. Or perhaps the reviving rays of the sun *are* the goddess.

The same, or a very similar, story is found about Etarscel Mor in Ireland (*etar* to my mind being cognate with *feather* and Greek *pteron* ‘wing’, indicating Etarscel³⁸ can take the form of a bird). He forces Mess Buachalla (‘mess’ corrupted from ‘medb’?; and then ‘veiled cow’, in corrupted form?). Here it is the skylight through which ‘an unknown man’ flies in, and from this union Conair Mor is born. It may be noted that one deed of Conaire is to kill Núadu, the king of the gods. Although Núadu is not part of the tale of Conaire’s birth, it seems likely to be that Aristius and Núadu play the same role — originally, it is Núadu who is resurrected as Conair. That is the youth Conair ‘kills’ the ‘old’ Núadu³⁹.

2.8. *Ilabrys*

The word *labrys* is glossed as a Lydian word for ‘double axe’, and that is the sum of our secure knowledge of it. Even the connection of the word to *labyrinth* is now open to doubt, as an early Linear B form seems to be *dapur-*.

38 The conventional explanation of his name is something like ‘messenger’.

39 Núadu’s name itself may be based on Gael. *núa* ‘new’ — ‘The Renewed One’?

Some conclusions, however, can be made regarding this obscure word.

We can note, for a start, that in Anatolia there were languages such as Hattic having a sort of ‘tl’ sound. This explains the name of the very first Hittite king, which can be written either as *Tabarna* or *Labarna* — ?< *Tlabarna*. His name is said to mean ‘king’, which suggests it literally means ‘holder of the *tlabrys*’. The word ‘labyrinth’ can in turn be explained as ‘the place of the king’, or *palace*. An original Minoan pronunciation ⁴⁰ of *tlabyrinth* would explain the Linear B form.

This word for ‘palace’ (or ‘fortress’, ‘castle’?) can be clearly seen in the Carian city of *Labraunda*. The widespread name *Laris(s)a* may be another form and was said by Greek authors to be a ‘Pelasgian’ word meaning ‘citadel’.

Still more remotely, the Etruscan *lar*, *lars* or *larth*, meaning ‘lord’, may also be mentioned, for the word can be linked to the Anatolian word *la(b)ar-*. The Roman *fascēs*, symbol of royal power, was considered to be a borrowing from the Etruscans and was a sort of double axe.

The Cretan double axe was a symbol of the goddess and it was a female symbol of power. Later, the double-axe was a symbol of power within many Indo-European cultures, but there it was of male power and male leadership — a Farmer symbol transformed into a Herder symbol.

2.9. The Sea Of Sky

In an interesting early Egyptian myth, we see earth (Geb) and sky (Nut) begotten from wetness (Tefnut) and the dry

⁴⁰ As a side note, this phonological quirk may lie behind the curious variants we see in *Odysseus* and *Olyssios*.

air (Shu). The Egyptian sun sailed across the sky in a *boat*. The Hurrian sun was drawn by two bulls and the Indo-European of course pulled by horses. Did the Egyptian sun, then, sail across a sea-sky? Was the Egyptian sky a *sea*?

Sumerian songs, or hymns, concerning Inanna and Dumuzi depict a barren field as a vulva waiting to be 'ploughed'. The milk of Dumuzi symbolises his sperm. However, in Egypt, Nut is the sky that covers the earth and one way of depicting her was as a woman towering over Geb, whose phallus is sometimes also depicted. It is if we combine both Tefnut (moisture, and so dew and rain) and Nut (sky) that we can clearly perceive the idea of a female 'sky' fertilising a male earth. Moreover, as a female, the sky can produce nourishing *milk* as well as *water*. One symbol of Nut is the cow. As we shall see, the notion of a sea-sky may help to understand some of the symbolism of the Neolithic colonists.



Malta. A ritual 'altar' in which the sky nourishes the tree of life.

2.10. Communitarianism

It is a common trope that the Neolithic was *matriarchal* both amongst masculinists and no less what might be termed *womenists* (that is, believers in those forms of feminism based around identity and of women at least implicitly set against men). In European terms, this envisages those sweeping-intoers the patriarchal Aryans doing their stuff agin them matriarchal Others, the Aborigines. The masculinist sees in all this a confirmation of male power, and the womenist of female virtue.

An especially egregious example of the womenist trope is Jaquetta Hawkes' reconstruction of Minoan Crete, *Dawn of the Gods*. This draws us into a 'feminine' society where, of course, aggression is unknown. All is soft and softness; all is beauty and beauteous; all is kind and kindness. It is a land of whispering and giggling. No bellowing or bickering in this place.

One of the most influential thinkers about both the Farmers and Herders is Marija Gimbutas. She theorised about the Indo-European *kurgans* (burial mounds) and also what she termed⁴¹ *Old Europe*. The former was, she suggested, patriarchal and the latter *matrifocal*.

Gimbutas' work is far more substantial than anything to be found in *Dawn of the Gods*. Unfortunately, it appears to be increasingly marginalised — both her 'kurgan theory' and her ideas about Old Europe. In my opinion these ideas are deeply flawed in some respects, but also contain a great many brilliant insights. The process of marginalisation seems also to involve a significant amount of misrepresentation. It is easy to say she suggests Old Europe was *matriarchal*, and ignore her use of the term 'matrifocal'. This focuses on the weakest part of her theory — that Old Europe was a land of women and a land of peace (in contrast to the kurgan land of men which was a land of war) — and weakens it further. If her *political* theory of Old Europe is unconvincing, if not nonsensical, her theories about Old European *religion* are extremely important.

To begin with, a useful distinction can be made between *feminism*, which is closely linked to Gender Theory, and *womenism* which is in essence *binarist*. Gender Theory makes a distinction between *sex* (male/female — the

41 That is, the Neolithic of Europe, in particular south-eastern Europe.

physical body) and *gender* (men/women — culture). While *sex* is binary, *gender* suggests the separation of Men and Women into two identically different classes is a cultural artefact. Opponents of Gender Theory may be called *binarists*. These assert that male and female are absolute determinants of humanity and ‘gender’ either does not exist or at most has a marginal effect on human behaviour. It may be observed that *patriarchy* cannot exist without an underlying belief in binarism. To believe Man has a natural dominion over Woman requires a prior belief in Man and Woman. Womenism, I suggest, is *a feminism of women*, of Woman as separate from and opposed to Man.

Gimbutas’ political model, it seems to me, veers very far into womenism. A key characteristic of womenism is its close relationship to masculism. In fact, the roots of womenism lie deep within Victorian notions of patriarchy — binarists believe in the same patriarchal myths, they just interpret them in a different way.

2.10.1. Masculism in the Victorian Age

The core idea of *masculism* is a belief in the *power* of Man, which is viewed as a physical power. The power of rivers, of lakes, of stone, of birds, etc — these have vanished, but the mysterious power of Man lives on. Although it is physical at root, the power flows through Man. It powers his Will (his iron will) and from there flows into his mind (his mighty intellect). But, of course, Woman entirely lacks this power. Her body is feeble and her will is soft and her intellect vaporous. An example of this magic power in action is Jung’s theory of *animus* and *anima*.

By Victorian times, however, the masculist religion was in trouble. The problem was that the rise of the bourgeois man meant the fall of the warrior. What was this magic

power worth to, for example, the clerk? Then there was the expansion of Empire and its endless encounters with ‘primitive’ warrior men. The clerk had no war to go to, yet had to measure himself up to these warriors. The solution was twofold. *First*, the basic model was modified. The core of man’s magical power was kept, but now it was seen as savage. What made the anglosaxon man the superior of the savage was his iron will and his strong and manly intellect. These the savage lacked, whose will was animal and whose intellect negligible. The Victorians, then, moved Man’s power up a notch or two, but they never forgot that his core *physical* power was still there when needed. The *second* modification concerned Woman. If the physical *power* of Man had to be backgrounded, the *impotence* of Woman must be foregrounded. She became the creature of utter fragility that was the Victorian Lady. The most cunning aspect of this remodelling relates to the new notion that the core of Man was savage. Because Woman lacked the magical power of Man, she lacked his savagery. Woman, aside from her Beauty that Man must reverence, was in many respects the *superior* of Man. She was all goodness and compassion and empathy. Only if we consider the difference between *morality* [emotion-based] and *ethics* [reason-based] do we understand the subtle ideas underlying the new notion. Woman, the model said, was moral because her *emotions* are moral. Her *feelings* are entirely gentle. Without a Will, without the Power of Man, this must be so. It is left to Man to reason, to understand *ethics*. Ethical ideas are not for Woman. Without an Intellect, this must be so.

So Man was *powerful* and owed *dominion* over Woman, but Woman was *moral* and owed *reverence* by Man — thus spake the gentlemen of Victorian times.

2.10.2. Gimbutas and Victorian Masculism

Something like this seems to underlie Gimbutas' political model of the Kurgans (men) vs the Farmers (women). Rather than the masculists' tale of manly superior men dominating effeminate inferior men, we have a revisionist womenist tale of *men overpowering women*. For Gimbutas also inverts the patriarchy in the following way. A patriarchy is *androcentric*. It is a world of men. Certainly, the Victorian age was a world of two *separate spheres* — public and private. The public sphere is the world of men and the private sphere of women and the world at large is the public sphere and therefore a world of men in which women do not exist. If we upend this world and enter the private sphere, this is a world of women in which *men* do not exist. Men on the whole do *not* exist in Gimbutas' model of Old European politics. Men are, it seems, always 'off out over there'. With men excluded, her Old Europe *was a world of women* just as much as a patriarchy is a world of men. So, her tale of the kurgan and the farmer is a tale of a world without women *there* and a world without men *here*.

The reason this absurdity is worth examining in detail is because it illustrates that the *virility/effeminacy* and the *patriarchal/matrifocal* models are built on the same ideas and are two ways of telling the same tale.

2.10.3. Gimbutas' Goddess

However, if we reject Gimbutas' political model, this allows us to better see the strengths of her analysis of myth, of her 'goddesses'. We can start by taking what I have called a *feminist* approach, that is by recognising the insights offered by Gender Theory. Humanity, in this view, consists of men *and* women and not one or the other, so the very existence of patriarchy becomes

problematic — *why* patriarchy? We can say that *binarism* is more primal than patriarchy and that men were men and women were women was unquestioned throughout all past human existence. That doesn't explain though why men took *dominion* over women. The obvious answer lies in the one advantage men do have over women, physical size and strength and the linkage of that one advantage to *conflict* and *war*. A society built around conflict and war is likely to have some sort of patriarchal social structure. It transforms a society in which men are men and women are women into one in which 1) status is based around male power, and 2) therefore men have power over women. Old Europe, though, shows no sign of being such a society, and it cannot be denied that the religion of early Old Europe was strongly focused around female deities. It is reasonable to conclude, then, that in Old Europe 1) men did not have power over women, and 2) status was not based around male power.

If we question the notion that 'patriarchy' is the natural order of human society, then *we should not be surprised* at this point. If Old Europe was not *effeminate* and it was not *populated only by women*, how did Indo-European languages move into the continent on such a scale?

2.10.4. Communities of Men and Women

In my view, the key is not the *matrifocal goddesses* vs the *patriarchal kurgans*, but that of *communities* vs the *individual*. Although the farmers colonised Europe, generally speaking the communities they founded were stable. In the core area of south-east Europe, settlements endured for an entire millennium. In general, once settled, a farming community lived over the bones and among the spirits of its ancestors. The land was *its* land, the land of its living and its dead. So long as each community believed something like this, what motive

was there to move to someone else's land? If the settled land was fertile, why move? Would that not be sacrilege? To the ancestors? The gods were gods of the land and the people were people of the land and so their communities were communities that kept close to their land and their gods.

The Herders of the steppes, however, did not have the luxury of staying still. In their world, men and women lived separately — the men with the herds and the women back at base. There were always other groups ready to raid their cattle and so conflict was a central part of society. Ancestors were the ancestors of the big men and they inhabited genealogies as much as tombs, *pace* the kurgan. Ancestors, then, were portable. The herd, the movable herd, was at least as important as the land.

This is the key to the 'success' of the Indo-Europeans. It is not patriarchy in-itself or matrifocalism in-itself. It is herding and farming and the inherent natures of these two very different cultures. A patriarchal culture did impose itself all over Europe, but more than that in the first place it was a mobile and individualistic culture faced up to a sedentary and communalistic one.

3. A People

In the shell of a very small nut, farming was established in the Middle East by about 10,000 BCE in various regional cultures. Turkey was an early adopter, and it was from there colonists arrived into Greece about 7,000 BCE. These colonists moved north into south eastern Europe, where their presence is evidenced by a range of rich archaeological cultures and from there they moved into central Europe. Other colonists rode the Mediterranean. About 5,000 BCE, groups moved up the Rhône and Loire and more or less simultaneously from central Europe into the France. The Two Isles were colonised from the beachheads of Brittany and the Rhine region. This was about 4,500 BCE.

The people of the Neolithic, then, in this colonisation model, were the people of western Turkey in the eighth millennium BCE, arriving as it were in the Orkneys just under three thousand years later. (If their starting point was the culture of Çatal Hüyük, it is curiously symbolic of this journey that the interconnected-house architecture of that city is repeated in the little Orkney settlement of Skara Brae.)

The question relevant to us here is, what in the archaeological record can be **1)** connected to the much later cultural record and, **2)** what in that can be used to set the Neolithic Farmers against the Indo-European Herders. Are there any diagnostics in Neolithic symbolism and, say, settlement patterns that can be used to understand the Indo-European entry into Europe better?

3.1. Reading Circles

A wise statement that has been made about Neolithic

stone circles is that *roundness* was clearly important to their makers. How can we go beyond this simple fact and understand their purpose in any more depth? It is not that we cannot suggest what their purpose was, for many suggestions have been made. The problem is that the blank canvas of a stone circle can never narrow down for us which suggestion is correct. Another problem is that, where we can be reasonably confident in an assertion, almost by definition that assertion will be so general as to be almost meaningless. To say, for example, that Neolithic people worshipped the sun is merely to say that they were people. All pre-scientific people worshipped the sun. Did people dance wildly in orgiastic rites, in the circles? Perhaps, but perhaps their ceremonies were solemn and silent. If we ask the stones in any stone circle what went on within their bounds (which were clearly 'sacred' — another vaporous assertion), they cannot tell us.

This combination of uncertain and vaporous assertions is characteristic of much of our Neolithic evidence. It is true that archaeology is nowadays able to command an ever-increasing amount of hard science to enhance our understanding of prehistory, but this hard science is often of limited use in explaining the subtleties of human culture. Nevertheless, it is possible to find in the culture of Old Europe aspects that are specific to it and not universal to all pre-scientific peoples. That is to say to see not merely the sky and the sun and the earth, but an *Old European* sky, sun and earth.

3.2. Prototypes

This section is concerned with Old Europe and the farmers who colonised it from Turkey in and around 7,000 BCE. Also of interest, then, are the cultures that must have influenced the early Turkish farmers. Here we

can go back very far, in the Levant region to the Natufian culture beginning c. 12,000 BCE. This was a prototypical Neolithic society and it underlies both Jericho and Çatal Hüyük.

Early Neolithic cultures exist in both the Middle East and Egypt and it is these that extend themselves into south-eastern Turkey. These early communities lived in small and scattered groups, but there was contact between them. Roughly, we can define a proto-Egyptian group, a proto-Sumerian (in southern Iraq) group, a northern Iraqi group (for example Jarmo), a Levant group (for example Jericho) and finally the Turkish group that the ancestors of the Farmers belonged to.

This early period was when the basic beliefs of the farmers developed, in and amongst these scattered population groups. We can think of this as the *Prototype Era* of the Neolithic. Because the farming lifestyle was new, communities who adopted the lifestyle adapted its ideology. We can conclude however that there cannot have been one single 'Neolithic culture'. Each adaptation in each community was not a carbon copy of the source culture. Nevertheless, the culture of each must have been closely related. Perhaps we can say that, while there was not *one* Neolithic culture, there was *a* Neolithic culture sharing certain common values and assumptions and rituals.

The figurines below, from Egypt and northern Iraq, illustrate just such a loose network of connections. The Egyptian figurine is from the pre-Pharaonic southern kingdom, the region that just under a thousand years later would conquer the northern kingdom and unite the country. The south of Egypt is remote from northern Iraq and the Hassuna culture. It will be observed that there is, however, a broad similarity between the two sets of

figurines — they are clearly derived from the same *Prototype*. It can also be observed that while the Egyptian example is *representative*, the Hassuna items veer towards a *symbolic* art.



Egypt.
Badarian
c. 4000 BCE



Iraq.
Early Hassuna, Tell es-Sawwan
c. 6000 BCE



The example overleaf is from the famous Vinča⁴² culture. The representative element has almost disappeared here, but it is clear it shares the same prototype as the Hassuna figurines and we can even see the link to our ‘representative’ Egyptian statuette. The hips are now, within Old Europe, stylised. The hands are no longer clasped, but outstretched and wing-like. But the tradition is recognisable. There is a single prototype, from which multiple ‘schools’ of art have flourished.

42 Located in modern Romania.

This illustrates how the very early Neolithic in and around the Middle East should be seen as a group of cultures with a common core — a common *prototype culture* overlying a loose network of different peoples. There was no single *culture*, rather many cultures sharing the same *prototypes*. So, when we arrive from Turkey into Greece and forward into Old Europe, we can think of the first colonists as creating *the* Old European prototype culture in Greece and that this was superimposed on the ur-prototype of the homeland.



Romania.
Vinča.
c. 6000 BCE)

In this section, I will try and identify elements of the culture of the Farmers, perhaps using the ur-prototypes of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and in such a way as to usefully distinguish it from the culture of the Herders who came after.

3.3. East — The Core Area

3.3.1. Cosmos

The figurines shown below illustrate the fundamental belief of Old Europe — its three goddesses, or the three ‘aspects’ of its single goddess.



Late **Cucuteni**



Cucuteni



Egypt [Predynastic]

This is half-representative and half-symbolic art. These are clearly three female deities that are located in a) the underworld, b) this world, and c) the upper world. They represent, therefore, a *cosmos*.

- The leftmost figurine is, as Marija Gimbutas observed, the bone-white bloodless goddess of death. She is the underworld.
- The middle figurine, originating in one of the classical Old European cultures — the Cucuteni⁴³ — is androgynous, with a phallic head. She is also covered with either water or ‘foliage’, reminding us of both Nut and Geb in Egypt and Inanna and Dumuzi in Sumer. She is the fertile and fertilised earth.
- Although the rightmost Egyptian figurine is outside the Old European sphere, it is shown here because it indicates the deployment of a dual symbolism — the outstretched arms are symbols of *horns* and *wings*. The figurine is at the same time a *cow* (sky

43 Located over a wide area from Romania to the Ukraine and into Russia.

or sun) and a *bird*. She is the goddess of heaven.

Although these three figurines prove nothing about the relationship between these three deities (and, of course, the Egyptian figure can only be distantly related to the other two), they do offer a useful framework for a prototypical three-layer model of the cosmos.

The two figurines below illustrate a *symbolic* depiction of the androgynous ithyphallic goddess together with a more representational figurine, showing how she was a core part of the Old European religion —



Romania. Cernavodă, Hamangia culture.



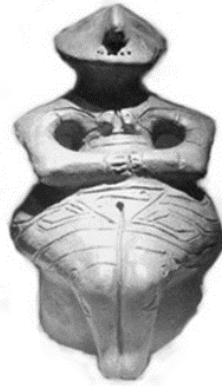
Bulgaria. Vidra, Gumelnița culture.

Another figurine from Vidra is clearly a representation of the cosmos. Here, the body is divided into two halves. At the centre there is a triangular vulva flanked by two disks. This represents *earth*. Above the earth there is a *band of swirls*, one of which is placed above the ‘earth’. The two disks are likely to represent the androgynous dyad. The breasts are a symbol of the sky, above which is another swirl.



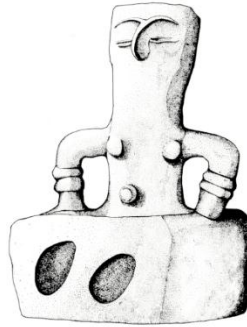
Bulgaria. Vidra, Gumelnița culture.

In the masked Gumelnița figurine below, within the triangular vulva there is a swirl with a hook at each end and, at each side of the vulva, a lozenge. This dyad is comparable to the disks in the above figurine.



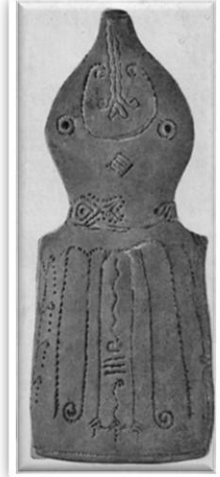
Gumelnița culture.

A similar concept is observable in the model of a temple shown overleaf. Here, we see the breasts and navel (?) forming a triangle (perhaps representing the triangular shape of the pubis). The eyebrows are in the shape of both wings and horns, just as with the predynastic Egyptian deity shown above.



Macedonia.

The symbol-rich figurines below use symbolism that clearly represents the entire cosmos (under-, middle- and upper- world). Again, a similar symbolic schema is utilised, but in this slightly more representational form, we now have a key to the symbolism.



Romania. Cirna-Dunăreni.
Girfa Mare-Cirna Culture.

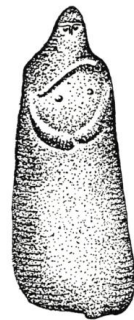
In the *leftmost* figurine, three levels are apparent — the three layers of the cosmos, above which is a ‘head’ comparable to the ithyphallic and androgynous deity. Enclosed within her arms (cf the posture of the

Gumelnița figurine above) lies the sky/heaven, represented by the rays of the sun which curl into two eye-like swirls. Beneath the 'sky', the figurine is divided by a solid band (literally a belt), perhaps the dots representing liquid (i.e. the clouds that rain water and maybe also milk). Then beneath this band lies the earth and its four cardinal points, again flanked by two symbols, which are circular here. At the root of the figurine, under another band — perhaps the solid ground of the earth — we reach the underworld, represented by a serpentine swirl.

The *middle* figurine shows up the same symbolic schema, though here we see a necklace, a symbol of the goddess' power. In this example, rays of — light? water? both? — emanate down from the sky to the earth (its rays ending in a leafy swirl) and the underworld (as the serpentine swirl).

In the *rightmost* figure, the topmost section is more clearly birdlike. In fact, here the earth seems to be linked to the sky above the underworld lying below the central band. The earth is represented by a lozenge, flanked as usual by two circles. It is the earth which makes up the bird's face, its eyes and beak. This representation illustrates most clearly that the earth itself (the lozenge) is flanked by two figures, no doubt our divine couple. The triangular dots are clearly a variation of those on the temple model (see above).

If we compare the top left figurine above to the one to the right, from southern France on the other side of Europe, we see the French figurine is merely a simplified (or cruder) version of the one from the core area. We see the arms wrap



Southern France.
Gard.

around the sky, with the breasts in the middle (morning/evening star? moon/sun?).



Moldavia.

In the figurine to the left, we see a) the necklace, b) the triangle (pubis) and c) a dot for the vulva. The figurine is also divided by a belt. In fact, there are two necklaces. One adorns the neck, but the other flows down to the waist region — it likely represents rays of light or drops of water. The top half, then, symbolises the sky and the lower half the mundane world. The triangle is presumably the middle world.

It is easy, looking at the purity of a symbol, to conclude that the belief it represents is pure.

Egyptian, Sumerian and Greek religions were not pure, whatever the power of their symbols. The Greek and Egyptian religions were a complex mix of rituals and deities originating in many times and places. The great gods were themselves complex compounds forged over time and place. Nevertheless, in terms of Neolithic prototypes for example, who would deny that Isis and Osiris, Inanna and Dumuzi, Hannahanna and Telipinu, and Demeter and Kore are intimately — though distantly — related? These clearly related figures are equally clearly related to Old Europe (Demeter and Kore, of course, hail from the core area there). Here we see perfectly illustrated the impure compounds of reality *and* the pure element of an ur-myth.

In this elusive ur-world, then, we can determine the following core concepts in Old Europe. 1) A sense of *three-ness* within the world of the goddess. First, she is seen in terms of aspects of the cosmos — upper- and middle- and under- world. Second, she has three aspects in her life-cycle — youth and maturity and eld. Third, she also has

three aspects within the seasons of the year — start, middle and end (in Ireland *Imbolc*, *Lughnasad* and *Samhain*). **2)** There is also a sense of *two-ness* — a dualism [consort? son? herself as Youth?]. The symbols of the dualism here may be sun/moon or heaven/earth. In this context, the threefold cosmos may have been reduced to a twofold upper-sky and lower-earth (its surface and underbelly).

The religion of the Old European core, founded on the prototype of the first colonists into Greece, was therefore a sophisticated set of beliefs of a cosmos inhabited by the transformations and transitions of a goddess **1)** in her aspects of the underworld, middle-world (i.e. this world) and upper-world, and **2)** in the generation of fertility with her consort.

3.3.2. Eyes

One of the key prototypes in the Neolithic art of Old Europe is the eye. The eye is clearly symbolic and, as the following examples illustrate, this symbol is found all over Europe beyond the core area.



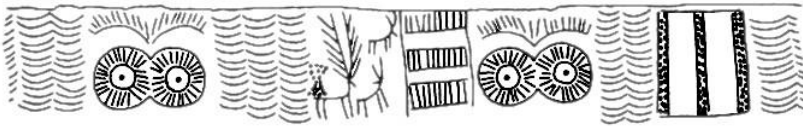
Malta. Tarxien.,
c. 3,150 BCE.



Central Europe.
Early Rössen.
c. 4400 BCE.

One of the most striking manifestations of the eye symbol is the Owl Deity, seen in the Los Millares example overleaf. In general, though, the eye seems to be a complex symbol. As a symbol, it is comparable to the *cross* or *crescent*, each of which has an underlying meaning

whatever the denomination of its originator. However, the cross and crescent are not interchangeable, proving that however diffuse and complex a symbol becomes, it still has a core meaning that remains broadly consistent, like the cross in any parish church. We can perhaps see the underlying meaning of the eyes as a symbol of the ‘aspects’ of the Old European goddesses.



Spain. Los Millares.
c3,000-2,000 BCE.

In each specific instance of Old European art, it is likely the eyes were a symbol that functioned on multiple levels. At times, the eyebrows are wings, but they can be horns. This appears to be a celestial symbolism — the bull and cow are doubtless linked to the sun and the day. But at other times, the eyes are serpentine, perhaps sometimes leaf-like. This must symbolise the ‘lower’ world, either the middle- and under- worlds both, or just the underworld. It is possible that the Owl Deity, with her burning fiery eyes, is in fact a symbol of day-in-night and her eyes therefore a cosmic symbol — she is the deity who is serpentine and leafy and horned as she travels through the threefold regions of her cosmos.

3.3.3. Masks

The corollary of the eye is the *mask*. It is a common attribute of figurines in the core areas of Old Europe, particularly in Vinča. However, the mask is one of those cultural artefacts so widespread it is easy for commentary to sink into a banal generality. Milton’s *Comus*, subtitled *A Masque* — was this a relic of Old Europe? Is Noh theatre? What is significant about the mask in Old

Europe, though, is its obvious *purpose*. It covers up the *eyes*. Wearing a mask both shields the worshipper from the power of the deity and also that power from the worshipper.

The 'mask' appears early, earlier than the Old European Neolithic. The famous palaeolithic figurine from Willendorf (c. 30,000 BCE), whose purpose is still under debate and quite uncertain, is shown to the right. Whether the head is covered by a mask or a veil, it seems clear that its makers considered it important that the face was hidden.



Austria. Willendorf.

The figurine of a human head to the left belongs to the very early proto-Neolithic Natufian culture. Human representations are scarce in this culture, so perhaps it is the lack of a tradition in stone-working that has led to this somewhat enigmatic product. Is the head simply crudely designed and implemented or is it a symbolic representation of a human head? Is it male or female? At any rate, the eyes appear to be clearly emphasised, perhaps indicating the link between eyes and masks. Is this the glittering eyes themselves or a mask rendering the eyes harmless? Above the eyes we see both prominent eyebrows, as per Old European representations of the Eye Deity, and also what may be the wings/horns also associated with her. However, the work is too crude to confirm this.



Levant.
Eynan, Natufian

Our next examples are from Turkey, from the early Neolithic village of Hacilar, founded c. 7,000 BCE. The figure to the *left* is more obviously a masked head. It looks very much like a prototype of the Old European art style. It is bird-like, it has prominent eyes and a triangular and beak-like shape. The *rightmost* figure displays the blank and featureless face of many Old European figurines. It too seems to be a prototype of Old European art.



Turkey. Hacilar.

The trio of figurines overleaf illustrates one of the most important artistic conventions of Old Europe. They depict what Gimbutas termed the *death goddess*. The left two figures have no eyes at all, and leads to the suspicion that this is the *inverse* of the Eye Deity on the one hand, but on the other the Masked and Eye Deities are aspects of each other. She is masked both at night and in the underworld, but ‘removes’ the mask as she re-enters the sky (or heaven). Her whiteness is at once the boned-bloodlessness of death, but also the whiteness of the moon.



Old European Masked Figurines.

Finally, the figurine to the right is from what was perhaps the ‘classical’ mask-culture — Vinča in modern Romania. Very many masked objects have been found there. The Vinča figurines form a rich and complex group in aggregate. The mask seems to have played an important role in Vinča religious practices, so it seems unlikely the mask belonged to a specific deity, rather that the masking of the face had assumed a wider significance. The importance of the mask in classical Greece may well have one of its origins in Vinča.



Vinča

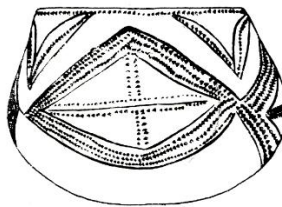
In summary, the mask had a twofold purpose — **1)** it acted as a shield to the power of a deity to the worshipper, and **2)** more generally, the mystery of the mask added to the power of ritual drama (behind which the first actors, of course, performed the first classical *dramas*).

3.3.4. Coiced?

A *coiced* is a ‘province’. In early historical Ireland, most people thought there were five provinces in all, but some

said there were seven. The underlying meaning of coiced, however, is ‘one fifth’, so it looks like the ‘fivers’ were technically correct. A closer examination of the word indicates that it refers to *five cardinal points* — north, south, east, west, centre. In this section that is what I mean by ‘coiced’ — not a *political* system divided into five, but a *conceptual* idea that the world is naturally divided into these five cardinal points, in which the *centre* is of considerable symbolic, if not supernatural, importance.

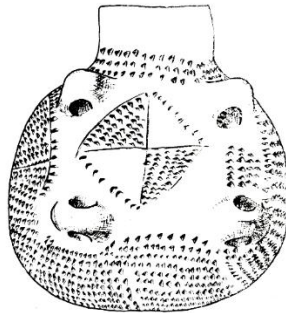
The art of Old Europe indicates that the people who made it believed in a coiced world. Take the pot illustrated below, from the Banded Ware culture in central Europe (*Linearbandkeramik* or LBK as it is generally known as). A lozenge is depicted on it most prominently. As this is a symbol of the earth, we see that the earth is divided into four. That is not necessarily a coiced, but it does suggest that dividing space into four regions was an important concept in the LBK period.



LBK. Königsau.

In the LBK pot overleaf, we see a similar idea depicted in a different way. Here we see the earth (or cosmos) likewise divided into four, but here one half is *light* and the other *dark*. Each half, moreover, has a winged shape.

The division into light and dark strongly suggests a conceptual division within the cardinal points. The most likely division would be north-south vs east-west.



LBK. Elsloo.

Exactly the same symbol appears in the vase below, except here it is made into the body of a bird, with a bird's head and bird's feet. This might also add weight to the idea the N-S and E-W are two pairs within the cardinal regions.



Cucuteni. Ghelăiești.

The two images left and right overleaf, from Tarxien in Malta, seem at first glance entirely dissimilar to the above lozenges, but it may be a variation of the same symbol for the earth (or cosmos).



The top row of this symbol looks like the Eye Deity, but so does the bottom row and, if you look on sideways, both the left and right sides depict the same deity — *every corner of the earth/cosmos has an eye!* What is new is that there

is now clearly a *centre* and there are *five* cardinal points that look very much like they make up a coiced. We can infer then that the lozenge symbols we have shown above, which divide the earth/cosmos into four, are simply coiceds in which the centre is not explicitly marked.

Could this be an Old European belief system adopted by the IE-speakers who became ‘the Celts’ and the idea underlying the Irish province system? Note that the Irish system not only has 5 cardinal points, it also seems to have been divided into two groups of N-S and E-W, as it may have been in Old Europe.

3.3.5. Swirls

The swirl is another key Old European symbol, and is illustrated right and overleaf.

It is found all over the Old European core area and is clearly another complex symbol. If we consider the eye and swirl symbol together, they clearly both belong to the same religious belief system. The eye is, in fact, nothing more than a fragment of



Malta. Tarxien, c3,150 BCE.



Bosnia. Butmir.
c. 4,200 BCE.

swirl. We conclude therefore that there is a *general* swirl pattern⁴⁴ that can be refined to create *specific* symbols such as the Eye.

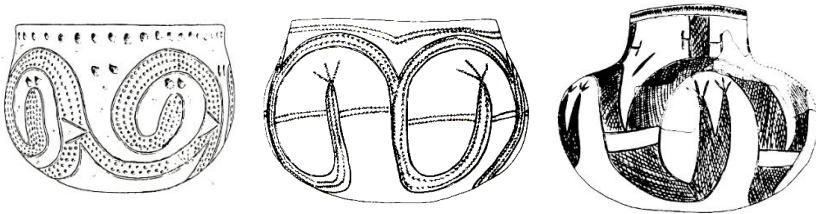
In the two examples below, it is unlikely the swirls are there simply to fill the available space. Three-ness is significant. Particularly in the above right image, the swirl is *serpentine* but at the same time *leafy* and *horn-bearing*. So this looks like a symbol of the Old

European cosmos⁴⁵.



Tarxien. Triadic Symbol?

We see the same composite symbol in the central European pots illustrated below — at least the serpentine shape and the bird's feet are obvious to see, and these clearly represent the under- and upper- worlds.



LBK. Central Europe.

Finally, we can consider the figurine shown overleaf.

44 That is, broadly symbolising the cosmos via the snake/tree/horn

45 Again, of snake, tree and horn.

What is significant here is the *swirl*, for this indicates that one use of the swirl is as a *symbol* of the androgynous deity.

The androgyne is a complex symbol with many layers of meaning. We can observe here the prototype in Inanna and Dumuzi, and here also the interconnection of the three parts of the cosmos. Here, Inanna is heaven (that is, life) and Ereshkigal is the under-world (that is, death).

They are the *fertile* and the *infertile*. Dumuzi is the intermediary who makes the middle-world fertile. In Egypt, with the figures of Nut (sky) and Geb (earth) we see more clearly the sky coupling with the earth to bring fertility to the earth.

This is perhaps *the* core Neolithic prototype. In times of dearth and drought, in the wintertime, the forces of fertility *withdraw*, or are *taken*. The earth itself becomes dead, that is, infertile — and, in fact, *becomes* the underworld. In a sense then, Inanna *becomes* Ereshkigal or, if you prefer, Ereshkigal replaces Inanna. The androgyne is therefore a *cosmic* symbol — it contains the cosmos within itself. The cosmos, meanwhile, is interlinked and interlocked. Its three levels are intimately — especially in the case of the androgyne! — intertwined.

And that is an appropriate point to take our leave of the Old European core area.



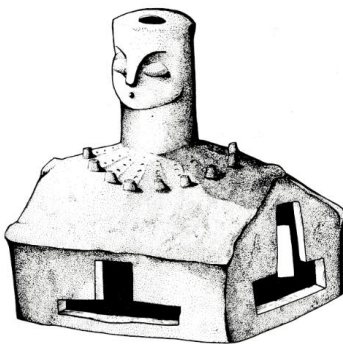
Romania. Crușovu, Vădastra culture.

3.4. West — Inside the Goddess?

One of the most probable interpretations of the great Neolithic monuments of the Boyne Valley, and related

monuments in the north of Ireland, is that they represent the Cosmos, which is to say the deities who make up the cosmos. To step inside New Grange was to enter the cosmos and join the spirits of ancestors who inhabited it. The following sections attempt to describe this cosmos in term of its symbolism of night and day (underworld and upper-world), of sun and the *sea of sky*. By inscribing sacred stones with these symbols, the builders ensured that the stones *became* the cosmos. For a thing that *looks like* something either becomes that thing or at least is inhabited by it. There is enough detail in these symbols, I believe, to link them to the religion of the Old European core region. However, in Ireland the art is purely symbolic — all representation is gone. In a sense, the magic stones are plastered with logos, as if in the beginning was the logo.

If we observe the Old European artefact to the left, a model of a temple, we can see it in one sense represents the deity, yet at the same time *is* the deity. In a full-size version, worshippers would be at-one with her when they entered the temple.



Macedonia. Porodin.
c. 6,000 BCE.

In the great megalithic buildings of the west, such as New Grange — are they in fact sacred constructions in the manner of the Porodin ‘temple’? *Are they too the goddess? Are the sacred inscribed zones the goddess?*

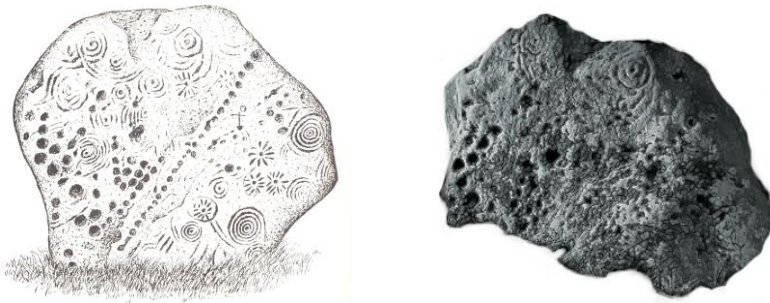
Were the worshippers who assembled in the passage grave of New Grange — did they believe themselves to be *inside the goddess?*

3.4.1. Upper and Lower?

Comparing the inscribed stones of Neolithic Ireland, one pattern emerges very clearly — a division into night and day. These, in turn, must represent the under- and upper-worlds or else perhaps the mundane and celestial worlds.

We can begin with a decorated stone from the north of Ireland, in the lands of a small farm near the small village of Sess Kilgreen. The illustration below dates from the late 19th Century, and the stone appears to be more and more weathered with each passing decade. The photograph shows what the drawing does not, an indentation at the top that makes clear the intent that the adjacent swirls are eyes. They are the eyes of the goddess. The stone *is*, therefore, the goddess herself. And, it must be said, she is in a sorry state today, just a rock in a remote field weathered by the very winds she no doubt once controlled.

Sess Kilgreen. County Tyrone



What interests us here — clear in the drawing, less but just about so in the humble remnant of rock we have today — is the division of the design. Is apparent, at least on a closer look, even in the weathered remnant, that there is a diagonal line of dots running down almost the middle. In the drawing at least, the left half has a sea of dots beneath the eyes whilst the right side is peppered



Ireland. *Knownth.*

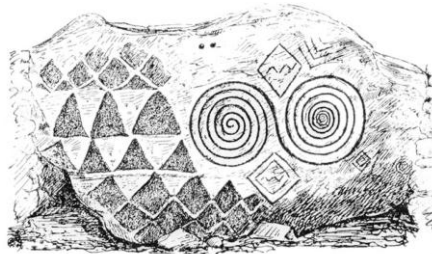
with what look like sky symbols (suns and/or moons and/or stars).

If we now look at the designs from two areas in western Europe, we can see a clear similarity in the form of the figure. This is the Owl Deity, so the figure on the left of the Sess Kilgreen stone is the Owl goddess.



Portugal

The right-hand side of the stone is therefore the upper-world, with its stars (or suns and moons). The stone, then, is comparable to the cosmic figurines of the Old European core region. In the New Grange decorated stone below, the same deity is now unmistakable.

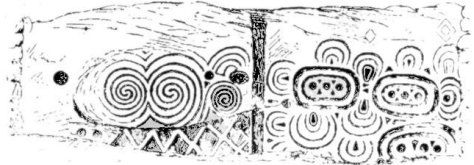


New Grange. Stone b

Here we can also see the serpentine, at least, character of the eyes and also the lozenge symbol that probably designates the cardinal points (whether four or five).

Like the Sess Kilgreen stone, the New Grange stone shown below is divided into two, and again this is probably 'earth' or 'underworld' versus 'sky'. The Owl Deity is just about apparent to the left. We see the eyes and the body beneath it. Here however, there is a third and smaller swirl. This is matched on the right section. The 'half-circles' are rays radiating from the three oblongs, which are perhaps boats. There are three oblongs, but just as there is a smaller swirl detached from the 'eye' swirl, there are two 'boats' together and a smaller one below them. This seems to indicate a triad of a 'couple' and a 'junior' third member.

New Grange. Stone a.



Finally, this New Grange decorated stone again follows the same basic design pattern. There is a left- and a right-hand side. The left shows the serpentine triad, but to the right we have a four-way swirl that probably symbolises the four cardinal points of the earth and therefore the upper-world.



New Grange. Entrance Stone.

In these stones then, we see highly abstracted symbols of the Old European cosmos, essentially though the same ones as we find in the core area to the east. The stones *are* the cosmos and these *are* the goddesses.

3.4.2. The Sea-Sky

We have seen how Ra sails across the sea in a boat, and how Nut is the moisture that falls down upon Geb the earth, and we have seen how the coupling of sky and earth is at the core of the Old European religion. Various decorated stones from Ireland can be interpreted in terms of a sea-sky — a sky full of water (and perhaps milk or semen) that rains down on the earth to fertilise her. In the stone to the right, we see a form of the Eye Deity in triadic form. The Deity, though, appears to be surrounded by what looks like water. At the bottom of the stone is the serpentine dyad. If we compare the triad and the dyad, moreover, we notice that the triad is made up of concentric circles rather than a swirl, as if light is radiating outward from the centre.



New Grange. Interior.

The same 'sea' is also depicted in the top half of the stone illustrated below. This, in the interpretation I am following here, is the sky — the sea-sky. It has no deity sailing it here. Clearly it is significant in itself — unsurprisingly, for this depicts *the heavens*.



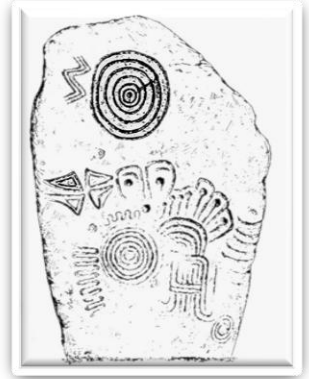
In each of the three decorated stones below, the sky appears at the top. Although the markings on these stones appear to have a complex meaning — a complex configuration of the cosmos — the sky symbol (the waters) seems clear enough to interpret.



Dowth. Stone No 4.



Loughcrew. Cairn T.



Knockmany. Stone A.

In the Knockmany stone we see along with the watery sea-sky the concentric circles, confirming that this is also a sky-symbol of radiating light. Below that we see a four-way set of lozenge-like shapes that probably represent the (4 or 5) cardinal points. At the bottom, parallel to the zig-zag water-symbol, we have a curved swirl — no doubt the underworld serpent. However, here we also have a parallel set of concentric circles from which light is radiating. This can be explained as the sun gone down to the underworld. This stone seems to represent all three layers of the cosmos, like the figurines of the Old European core area.

At the top of the cosmos, then, it seems there lay a sea of sky over which the sun sailed each day, the sea that rained fertility onto the earth.

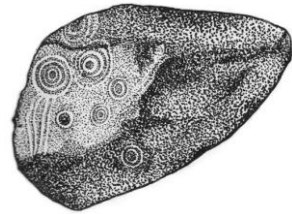
3.4.3. A Triad?

The symbols etched onto the decorated stones of Ireland make it clear that there was a triad, and in Old European terms that would suggest the triple-cosmos. Some characteristics of this triad are revealed in the stones shown below.



New Grange. Interior.

The New Grange symbols are clearly of a triad. However, the left triad is the serpentine swirl that represents the underworld. The centre triad is a set of concentric circles, which represent radiating light — a sky symbol. This is confirmed by the concentric circles of the Tillicoultry cist. From these rays of light are emanating, so this must be a solar symbol.

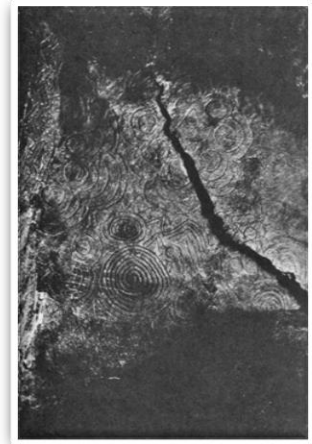


Tillicoultry. I.

The Irish Neolithic, then, not only believed in a triad, but one that was seen in terms of ‘aspects’. An underworld and upper-world aspect are both clearly delineated. As this upper-triad is the sun and the sun was more or less certainly female, in spite of the abstraction of these symbols, we can relate them to the religion of Old Europe.

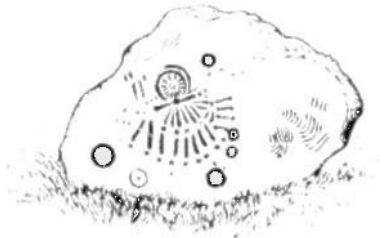
3.4.4. Rays of Light

New Grange appears to be in part chthonic. It is after all, of this earth, made of the stuff of this earth. However, to step inside the goddess was to enter the cosmos, to stand under, or perhaps even within, the sky. The picture to the right, of the New Grange interior, indicates this clearly.



New Grange. Recess.

Here we see the concentric circles of the sun(?) and another sky-symbol — the circle of circles (seen to the top centre of the picture). This is clearly the sky section of the cosmos. The stone from Patrickstown is one of the most unambiguous depictions of the sun, and shows beyond doubt that it was conceived as a centre that radiates rays of light.



Patrickstown.

The same sun is seen here, in the decorated stones from Brittany shown overleaf.

The half-circle is a symbol of radiating light. It is possible, in the left stone overleaf, that the three half-circles at the bottom of the central 'pillar of light' is the Neolithic triad. True or not, from the pillar radiates more light each side of the 'pillar', and yet more light towards each edge of the



Brittany. Gavrinis.

stone. We might compare this to the Egyptian conception of the *benben* — a petrified bloc of sunlight.

At the top of the rightmost stone, we see the sea-sky (top left) and again what seems to be the triad. As the decoration seems to be divided in two (as are various New Grange stones we have seen), the bottom section may represent the underworld and the triad in chthonic form.

In this rightmost stone, then, dwells the cosmos — the sky and the earth (perhaps seen here in our dyadic form of middle- and under-world). The goddesses *inhabit* the stone and in fact *are* the stone and while she is inside the stone her worshippers are inside the goddess.



Gavrinis.

Which is where we can now leave the western half of Old Europe.

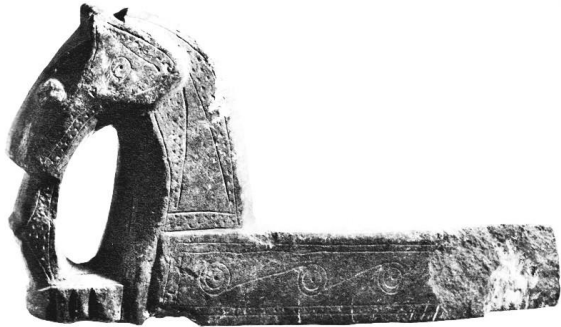
3.5. Reusing the Symbols

Having observed the art and symbolism of Old Europe, of the Farmers, we are now in a position to note a few examples of the art of the Herders and how it is related to the earlier art.

First, overleaf we see the swirl during the Bronze Age, in the early 'proto-Thracian' style (though the artefact does not belong to the historical Thracian area). What is to be noted is that the swirl is now a flame. It is not serpentine. It is not leaf-like. It is not horn-like (or wing-like). That is, *none* of the symbols of the Neolithic cosmos remain.



Caucasus. Kelemeres, gold plaque.



Bulgaria. Chirpan
Middle Bronze Age.

In the fire-dog shown to the right, the swirl is now adapted to the archetypal Indo-European animal, the horse. The horse bears swirls of flame. The Indo-European horse (not a bull) drew the sun.

Again, below we see an early scene that depicts the *eyes* and probably the half-concentric-circle. But note how the image is now entirely androcentric. This is not the cosmos of the goddesses. There is a ploughman. There are axes and daggers. There are animals that, whether they are deer (prey) or dogs (predator), probably indicate a hunt.



Northern Italy. **Val Camonica.** c. 3,000 BCE.

Our final example perhaps exemplifies the death of Old Europe. This piece from Letnitsa comes from what is very

likely to be — well, we can call it a ‘proto-region’ for sure. This is where Greeks, Macedonians (Macedonian is an inferred Indo-European language), Pelasgians (ditto), Paeonians (also inferred) and Thracians dwelled. Old Europe and its language were long-gone, but its beliefs, as we have seen, left many an echo. This seems to be one of these echoes. Whatever the name of the man⁴⁶ or the beast in this picture *was* — and both the man and the beast will have had a name — this is possibly who *we* would call Perseus, and he is slaying what we would call the Gorgon. Of course, Medusa was female — is this serpentine dragon female and is she Medusa? Impossible to say. This is the same story, but its tellers were unlikely to been Greek (or ‘proto-Greek’). It is a variant of our story. Who can tell what has been varied? What is key is that the hero holds a mirror to shield him from the monster, just like Perseus.

But observe how different this is to the world of Old Europe. It is not that this is beautifully achieved *representative* art. *Narrative* art, even. But this is the world of the Neolithic and serpentine Eye Deity. Whether the monster or a female gorgon or a male dragon, the essence of the myth of the farmers was the *coupling* that brought fertility to the earth. One image of the coupling that survived into classical Greek times was the entwined serpents. Demeter



46 The view of some is that it is a woman (or goddess) that is depicted.

and Zeus, for example, entwined and coupled and from this Dionysus is conceived. The mask is worn to protect the worshipper. The underworld goddess *is* the snake. The underworld is the world of the dead, and death, but the snake is not an enemy. The story of Perseus and Medusa illustrates how the meaning of the old religion — a religion half-remembered and mostly misunderstood — has been re-imagined for a world of heroes — male heroes, of course.

The fine Letnitsa art above shows this process not just re-imagined, but depicted. It is its own symbol, unintended but powerful. It can be interpreted as the Hero defeating the old Deity and finally laying her to rest.

Herders

Indo-European is the hypothetical parent language of what are today, after centuries of European expansion, languages spoken all around the globe — over the American continent, north and south; Australia and New Zealand; the Philippines and Indonesia; India, Pakistan and Iran; Russia; and nearly all of Europe, from the Baltic region and Scandinavia to Iberia.



This expanse is, however, an exaggeration, for it is the result of a *European* expansion. Before that expansion, let us say in the Middle Ages, we find Indo-European languages spoken in a band stretching from India to Western Europe and over this area we have documentary evidence dating back to Greco-Roman times. We can therefore trace the changes that occurred in languages spoken over this period (for example, we see Brittonic *replaced* by English in England and *developing* into Welsh in Wales; we see Illyrian and Thracian replaced by Slavic languages and probably Albanian; we see Latin developing into the Romance languages; etc). It is

remarkable that the *extent* of the Indo-European language area remains broadly the same between the Greco-Roman era and that of the Middle Ages. In fact, the main change was a *contraction*, as Tocharian and Iranian languages gave way to the languages of the ascendant Turkic and Mongol peoples.



When we talk of ‘an Indo-European expansion’, then, we are to think in terms of the Greco-Roman era of just where its speakers expanded *to*.

Just how this happened is the subject of this section.

1. How Old in General?

How old are languages? Ultimately this is a question of how old is language itself. There is no conclusive answer to this question, even whether modern languages (or modern human beings) had one or multiple origins. One convincing idea here is that, for a human-like language to be possible it is necessary for at least the following to have developed — **1)** adequate speech organs, **2)** adequate control of these organs, and **3)** the ability of the brain to process a symbolic representation of the world.

In other words, language is a combination of symbolic thought and its expression and utterance. Without at least these three, no language. It may be that these requirements must develop simultaneously. It is likely that Neanderthal people had language and if that is so *quite* likely earlier human species also had language. The existence of language before *homo sapiens sapiens* certainly raises the question as to whether Neanderthal languages influenced any 'modern human' language.

But the origins of language itself involves far too large a timescale for *our* problem of origins. Any human language is in a sense as old as language itself. So, our question needs to be rephrased as, How old is language X *in its existing form*? If we ask how old English is in its existing form, for example, with our more precise question we can go back to about 1000 CE, around about when Anglo-Saxon mutated into 'Middle English'. We do not go all the way back to *Indo-European. If we ask the question about Anglo-Saxon, we now go back to *Germanic and only before that point must we be interested in *Indo-European. We must therefore think in terms of — *English* < *Anglo-Saxon* < **Germanic* < **IE*. Or — *Gaelic* < **Irish* < **Celtic* < **IE*. Further back than *Indo-European we cannot meaningfully go, though we would certainly be correct if we devised the sequence *Indo-European < **Ur-Language*.

The sequence can be generalised as — LANGUAGE [< PARENT[S]] < UR-LANGUAGE. Each step in the chain represents a *mutation* from one language to another (e.g. *Anglo-Saxon* > *English* or **Irish* > *Gaelic*). The question of 'how long', then, involves the number and timing of these mutations. As language mutation is driven by social forces, especially a mutation that effectively transforms one language into another (for example French into the Kreyòl of Haïti), such mutations are unpredictable

because social forces are unpredictable. In other words, if we start with English or French or Italian or Russian, we cannot expect to find a general rule that allows us to predict when *Indo-European was spoken from any of these languages alone. We cannot, in other words, say how old we *expect* a language to be.

Take Arabic, for example. We can write out for it the following schema — *Arabic* < **South Semitic* < **Semitic* < **Afroasiatic*. Now, with regard to Indo-European languages and ur-languages, it is common enough to doubt they are very old. It is as if because they are not attested there is difficulty in accepting their existence. Could *Irish have been spoken, say, around 1000 BCE, long before it is first attested sometime after 300 CE? Yet if we take the example of Arabic, we know that Akkadian — a Semitic *language* — was spoken c. 3,000 BCE. And, of course, it is likely to have been spoken — or at least a familiar *East Semitic — at least centuries before then. The Arabs themselves were essentially nomads of the lands in between the ‘Fertile Crescent’ and they were preceded by the Aramaeans and before them the Amorites. These last lived alongside the Akkadians at the dawn of the writing era. It is clear the Aramaeans must have lived to the south of the Amorites before we encounter them around 1,200 BCE. The Arabs in turn must have lived to the south of the Aramaeans. The ‘homeland’ of the Arabs is therefore likely to have been in and around what is now Yemen and Oman. It seems a reasonable assumption that *South Semitic languages were spoken in that region at time that Akkadian and Amorite were spoken further north. At that time, Sumerians and Akkadians were in trading contact with a land to the south named *Magan* and *Makkan* respectively, generally believed to be Oman. As the names **Oman** and **Magan** are strikingly similar, perhaps

even the ancient name has survived.

So, if we ask a general question as to how old a language is, even if we are careful to add that that the language must remain in roughly its current form, we see that we cannot hope for a general answer. English is about 1,000 years old, but Arabic (or at least *South Semitic) may be at least 5,000. A language can mutate quickly, or very little, over a long time. Language itself cannot determine which of these is the case.

2. How Old is Indo-European?

The first-attested Indo-European languages date to around 1,400 BCE. An Indic language is found in the archives of the kingdom of Mitanni (in modern Syria); the Linear B tablets of Greece and Crete are written in a Greek language (but different to the Greek of classical Greece); and although they were written down much later, it is thought the Sanskrit hymns of the Rig Veda (ritual texts that had to be repeated exactly by the priest) date from around 1,200 BCE. In fact, in Anatolia (modern Turkey), tablets written in Hittite, which many think belongs to the family of a *sister* to Indo-European, have been found that date from around 1,600 BCE.

So, does *Indo-European therefore date from just before 1,400 BCE and *Indo-Anatolian just before around 1,600 BCE? The hypersceptic who finds it hard to believe in the existence of what they cannot see might prefer to believe so. But these initial dates mean nothing. They just show use when these peoples started to use writing.

The Hittites were originally located (as far as we can tell) around the Old Assyrian *karum* 'trading centre' of Kanesh. When the Hittites took control of the land of Hatti, their elite decided to establish a state archive, using the same cuneiform syllabary used at Kanesh.

At some unknown point in time, the Minoan elite of the great palace of Knossos also adopted writing. These Minoans had close contacts with Egypt at that time, and we can surmise that some unknown genius created⁴⁷ the hieroglyphic-like syllabary we call Linear A basing it on the Egyptian script. When Greek-speaking ‘Myceneans’ took political control of Crete from the ‘Minoans’, they adopted the practice of state archives and also adapted the Minoan script — to create our Linear B.

So Hittite is attested and Greek is attested, but this is really just another variation of George Berkeley’s falling tree. Do languages only exist if they are attested? The conclusion to draw is that *attestation* is only in the loosest sense correlated to the question of ‘how old’. Attestation is, if not quite an accident, a cultural phenomenon. Attestation means writing, period. Without writing, no attestation. An Indo-European-speaking people either *writes* or *is written about* — and that is the law⁴⁸ of attestation.

All that is certain, then, is that the Indo-Europeans belong to the world of things, not the world of worlds. They exist beyond any form of ‘attestation’. How old? That question should be determined by the evidence of Prehistory, not attestations and not calculations drawn from language alone. Following the model adopted in this book, the colonisation of Europe by the Farmers is our baseline. The Herders entered Europe *after* the Farmers and *that* gives us our basic time-frame for Indo-European.

47 The mysterious Phaistos Disk is often thought to bear an inscription written in a different hieroglyphic script to Linear A. The disk is dated to an earlier period than Linear A, but there are similarities to the later script.

48 Even the Vedic hymns, composed many centuries before being written down, were *written down*.

1. A Language

The *content* of the reconstructed Indo-European vocabulary is generally of limited use for our purposes. For example, knowing that there was an Indo-European word for *head*, *nose*, *eye* and *foot*, and no word for *computer*, *radar* or *DNA* tells us little. Even the lack of words for *coin*, *book* or *writing* tells us nothing we could not find out from other sources of evidence. In the past, there have been attempts made to use words such as *beech* and *salmon* to locate our phantom people. That led to nothing as these words ultimately failed to point to any specific location.

However, the vocabulary can provide insights into the lives of the people who once spoke it. For example, the basic family-words of Indo-European can be represented by the following Latin and English words — ‘**mater**’, ‘**pater**’, ‘**daughter**’ and ‘son’. All except the word *son* have a *-ter* suffix. Linguists have drawn the interesting conclusion that gender markers were developed in Indo-European and did not exist in *proto*-Indo-European. These family-words therefore provide a small insight into the culture of IE and *proto*-IE speakers. The *-ter* suffix may have been developed — along with gender markers — as *IE culture moved from a hunter-gatherer to a more complex pastoral phase. In its earlier stages, the family-group terms may have been something like *ma-*, *pa-* and *son* where the last term simply meant ‘*child*’. The later pastoralist culture was more complex and additionally was sex-segregated — boys and girls were therefore separated into *sons* and *daughters*. So the meaning of ‘son’ moved from ‘child’ to its ‘modern’ sense.

One of the most important things that we learn from the Vocabulary is that Indo-European had a word for *horse*. For reasons outside language itself, this fact has often

been of central importance to Indo-European theorists. What is really significant, however, is that it also has a cluster of words related to wheeled vehicles, such as the word *wheel* and *axle* and other wagon-parts. This combination of 'horse' and 'wagon' is a very significant cultural artefact to have found.

The Vocabulary contains other important words that complement the IE horse and cart. There are words for 'chief', which indicates that Indo-European society was a hierarchical one. The notorious word Aryan is reconstructed for IE. It seems to have meant something like *free* or *friend*, with the specific sense of 1) 'member of the in-group' and 2) 'not a member of an out-group' — by analogy, a supporter of *your team* is an *arya* and a supporter of *their team* is un-*arya*. Again, this suggests a hierarchical⁴⁹ society with an 'aristocratic' layer of *arya* over a 'common' people.

We also find words in the Vocabulary that are related to metal-working. For example, there is a word for 'copper', but not 'bronze'. This suggests that Indo-European belongs in the Chalcolithic period.

These findings are a useful starting-point. From the Vocabulary alone, we can conclude that we are looking at a hierarchical Chalcolithic society closely associated with horses and wagons.

⁴⁹ For example, only certain families could be members of the council of elders ('senate') in very early Rome, and it was these senators who voted for who should become rex ('chief', usually translated as 'king'). In Gaelic Ireland, only certain men, who had the right genealogies, were 'free', and of these only members of the *derbfine* ('true family') could be *ri* (an exact cognate of *rex*).

2. A Culture

2.1. Communities

Although language has been described a ‘a mouthful of air’, the reconstructed Indo-European of the philologists exists sealed in a vacuum. To haul this ‘people’ back to earth, to attempt to locate them in place and time, it is necessary to go beyond language itself and look to the beliefs and traditions of peoples who speak Indo-European languages. I will discuss six aspects of Indo-European culture that can be reconstructed from comparing the cultures of later Indo-European-speaking peoples — 1) *class*, 2) *religion*, 3) *patriarchy*, 4) *warriors*, 5) *individualism*, and 6) *the Other*.

2.1.1. Class

Indo-European culture, at least in its developed form, seems to have had a strong ‘class’ basis. This is most easily seen in the Vedic texts and, indeed, in the later cultures of India, where we find the *colour* system. The *ksashtra*, *brahman* and *vaisya* ‘colours’ represent warriors, priests and ‘producers’ (i.e. farmers). Early Iranian texts outline similar classes. In Ireland we encounter the *ri* and the *druí*, matched in early Rome by the *rex* and *flamen*. The Irish chief and priest appear to be associated very strongly with colours — red and white respectively. Additionally, a ‘producer’ class is discernible in both Latium and Ireland.

In the wake of Georges Dumézil’s work, a whole mini-industry has devoted itself to analysing these classes (or ‘functions’, as the dumézilians call them). The dumézilians have created a large body of work that is one of the best proofs of the rich understanding that comparing different Indo-European traditions can lead

to. However, I have never been entirely convinced by the dumézilians, as the ideology of the functions that they study seems too well-ordered and too sophisticated for such an early society. These theories also tend to treat Indo-European in monolithic terms. What though if what we think of as 'Indo-European' society was not monolithic, but that individual Indo-European languages and cultures represent different 'layers' — either regionally or temporally — of evidence?

For example, in Germanic mythology there is a clear-cut trio (but not triad?) of gods at Uppsala — Odin, Thor and Freyr. This trio is clearly, in dumézilian terms, *trifunctional* — Odin is for *warriors*, Thor is for *travellers* and Freyr is for *producers*. But this is not a close match to Dumézil's functions (i.e. *king, priest, producer*). Furthermore, though Odin (or Wodan, etc) is certainly associated closely with kingship (for example, the genealogies of the early Anglo-Saxon kings usually have Wodan at the head), that is surely because kingship was associated with war. Wodan is the god of warriors and therefore by definition a warrior chief — a king. But the producer god Freyr (or Ing, or Yngvi-Freyr) was *also* the god of kings and/or peoples. The Ingaevones (or Ingvaeones) mentioned by Roman authors (a 'people' that included tribes such as the Frisians, Angli, Jutes and the confederation of the Saxons) were clearly 'descended' from Ing. The same is true for the Ynglingas, the early dynasty of Swedish kings. The early Germanic peoples, moreover, had no class of kings or priests. Leaders were chosen on an ad hoc basis in a time of crisis, and priestly tasks were carried out by members of the tribe, not dedicated priests. This mismatch with the dumézilian model can be explained if we consider that Germanic society illustrates an earlier stage of Indo-European culture than does Celtic or Italic or Indic. The basic

structure of early Germanic culture appears to have been simpler and more fluid than, say, Celtic culture (or at least the Celtic-speaking cultures we have sufficient evidence to evaluate).

In my view, the core of the Indo-European class system may have been the dualism of a warrior-priest, with the ‘producer’ being an outlier class of lesser status. The warrior and priest probably complemented each other — the one was there to *defend* the law (that is, the laws of the cosmos) and the other to *bind* the law (via ritual). That is what we find in pre-Christian Ireland (ri and drui) and in fact in early Christian Ireland (ri and priest).

The essential point, at any rate, is that a study of Indo-European cultures indicates that the parent culture had a strong sense of *class*.

2.1.2. Religion

The core of Indo-European religion seems clear-cut. It was framed around a Father Sky and a Mother Earth. **Diyaus* (‘the shining one’, the sky) was the great father of this patriarchal society. This core couple of Sky and Earth rarely survived intact, however. For example, in the Vedic hymns of India, *Dyaus* is a very minor god. In Norse myth, *Týr* (< **Tiwaz* < **Diyaus*) is also a minor god, and *Jorth* (‘earth’) is the mother of Thor. Elsewhere, we do see a divine couple, but usually modified. For example, there is the Olympian pair *Zeus* (< **Diyaus*) and *Hera*, although Hera is more celestial than terrestrial. In Ireland the *King* had his *Consort*, who was ‘Sovereignty’ and beliefs about this mortal couple appear to have been mirrored in beliefs about the gods, though how ‘Indo-European’ this couple was is an open question.

But no matter how the divine couple was split up or distorted, the Sky Father seems always somehow to

survive. Amongst Indo-European-speaking peoples, we always find some sort of great big Daddy God (Jupiter, Zeus, Odin, Dagda, Indra, Ahura Mazda, Dazhbog, etc). These daddy gods do not necessarily have any direct relation to *Diyaus. Indra, for example, is probably a major deity of the unknown people of the 'Bactria and Margiana Archaeological Complex' (easily-remembered as BMAC) adopted by the Indo-Aryan tribes who moved into the area prior to entering Syria and India. But he is also no doubt an adaptation of Father Sky.

2.1.3. Patriarchy

Indo-European society was fiercely patriarchal and — this is closely connected — warlike. We have seen that, if we examine the reconstructed Indo-European language, the Warrior and Priest are at the heart of Indo-European culture, together with the Chief.

When we have documentary evidence of Indo-European peoples, we find patriarchal and warlike societies. Classical Athens, for example, was unusually misogynistic and its rival Sparta (at least from the tendentious outsider reports we have of it) unusually sex-segregated. In Sparta, men and women seem to have lived entirely apart. The Roman *paterfamilias* (head of family) has been said to have possessed the most patriarchal powers in all history, at least in theory. Unlikely as it would have been in practise, the father of any Roman Emperor could have ordered the execution of his son.

Patriarchy was greatly enhanced by patriliney, which was in effect a cult based around male ancestors. Tribal societies — as found among the Irish, British and Germans — were dominated by men who could boast of having *the right forefathers*. Genealogies were frequently forged and falsified, but that did not make them less

powerful. The great Roman families, in their grand villas, each kept up a cult of their ancestors. Early Roman history was based in a large part around these cults, which had preserved legendary details of great deeds and terrific acts.

Even when Athens developed what today we would call a bourgeois society, although this subverted the idea of nobility-in-birth, nobility now lay in power and so still in the individual self. As critics of democracy pointed out, the rule of the *demos* led to a den of power-seeking demagogues hiding their deeds behind noble words.

Tribes of noble warriors led by chiefs, therefore, evolved into city-states of warlike burghers led by magistrates and the spirit of the Indo-European patriarchy was upheld.

2.1.4. Warriors

Patriarchy and the warrior are two sides of the same coin. A warrior, also, of course needs war. But we must be careful not to confuse myths and ideals with reality.

Warrior societies certainly celebrate war, but they also relish peace. It is perhaps significant that the first European literature consists of two epics, one celebrating the glories of war (albeit also lamenting its tragedies) and the other depicting the arduous journey of a warrior on his way home to peace and rest. The word *islam* might be mentioned here. It means ‘submission’, but the specific meaning is *submission after battle*, and the trilateral root of the word is *SLM* ‘peace’. The reasoning is perfectly clear — the result of a *decisive* battle is often peace.

So perhaps we are better thinking of a warrior society as not so much one in which war is *celebrated*, but one in which war *is* — that is, is a *fundamental part* of that society. In such a society, the warrior achieves *status* in

war but *happiness* in peace. In other words, the core of a warrior society is war itself rather than the warrior who must, seen from this perspective, adapt his *self* to war.

The *Germania* of the Roman historian Tacitus provides a good, if doubtless highly distorted, overview of a warrior society. When Tacitus wrote, Germanic society was evolving from an egalitarian one (for the ‘free’ men, or ‘lords’) into one ruled by ‘kings’. Ariovistus (a key player at the start of Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*) and the heroic Arminius seem to be established ‘kings’. The general impression of the *Germania*, however, is of a society dominated by warrior bands.

It is clear from Tacitus that the warrior band was vital for the survival of the tribe. If Tribe X has no warriors to protect it, then it is defenceless against Tribe Y. The latter will therefore either annihilate or enslave the former and Tacitus suggests this a basic rule of the Germanic tribes. Peace means ease, ease leads to softness (seen as ‘effeminacy’) and softness to enslavement. A warrior is a ‘free man’, both within the tribe and without. The unfree tribe pays rent, or tribute, to the free tribe.

The *Germania* is however a distorted picture of Germanic society, for the Romans primarily encountered the Germanic tribes in war. Who they met was primarily the warrior. If we read Irish annals or Anglo-Saxon chronicles, we meet the Vikings in the main as warriors. For example, in the English poem *The Battle Of Maldon*, the English alderman Byrhtnoð and his army make a heroic stand against the ‘sea men’ on the river Blackwater. Who are these sea men? We do not know. They have no names and, in the poem, they taunt and boast and they kill and are killed. They are men, they came by sea, and that is that.

However, these Vikings have left a large library of

literature courtesy of medieval Iceland, in particular the ‘sagas’. The hero of many a saga is a ‘viking’, but the setting of the saga is often Iceland. These tales tell of Vikings not at war but at home (though rarely of course at ease). A Viking here is a farmer. He sows his crop, milks his cows, if necessary, fights his legal battles at the Thing (a sort of court-cum-parliament) and, if he is like the anti-hero Hrafnkel, he is a priest to his god (Freyr, in Hrafnkel’s case).

These Indo-European warrior societies, then, were places of peace interspersed with war, whose unspoken motto was *If you want peace, then prepare for war*. To a free man the two *certainties* were not ‘death and taxes’, but ‘death and war’ (or to put it another way, ‘death and axes’) and the one *probability* ‘death *in* war’.

2.1.5. Individualism

Indo-European society, in the abstract at least, was built around the *arya* – a group. But, two things. First, within the group was the individual, free within a group of equals. Second, there was the *chief*. This chief subtly altered the notion of individualism, but the notion itself was retained, if not strengthened. For the *chief* was himself an individual – *the* individual. His coterie of warriors, moreover, were still *arya* — that is to say, *free*. However, the notions of the *big man* and the *free man* may be hard to reconcile. The battles between medieval monarchs and their nobility attest to this, in France the solution being the court of Louis XIV that the demilitarised nobility was obliged (in a true *noblesse obligée*) to inhabit.

Whether the individualism of the free man or the big man, at any rate, individualism was central to Indo-European culture and this notion of the *free man in the*

*In marble immortality
are the eternal symbols.*

In the liberal (king-less and priest-less) state of Shelley's dreams, the individual is freed from the Tyrant and therefore men and women can develop their own identities and shape their own destinies. This goes far beyond the early Indo-European ideas of the *arya*, for it includes *all* men and also *women* and, to top it all, there is *no out-group* (aside from the Tyrant and his lackeys).

How does the poet's Liberty, then, relate to that of the Indo-European *free man*? What was the actual Greece in comparison to Shelley's idealism?

The Mycenean

Although the Mycenean Greeks had no history, only state archives, it is clear this was a warlike and aristocratic society, ruled over perhaps by the 'chief' *wa-na-ka* (*anax*) and the 'prince' *qa-si-re-u* (later Greek *basileus*). Although *The Iliad* was, in the form that we have it, composed centuries after the fall of Mycenae, it is likely the poem offers an insight into its political structure, with Agamemnon the chief of the Achaeans and numerous lesser leaders such as Achilles. The poem depicts the uneasy, but here mostly well-functioning, relationship between the big man and the free men. It is clear that there are many small lands, each led by a warlord (and his companions) and that these small lands make up the larger entity we can anachronistically call 'Greece'. The free men are subordinate to the big man, but the big man cannot function without the support of the free men. A strong feeling of individualism – of the freedom of the individual – is apparent throughout the poem.

The Hellene

Pre-classical and classical Greece was a land of city-states, but these were not at first democratic. The early city appears to have been ruled by a 'tyrant' (*turannos*).

Were these Shelley's Tyrants? That is doubtful. Greek political theorists envisaged politics as the rule of the *one*, the *few*, or the

many ('monarchy', 'oligarchy' and 'democracy') and tyranny was a general term for unjust rule in each of these categories. A tyrant was essentially, in terms of a single ruler, an unjust monarch.

The appalling reputation of the tyrants has clearly been created by their political enemies, rather like the last ruler of legendary Chinese dynasties was the epitome of evil overthrown by a ruler who created a new dynasty and who was the epitome of good. The word *turannos* does not appear to be of Greek origin but has possible cognates in the Indo-Anatolian languages (e.g. Hittite *tarawanaš*) and possibly Etruscan *Turan* ('lady', 'queen', a deity equated with the Roman *Venus*). It was originally a descriptive word, not a pejorative one.

The details of the 'tyrants' do not make them seem agreeable men. As a general principle, we see them *usurping* power and these tyrants appear to have been the almost inevitable result of political tensions that developed as cities grew bigger and wealthier. Wealth begat faction and the tyrants seem to be the men who overcame faction. But their usurpation created enemies and if a tyranny became a dynasty, the enemies of the dynasty had to be put down ruthlessly. Here we see the political problem of the big man and the free men. The usurping big man, so say our sources, could not afford to allow the free men their freedom.

Greek cities evolved in preliterate times. It is interesting that legendary rulers such as Theseus and Erichthonius were monarchs, but these were wise and good rulers and not tyrants and they were both kings of Athens. Perhaps, to the extent these legends have any truth to them, those were simpler times, times with minimal faction.

All this suggests that, long before 'democratic' Athens, some form of monarchical rule existed, but as the cities grew in wealth and power, faction emerged and out of this rose the men who aimed to usurp faction and monopolise wealth and power for themselves. The 'tyrants'. A perceptive early Irish political tract, attempting to categorise types of power, identifies a 'bull king' as one who achieves power with violence and is subsequently forced to hold

on to his power (if he can) by further violence. The tract makes it clear violence is all a bull king has and that sums up the situation of the Greek tyrant.

Perhaps early Rome helps us to understand the tyrants. There are two strands to the early political history of the city. First, the fact that it was led by a magistrate called the 'rex', and secondly the legendary histories of the seven *rexes* of Rome (*Romulus*, *Numa*, *Tullus*, *Ancus*, *Tarquin I*, *Servius*, and finally *Tarquin II*). Although the legends are not reliable as history and surely do not preserve an accurate sequence of 'kings', they do indicate that the *rex* was generally a *monarch* and not a *tyrant*. In fact, the later Republican system of government by consuls is clearly a mere – but ingenious – modification of the early system. The *rex* was a magistrate elected by the senate for life and his successors were two magistrates elected by the senate for a single year. The fall of the kings was clearly seen by later Romans in terms of the fall of the tyrants. The last king, Tarquin the Proud, was in his legend certainly a tyrant.

The stories about Tarquin are clearly close to real history and real events, but they point less to tyrants than the breakdown of the Roman political system, which in fact resembles the future breakdown of the Republic itself. The problem seems to have been caused by the fact that Rome was now powerful enough that the position of *rex* was worth contending for. The name Tarquin is Etruscan⁵⁰ and it used to be thought that the rule of the two Tarquins (father and son, the Elder and the Proud) indicated a period of Etruscan rule in Rome. That is in fact unlikely. The Tarquins were certainly not 'The Etruscans', who in political terms were a league of twelve cities to the north of Rome. Early on in its history, Rome did fight many battles with Veii. This was certainly an Etruscan city, but more significantly it was a city on the other side of the River Tibur near to Rome and therefore a rival city and not 'the Etruscans'.

50 The name Lucius Tarquinius seems to mean 'the lauchum/lucumo' ('chief') of the city of Tarquinia, an Etruscan city situated in Latium.

The elder Tarquin (*priscus*) is in fact depicted as a model leader, working for the good of Rome. The ‘proud’ (*superbus*) second Tarquin had a less happy time of it. The Roman reports of these later *rexes* have a less legendary appearance than say of Romulus or Numa. However, they are clearly the ‘reworked reality’ that is typical of Roman history. The proud Tarquin can do no right. His attempts to hold onto power, like a ‘bull king’, lead him to tyranny. If we go beyond the reworkings, however, we can doubt whether the political crisis was of Tarquin’s making, although it was one he certainly contributed to.

As Rome’s power grew, it was in danger of becoming un-Roman. It is not so much that the Tarquins were Etruscan, but that they were from Tarquinia. Tarquin the younger seems, if we overcome the reworking, to have been faced with a substantial ‘Roman’ opposition and it was this ‘Roman’ faction that won the battle. Tarquin and his allies were expelled from the city and unable to retake it. The opposition correctly saw that the institution of ‘*rex*’ was a liability and instituted the new magistracy of two men elected by the senate for a year. This ensured that the holders of the magistracy were Roman.

This system in turn failed during the last decades of the Republic. First, the power of the Senate and the two consuls were no match for the men who headed armies (Marius, Sulla and the triumvirates). Second, the Senate (and therefore consuls) were rapidly losing their credibility by at least the time of the Gracchi (c. 133 BCE). There were now half-Roman citizens throughout Italy who increasingly felt exploited by Rome. They had many of the duties of the citizen, but not his benefits. This was a curious inversion of the ‘regal problem’ — there the native Romans confronted alien magistrates, yet here the native magistrates confronted alien half-citizens.

The early Roman *rexes*, then, seem to have been essentially monarchs rather than tyrants and the *rex* a magistracy that worked at first and later not, just like the consulship that replaced it. The Greek *turannoi* were a similar phenomenon, but unfortunately the Greek tradition has fixed into the imagination the notion that they

were *inherently* tyrannical. What is more likely is that politics in the evolving cities made the rise of big men who became ‘bull kings’ inevitable. The tyrants were a conspicuously alien and novel element in the city and the reaction against them was a fight of the free men against the big man and the fight was eventually won by the free men.

We might wonder how much continuity from Mycenaean to pre-classical Greece the myth of the tyrants hides. Homer’s depiction of the Greek warriors is in many respects democratic – at least for the *arya*. In at least some ways, the *tyrants* and not the *democrats* were ‘progressive’. At least novel. No one can doubt that Kleisthenes, who more or less created Athenian democracy⁵¹, was himself a progressive or that he created a workable and concrete political system. His ‘free men’, moreover, were no more simply members of the tribe (or whatever in-group), but of a well-defined legal entity, the *demos*. There was, also, no big man. The Athenian democracy made all men free and, in political terms, equal. This is indeed closer to our starting point of Shelley’s transcendent notion of Liberty.

Kleisthenes was a progressive, then. But was he also a conservative trying to recreate the older society of free men?

The realities of democracy were far less transcendently tied to the image of Liberty than Shelley suggests. We have seen that the Indo-European *arya* were equal only among themselves. The achievement of creating a society of legally-equal free men was considerable, but it ignored key factors such as wealth, intelligence, charisma, rhetorical ability, and so on. Thus, the legally-equal men of Athens were hardly equal in fact, and then what about metics (foreigners who lived in Athens) and slaves? The Delian League, set up as a result of the Persian Wars, quickly developed into an Athenian Empire. Its imperial function was to collect the tribute that built the Parthenon. Members of the

⁵¹ Originally, the words ‘democracy’ clearly meant ‘demos-power’ and not ‘people-power’, the *demoi* being comparable to an electoral roll, with each *demos* consisting of a group of (male) citizens.

League soon learned they were neither equal nor free. The great Greek cities were also almost constantly at war no matter whether they were run by ‘democrats’ or ‘oligarchs’.

Were the Greek cities so different to the Germanic tribes as described by Tacitus? Weren’t Athens and Thebes in a way mere variations of the Chatti and Cherusci? Of course, the culture of Athens was broader and richer than that of the Chatti. But if you described the Athenian citizens as ‘urbanised Chatti’ you would be merely be pointing out a shared Indo-European heritage of an *arya* warrior society of ‘friends’.

The Hellenist

The story of the glory that was Greece and its perfect image of transcendent Liberty diminishes, then, as soon as we observe the real thing. But it begins to dissolve altogether with the shift from the Helladic to the Hellenistic and in the end to Byzantium.

We can start off the dissolution with Persia. The myth of the Persian Invasion of Greece is closely linked to the myth of Greek Liberty. The Persians symbolise the ‘eastern’ form of barbarism — despotism, depravity and luxury (as opposed to the ‘northern’ form of animalistic primitivism). This myth tells how the free men of Greece – the Spartan *arya* and the Athenian democrats – fought off a foreign despotism. The free men kept Greece both free and Greek, says the myth.

The wars between Greece and Persia, like the fall of the tyrants, took place in a wider and more complicated context than the mythical version. We can begin with the entanglement of the unpopular Assyrian Empire and the Medes, which led to the unlamented downfall of the former. The ultimate result was the rise of the Persians, who stepped into the power vacuum and created a huge empire. Egypt and Babylon fell to them, leaving the Persian Emperor face to face with the kingdoms of Anatolia, in particular the kings of Lydia. The Greek peoples of the coast, such as the Aeolians and Ionians, were already entangled in Lydian ambition but now Croesus, the Lydian king, was defeated by the Persians and Anatolia was now part of the Persian Empire. The

Greek cities there were its subjects. When the Ionian cities revolted under Aristagoras of Miletos, the Persians reasserted their control of Ionia and began to take heed of the mainland Greeks across the Aegean. A sustained attempt to invade Greece took place over the reigns of no less than three Emperors — Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

Rather than a glorious display of Greek Liberty vs Eastern Despotism, the reality involved a great deal of small-scale local politicking. The invasion itself was of course large-scale and endured over a long period of time. The great defence of Hellas was similarly large-scale. The Greeks were, for course, fighting for their freedom. But pragmatic ‘freedom’ and Shelley’s transcendent Liberty are not the same thing. The former is a selfish act and not an abstract idea fished out from the pool of Ethics. The Greeks were in fact facing the fundamental choice of a warrior culture — the choice of *freedom* or *slavery*. These terms are endlessly interchangeable. It is even true that the word ‘arya’ was borrowed into proto-Uralic⁵², where it means *slave*. The word ‘slave’ itself is derived from the ethnic term *Slav*, which may mean ‘glorious’. One tribe fights another equal tribe, the winner is ‘free’, the losers ‘slaves’. Either might win; either might end up free or slave.

After this Persian era, the future of the ‘Greeks’ lay in a Macedonian conqueror and king. Macedonia was not originally Greek and did not speak a Greek language, but the Macedonian kings, in particular, Philip and his son the world-famous Alexander, were infatuated with Greece and they made their kingdom ‘Greek’. They were not Hellenic, but they were effectively Greek. In fact, Alexander’s conquests — stretching all the way from Greece up to the Indus Valley — created a new type of ‘Hellenistic’ Greek society. It is, however, very hard to claim that there is much democracy or liberty in the Hellenistic world of Alexander’s ‘successors’ — the Seleucids (ruling in Syria), or the Ptolemies (the foreign Pharaohs of a new Egypt) or the Bactrian

52 The parent language of for example Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian and Samoyedic.

Greeks (far away in eastern Iran and leaving behind fistfuls of coins bearing the heads of fistfuls of kings). Nevertheless, Hellenistic Greek culture is an integral part of Greece's glory.

Hellenistic Greece was overrun by Rome, but in the East the Romans left the Greek language intact as the medium of communication. So Greek culture remained powerful, but not necessarily so Greek. For example, when the new sect of the Christ arose in Judea, Greek was the language it used to preach and to convert. The Christianised Empire — under severe pressure from every direction — split up into a Latin west and a Greek east. Rome then fell, but Byzantium stood standing as an utterly despotic Empire. It was another glory of Greece but it lacked even a particle of Shelley's Liberty. In fact, perhaps we can see in Byzantium the end of the Indo-European *arya*. The Emperors were tyrants. The free men were replaced with the Court.

In the West, though, the successor powers in the Roman provinces were the Germanic tribes and confederations — big men and their free men. In England for example, we see the people of *Beorma* (Birmingham) or *Reada* (Reading) or *Haest* (Hastings). The early states of northern Europe were big confederations in which the king, now *roi*, ruled over an assortment of barons, dukes, etc. Big men and free men still.

So, an Indo-European culture remained at the core of early medieval society in the west of Europe, but its Liberty was the liberty of the Tyrant and the Priest.

2.1.6. Europe and the Aryans

Although these days the Hindu right-wing is fond of boasting about its Aryan descent and perhaps the renaming of Persia to 'Iran' (i.e. 'land of the Aryans') in 1935 might also be mentioned, historically the Indo-Europeans are very much European. They were rediscovered by European scholars and the rediscovered 'people' was studied by European scholars. In other

words, there were the actual people who once spoke Indo-European languages – and Indo-European itself, and proto-Indo-European and pre-Indo-European – and there were the Indo-Europeans of the European scholar's study who escaped out into the land of popular imagination and nationalist and racist politics. In Europe.

This relationship between modern Europeans and their Indo-Europeans is significant, but it can only be understood by asking *Who were the Europeans?*

It is unlikely that early inhabitants of the continent had any conception they were living on a continent, though evidence of long-range connections exist. For example, the fine golden Rillaton Cup, found in Cornwall, shows metalworking techniques with clear Mycenaean parallels. There is no question of direct contacts, just the transfer of a metalworking technique. It does however confirm some form of contact existed between the far ends of Europe in the Bronze Age. Another example of contact between distant places is the skull of a Barbary ape found in the north of Ireland and possibly also dating to the later Bronze Age.

The process of forging a 'Europe', however, probably begins with the Phoenicians and Greeks. These peoples planted colonies all along the southern (Pn) and northern (Gk) shores of the Mediterranean. In about 550 BCE, the Carthaginian successors of the Phoenicians appear to have sent two explorers, Himilcar and Hanno, beyond the Pillars of Hercules. One goes north along the Spanish coast and the other along the African coast to the south. Around 325 BCE a Greek named Pytheas went further northwards up the coast and Spain and France and circumnavigated Britain, all the way to the desolate and icy land of Thule, which seems understandably to represent the edge of the world to him.

Herodotos, the ‘Father of History’, writing slightly earlier than Pytheas about 425 BCE, provides a comprehensive description of the world as he knew it. Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Black Sea are all well-known to him, but places further away are vague. The westernmost people, he says, are the *Cynetes* of Spain and he tells us that the Danube rises in the Pyrenees ‘in the land of the Celts’. In the far north, to the north of the Black Sea, we hear of the *Hyperboreans*, and *Neuri* (who once a year, ‘it is said’, though Herodotos does not believe it, ‘turn into wolves’), the *Androphagi* (‘man-eaters’) and the *Issedones* (who are ‘ruled by women’). These lands of distant mist probably characterise Greek knowledge of Europe at that time. Of course, few Greeks were as knowledgeable as the father of history.

It is the Greeks who provided most of the basic vocabulary with which to divide the world. First, Hittite texts tell of confederations of peoples in western Anatolia called variously Arzawa and Assuwa. This last is remembered in the classical Greek name ‘Asia’ which became the name that was generalised to refer to all the East. The Greeks also had a name for the West, adapted from the mythical figure of *Europa*. Africa they named *Libya* and it was the Romans who named the continent after the tribe that dwelt next to Carthage, the *Afri*.

‘Europe’ was now a place with a name. However, much of its extent still lay in a distant mist. Even the report of Pytheas only extended the mist a little and it was the Romans that made Europe a proper and familiar place. With the Roman Empire, the mist was dispersed and by the time of Augustus, Rome had advanced into Spain, France and the Alps. Caesar crossed the Channel into Britain and the Rhine into *Germania*.

The name ‘Europe’ was now a place.

The Romans created Europe as a place, not just by going there and staying there, but also because they divided it into the fundamental divisions it retains today. *Hispania*, *Italia*, *Gallia* and *Britannia* were Roman provinces, but even outside of the Empire lay the *Germani* and the people of the island of Hibernia. The Germanic-speaking peoples themselves began to think of language in binary terms — there was the Roman language (*romansch*, or *romance*) and then the people's language (*diutisch* >> Deutsch ~ Dutch). The Irish referred to the people of mainland Europe as 'peoples of Gaul' (*galli*), which was then generalised to mean 'foreigner' (*gall*).

Even when the Germanic tribes destroyed the former provinces, the shell of the province often remained. So, the Franks and the Burgundians and the Goths took over Gaul, and then the first conquered the latter two, but Gaul simply became 'the land of the Franks' (*Francia* > France) and the Franks themselves gave up speaking *diutisch* for *romansch*⁵³. In fact, an attempt to revive the Roman Empire was made by the greatest Frankish king, Charlemagne. This diadochian Emperor united Francia to Germania. After his death, though, they promptly split into two. While the 'Franks' remained kings of France, the 'Germans' — still ruled by an Emperor — in a sense turned the old tribal lands into a polity based on the ideas of a Roman province. Meanwhile, further north, though the 'land of the English' was smaller than the old province of Britannia, it was in all essentials its successor.

These Roman and post-Roman political developments explain the nascent European states, but not *Europe*. Even at the height of the Roman Empire, its inhabitants were, if they felt any wider affiliation at all, *Romans*

53 Which now of course in turn became 'frankish' > French.

rather than *Europeans*.

The key event in creating a European-ness was the Empire's adoption of Christianity. After its official adoption, the new religion became part of the fabric of society and again and again invading tribes gave up their own religions for the new church. For example, the descendants of the worshippers of Wotan in central Europe were the Holy Roman Emperors.

Although Europe itself split into a Latin west and a Greek east and Christianity was split between the Papists of the Vatican and the Orthodox of Byzantium, there was still a sense of *Christendom* and this sense was doubtless redoubled in the west by the feeling that the Catholics followed the *right* faith. Christianity was the main force that forged the idea of western Europe as a single place, bound together under the Pope and it was a place part of a wider place of the Orthodox Greeks and Russians whose iffy beliefs were at least not *pagan*.

By the time of the Renaissance, however, Europe began to advance beyond the limits of the classical world. Explorers, scientists, philosophers, political theorists created a new world and, of course, discovered new worlds. By the 18th and in particular the 19th Centuries, Europe was evolving into a new and industrial society, and this society was peculiarly European. Furthermore, the world was now by common consent a globe and this globe was dominated by Europe. There was no more Thule, no more mist in the distance. After the post-1870 'scramble for Africa', even the 'dark continent' was no longer much of a mystery. The Niger, the Nile, the Congo – these great and once-mysterious rivers were now familiars to the new colonialists.

And it was at this time the Indo-Europeans were re-discovered.

The Other

When Europeans realised there had once been a people they named Indo-Europeans, these Europeans were a well-defined 'we-group'. It is here the importance of understanding the notion of 'Europe' should be apparent, for Europe had a particularly strong sense of a they-group and this sense was the result of three extremely potent *Others* that I call **1)** the Barbarian, **2)** the Godless, and **3)** the Whiteless.

This sense of the 'Indo-Europeans' as a 'we-group' is at the core of all the early studies and thereby defined who these European aryan were. I do not think the question of who the 'Indo-Europeans' were can be understood without understanding the ideas of the Europeans who first studied them.

The Barbarian

The Greeks had an unusually strong sense of 'we' and 'they' — of in and out groups. For the Greeks, 'we' were the *Hellenes* and 'they' were the *barbaroi* (which probably originally meant something like 'the people who go *bar-bar* when they speak'). Although most if not all peoples have a sense of us-and-them, the Greek concept was more virulent because of the high level of culture that classical Greece achieved. There is a deep truth in the idea that Greek culture was at a far higher level than the northern tribes and also that it was freer (for the free men) than eastern states ruled by god-kings. Greeks philosophers were able to speculate about a world ruled by reason and not gods, which clearly priests in pharaonic Egypt were not free to do, for in Egypt the power of the gods was the power of Pharaoh *and* the power of the priests. That not to say that Egyptian priests were not philosophical, but there is a threshold beyond which philosophy moves too far towards science and too far away from religion, as can be seen in medieval Christian philosophers like Peter Abelard and William of Occam, or in a Renaissance scientist such as Galileo Galilei. A true priest cannot cross this threshold.

When the Romans took over, as it were, the Greek crown, they fully adopted the idea of the barbarian. As one conquest succeeded another, one set of barbarians followed the next. This Roman way of seeing things is so powerful that generations have accepted the moral depravity of, say, the 'Gauls' or Carthaginians. A Roman who was cowardly or corrupt was *unroman*. Ergo Rome could never be cowardly or corrupt, an idea enforced even further by the idea that a non-Roman who was *not* cowardly and *not* corrupt was Roman-like.

The Godless

With the rise of Christianity, the *barbarian* was in part complemented but in the main superseded by the *pagan*. If the barbarian was inferior, the pagan was a fiend.

One of the roots of Christianity is, curiously enough, likely to be Indo-European culture, which seems to have had a strong sense of *dualism*. We frequently find the supernatural world divided into two opposing forces. This phenomenon is found in Ireland (the people of Danu vs Fomorians), among the Norse (Æsir vs Vanir), and in Iran (daeva vs ahura) and India (asura vs deva). It was in Iran that a sort of fundamentalist dualism developed and this fed into both the Roman⁵⁴ cult of Mithraism and early Christianity. When combined with the belief in an *absolute* god, it led to a complementary *absolute evil* — the Devil.

A good depiction of typical pre-Christian ideas about the gods can be found in the works of the Roman poet Horace. Here the gods are a constant and fickle force in the world. The poet frequently references sea voyages and describes how the gods stir up the waves, causing dreadful peril to the traveller. On land too, the

⁵⁴ Mithras was an Indo-Iranian god, probably of oaths and contracts, who swept into Iran with the Bactrians, Sogdians, Medes and Persians. His worship spread throughout the Persian Empire, in particular to various regions of Anatolia. Then the Romans came and Mithras was adopted as a Roman cult — a sort of Freemasonry — especially popular with soldiers. Mithraism was strongly dualistic and the god himself thought to be born on December 25th. Comparisons between Mithras and Christ were often made.

gods stir up the clouds and the winds and they cast fateful bolts of thunder that set many a mighty oak on fire. On a less dramatic level, they caused a branch to fall almost on the poet's head. Horace mentions that incident at least twice. The thing to do is accept fate and also attempt to placate the gods, for then they may possibly favour you. To be blessed by the gods is to have luscious grapes that bring forth tasty wines, to harvest fat corn, to receive rich stores of milk and to weave the thick wool of your sheep into fine things to wear.

The Devil, though, is everywhere and everything — like God. All things bright and beautiful are the work of God but the Devil is everywhere trying to make everything dark and hideous.

This dangerous idea of a universal good and evil, quite unknown to Horace, provides a key to understanding western Europe during the time of Christendom.

A. Crusades

Regarding the Crusades, first consider that at the time that Islam absorbed itself into the Middle East, Palestine became a mostly Muslim country and Jerusalem too became Muslim — it is one of the holiest cities for Muslims. Note also that Jerusalem was never a Christian city. It was the capital of the Israelites that was created by David when he united the Israelite tribes c. 1,000 BCE. The city was an important place of pilgrimage for Christians, who were able to travel there unhindered.

The game-changer, it turns out, was the arrival into Anatolia of a nomadic Turkic tribe called the Seljuks, which presented a significant threat to the Byzantine Emperor. In desperation he opened diplomatic channels to the Pope, asking for aid. The popes, meanwhile, were in the middle of fighting a long-running battle against the German Emperors. The emperors claimed dominion over the popes and the popes dominion over the emperors. What to do?

We do not need to go into the details of the First Crusade, or the subsequent ones, but crusading is what the popes 'did'. What is

significant here is that the situation outlined above ended up in Jerusalem being ‘knee deep’ in blood. The propaganda for the First Crusade, which was the foundation of the ideas behind all the crusades, fixed on a single devilish enemy — the Saracen⁵⁵.

The Saracen, and this was the core theme of the propaganda – the *Saracen* had *taken* the Holy City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem *must* be *taken back* by an army of willing Christians. It of course *was* took back, but in the meantime the notion of the Saracen — heretic, unbeliever, and so forth — was burned into the heart of Europe throughout the centuries-long the crusading era.

This universal notion of *unbeliever* is closely comparable to the universal Roman notion of *barbarian*.

B. The Americas.

It is in central and south America, occupied by the Spanish, that the most notorious acts against the ‘godless’ occurred. The avarice of the early conquistadors was crudely masked by the call to faith. What right – what rights – did the godless have? The sophisticated societies of the Aztec and Inca empires could be reduced to a moral vacuum. These societies were godless ergo they were *not* societies. The conquistadors could not lose — these godless men could be killed and their souls dispatched to Hell, or they could be enslaved and saved. They were neutralised either way.

The conquistadors represent a subtly different culture to the crusaders. The latter regarded the Saracens as in some sense equal. They were godless, but they were men. With the conquistadors, the godless are *lesser* men. They are thus twice damned — as godless men and as men. When we observe the northern Europeans moving into north America, there is less sense of a systematic cruelty or brutality, though so often that meant that the mask was more cleverly made than those of the conquistadors and gentle words drew the veil over hard deeds.

55 Originally simply a nomadic tribe, the Sarakēné or Saraceni. These are located in the Sinai region and the Hejaz. The the meaning of the name is uncertain, but may mean ‘easterners’ [trilateral toot = šrq ‘east’].

The Cherokee are the classic study here. Behind the gentler words, we see the familiar theme that Indians are always and everywhere *lesser men*. But as the northern takeover marched on, and the United States expanded further west, we find the notion of godlessness is increasingly being taken over by the idea of what might be termed *whitelessness*. A European is now a *White* and, it is increasingly felt, an *Aryan*.

The Whiteless

In a sense, the notion of The Aryans (and its various dialectal forms, such as Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Whites etc) sees a return to the idea of the barbarian. As we have seen, Greek culture was far in advance of the northern Illyrians, Thracians and Scythians and so the Greek sense of superiority had a core of truth to it. Likewise, Europe began to industrialise and these industrial advances fed back onto themselves — the advances in technology and science accelerated increasingly rapidly. Moreover, just as the Romans, in creating their empire, confronted numerous ‘barbarians’, Europe was now moving throughout the globe and encountering many more peoples than the Romans could even have imagined.

These peoples were uniformly lesser men — lesser *races*. Europeans were now a race of people, sharing the world with other lesser races, civilising them (they claimed) like the Romans civilised the Gauls and the Britons and the Dacians and the Iberians, etc. The insidious idea in all this is that, while the Romans clearly generally believed that the barbarians could be civilised and were not *inherently* lesser men, the concept of race led to the belief that other races were inherently inferior. In the end, when the European colonies were established, this became the default belief, whether stated or unstated. So, we see the ambiguous statements of Lord Cromer in Egypt. The Egyptians are not at present fit to rule themselves, he says. Perhaps at some time in the future. Perhaps. But not now. This could be taken to mean that the Egyptians are a lesser race who will probably never be fit to rule themselves; but equally it insinuates they *are* capable of ‘improving’. Are the Egyptians actually lesser men or men of a

lesser culture? I doubt if Lord Cromer knew what he really thought about that, but the point is he clearly believed the Egyptians of his own time were lesser men who required guidance from members of the European race. In any case, there were plenty of pure racists who fully bought into the idea of lesser races.

The Aryans

Europe, then, defined itself as an in-group and it devised three suitably stirring mechanisms to define (and perhaps delete) out-groups — the *barbarian*, the *godless* and the *whiteless*.

To their European discoverers, the Indo-Europeans were pristinely *white*. They exemplified whiteness. They were the pure race, these Aryans. Their blood was the purest of blood. But the Aryans were also *Europeans*. They were almost the platonic Form of a European. The European, of course, was almost the platonic Form of Man.

So who were the Aryans?, they asked. Whatever the answer, it was constrained by the notion that said answer had to concern itself with epitomes of men. The Aryans were martial, sturdy, strong, tough, clever, active, resourceful, creative, etc. The Aryans were therefore also un-women. There could be no hint of ‘effeminacy’ in an Aryan. No softness, no luxury, no pampering, no laxity, etc.

No, the Aryans were martial men who entered Europe like conquerors — like Romans, or Alexander, or Englishmen in India, or (it seemed to Frenchmen) Frenchmen in Indochina. Like conquerors they entered Europe and quickly dispatched the lesser men who lived there — the aboriginal folk, the ‘pre-Indo-European’ peoples. These included the ‘Iberians’ of Britain, and the ‘Prehellenes’ (or ‘Pelasgians’) of Greece and the Dasas of India. Like conquerors the Aryans came and chased out the effeminates. Here we see the matriarchal Picts, an Iberian people who were doomed to be disappeared. In the north of Ireland we find a tribe named the Robogdii. Said the great Indo-European scholar Julius Pokorny, these are ‘the very poor folk’ — obviously a group of ‘Esquimaux’ who had somehow clung on to a desperate existence. All sorts of issues were found with the Etruscans, a people

speaking a non-Indo-European language to the north of Latium — effeminate, took pleasure in opulence and luxury, matriarchal, cruel and worst of all, *Oriental*. No, it could not be denied — the Etruscans were orientals. They came from Lydia, which is located in the Orient. The Prehellenes, meanwhile — they worshipped female gods and they were matriarchal. Signs of matriarchy were found all over Europe. Looking at local customs, you could locate pre-Aryan matriarchy in the tiniest of English villages. Perhaps in such a village there lived people with black hair. Genuine pre-Aryans.

Skulls were endlessly measured — dolichocephalic or brachycephalic? One of these meant you were a patriarchal Aryan. Otherwise, you were condemned as a matriarchal Iberian. The great skull lottery.

In the grand scale of things, the Aryans were steppe-riding warriors who swept into Europe and conquered the matriarchal natives and their giggling goddesses. Great heroic cultures were created, including at the core the Alpine sequence of *Tumulus*, *Urnfield*, *Hallstatt* and *La Tène*. From these cultures, great waves of Aryan warriors ‘expanded’. In the final Hallstatt and La Tène periods, Celtic warriors swept through pretty much everywhere — Spain, France, Italy, Britain, Ireland, into Hungary and the Balkans, at last ending up in Turkey. And they sacked both Rome and Delphi.

That, so it was so often said, was the Indo-Europeans — supermen eternally sweeping into somewhere or other. Europe as Valhalla.

It must be said that these ideas are pretty universally rejected nowadays, but these are the ideas that underlie studies of the Indo-European *people*. Even Vere Gordon Childe, in his still-superb run-through of British prehistory, a work that cannot possibly be accused of promoting the idea of a pure-Anglo-Saxon, let alone Aryan, race in Britain — nevertheless, his book is one continuous sequence of pots and swords sweeping-into the island in one invasion after another.

To my mind, the curious thing is that the sweeper-intoers were in

many ways right in *form* — it is in *spirit* that they were so wrong. So, what is needed in Indo-European studies is to reinstate the body but re-inspire the spirit in a healthier form. Indo-European languages did indeed come into Europe with the Herders from the Pontic-Caspian steppe, but they came as human beings and not as platonic Forms imagined by racist white European men who lived in a world of White Man imperialism.

Material Witnesses

One way of re-imagining the early Farmers, of trying to see inside their heads, is to imagine you are walking on a grassy moorland and you say to yourself, ‘I will settle down and live *here!*’. Of course, the first Farmers did not have to go to a moorland to find a place where they could settle down and live ‘here’. The moorland, though, to continue our analogy, is a blank and bleak place. If we think of ‘home sweet home’, moorland (or any kind of grassland or forested land) is a long way from anything that could be called ‘home’.

Here then is the alchemy of the first Farmers and here their intent. We see an *intent* to make a home out of the wilderness and the *process* of making this wilderness into a home. That is not an easy task — there are various reports of later pioneers to the New World who sailed across the Atlantic full of hope and prayer and little knowledge of farming. The communities that settled often did not survive. The farmers of Old Europe, however, transported their expertise with them. When they declared they were going to settle ‘here’ they knew what it would take to do so. If we look for example at the earliest farmers in the Two Isles, we can see how they alchemied the wilderness into both a ‘here’ and a home. The tie of each community was to its ancestors and to these ancestors monuments and ceremonial sites were built and raised. In a short time, the wilderness was converted by pioneering colonists into a new landscape of homes and communities. Of course, wildernesses remained, but this patchwork ‘home’-land of community and wilderness is what we see by about 3,000 BCE in the five great ‘regions’ that are discernible in the near-west area of Britain, including the complex social landscapes

of Salisbury Plain and Avebury.

The broad outline of the early Neolithic in the Two Isles is therefore of many communities settling 'here', then alchemising 'here' into a home, finally evolving into a complex network of human communities. From wilderness to a hive of humanity.

We can enumerate certain key characteristics of these early societies —

- There were the common ancestors. These ancestors (and the life-span of these men and women appears to have been short, about 30-35 years or so) acted as a sort of spiritual adhesive binding the living both to the dead and to the land. A 'here-ness' of the community was enforced by the here-ness of its ancestors.
- There was the land itself, the land of the community, the land held in common. This was a physical 'here', the here where you lived and played and worked and died.
- The community was made up of men and women. Men were men and women were women, but the idea of men having absolute dominion over women was probably not a component in the belief of early Neolithic communities.
- The land — the basis of the here-ness of each community — was an ebb and flow of barrenness and fertility. The core need of the community was to induce fertility out of the land and to drive barrenness away from it. Fertility meant seed. Fertility was sexual. Fertility was the coupling of man and woman, of the sky and earth. Fertility was ritual and belief.
- Having built its 'here', the community now had to

keep it. 'Here' defined the future as well as the past. The community was defined in terms of *stasis*. What is must stay as it is.

- Because the idea of 'here' was so powerful, the idea of conquering 'there' was unthinkable. 'Here' was home, not 'there'. The concept of conquest was alien to people whose world was 'here'.

An interesting example of the attitude of the early Neolithic is to be found in the earliest traditions of China. Long before anything like a proper historical record exists there, tradition has it there was a sequence of three powerful dynasties. The first two are of interest here.

The Xia dynasty (c. 2,200-1,750 BCE) came first, with a suitably legendary foundation. The legend tells how a central power was created along the Yellow River (*huang ho*). The basis of power for the Xia emperors was ancestors. The gods granted power to Yu, the founder of the dynasty and all his descendants were likewise blessed, for his spirit dwelt in the house of the family. The blessing was conferred on the spirit of the family of Yu.

The last Xia ruler was Jie. Jie was evil. Jie was overthrown and a new dynasty founded. This was the Shang (c. 1,600-1,046 BCE). But how could the Shang rule? The spirit of their family was not blessed. The gods had not, according the principle laid down by the Xia — they had not blessed the Shang. However, the Shang had a simple response to this seemingly intractable problem. The gods, they explained, gave the Mandate to rule to the Xia *as long as they were worthy of ruling*. Jie, we have seen, was evil. The tradition makes it abundantly clear how evil he was. So, *no one* could possibly believe he was a worthy ruler. The early Shang, of course, were worthiness personified. There was no questioning, therefore, their right to rule. The gods had taken away

the Mandate to rule from the Xia and now passed it to the Shang⁵⁶.

This illustrates how powerful the idea of the ancestor was in the early Neolithic. It was not immutable, as indicated by the Shang usurpation, but when the Yellow River communities were bound into a single super-community under the Emperor, it followed that the ancestors of the community were those of the dynasty. The achievement of the Shang was to detach the Xia ancestors from the community.

The grand narrative adopted in this book is that of the arrival of Farmers and Herders. The Farmers colonised Greece and then, as we have seen, moved into eastern central Europe in one direction and along the Mediterranean coast in another. Then, one group moved up the Rhône~Loire valleys into France and the other into the Rhine area. From here, the Two Isles were colonised. This enables us to envisage a simple cultural model based on a single original Prototype. The culture of Skara Brae, a Neolithic community of the Orkney Islands and those of the earliest Greek Neolithic *shared this same basic cultural prototype*. Later, Herders speaking Indo-European languages settled in every part of Europe. The prototype culture here was the Pontic-Caspian steppe. This Herder culture overlies the earlier Farmer culture.

In this model, then, a Neolithic *Farmer* Prototype is overlain by a later *Herder* Prototype. This chapter analyses how this model is reflected in the archaeological record. It calls up the material witnesses of the Farmers and the Herders.

56 Of course, this was a somewhat less stringent Mandate and, sure enough, the last Shang emperor — Di Xin — and his consort Da Ji were as cruel as Jie, and moreover quite depraved and *decadent*. The ‘worthy’ Zhou dynasty (1,046–256 BCE) therefore replaced the ‘unworthy’ Shang.

1. Farmers, Europe

1.1. The Neolithic Core

The core area of our Neolithic may be the Levant. Here we find the proto-Neolithic Natufian culture that underlies the securely Neolithic cities of Jarmo and Çatal Hüyük. The Natufian area, as we have seen, may have had a reasonably stable population dating all the way back to the palaeolithic Aurignacian. The Natufian language may have been an Afro-Asiatic one and possibly Semitic. Other early Neolithic ‘cores’ can be found in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Although this general area became literate at a comparatively early date (c. 3,000 BCE), literacy was achieved far later than the time of the ‘core’ cultures. That is why, although we can say that the people of Jarmo and Jericho *may* have spoken an Afroasiatic or a Semitic language, as that ‘may’ stretches itself out over a period of 6,000 years, it can carry little conviction. However, it is likely that the *ideas* of the core areas survived within later texts.

Although there was no single core for the Neolithic and the various cores mentioned above seem to have adopted farming independently after the *idea* had been assimilated from observing neighbouring farmers, there was likely an exchange of fundamental ideas — I have termed these fundamental ideas *prototypes* — along with an exchange of technology.

For our purposes here, the two most important prototypes from the core-complex itself are —

- the Missing Deity, and
- the coupling of earth and sky

Later and localised prototypes include—

- **Egypt** — 1) male earth / female sky, 2) triadic (male) sun
- **Sumer** — 1) dyadic (female) heaven and underworld (probably morning and evening stars), 2) 'lord earth' and 'lord air', 3) youthful god in underworld
- **Levant** — father and son (bull-king in heaven / 'lord' on earth)
- **Semitic** — goddess of love
- **Hurrian** — cycle of gods
- **Hattic** — 1) queen Sun, 2) triadic Youth-Mother-Grandmother

First, let us consider the Hurrian 'core'. Was this originally Hurrian? We cannot know and in fact our texts have a Hittite provenance. But it is, in the form we have it, Hurrian. It also is, in its essence, clearly Neolithic and clearly archaic. It also serves as a good illustration of the nature of our evidence, for one of the basic sources of our core Neolithic cultures is much later Greek writings. This Hittite/Hurrian myth is clearly the same as the one told in Hesiod's 'Theogony', one of the earliest Greek texts. In Hesiod, the cycle involves Ouranos, Cronos and Zeus. As Greece is effectively the 'homeland' of Old Europe, is this myth a part of the core Old European belief system? The answer is clearly 'no', for Hesiod's myth is related to the Hurrian myth of Kumarbi and was therefore borrowed into the Greek-speaking area at a much later date than the Old European era. Whether or not its origins are in fact Hurrian, it is likely to originate in the same northern Iraq area as the Hurrian language itself belongs to. We can perhaps note certain common themes, though. First, there appears to be a triadic age-system (here

Grandfather, Father and Youth). That theme is found in Greece and Old Europe. Second, there is the castration element we have seen in the myth of 'Attis', a Greek myth borrowed from Phrygia. This unpleasing motif is clearly linked to fertility and in a 'male' context infers the loss of fertility with age — in the cycle of time, fertility is renewed by youth. In Greece, and Old Europe, this fertility principle appears to be 'female'. This illustrates how the core Neolithic area consisted not of one core, but certain core ideas that were adapted in different ways. Here we see different adaptations in Greece and northern Iraq, dating from very early in the Neolithic period.

Again, the Levantine pairing of *father* and *son* (El and Ba'al) is comparable to the Greek *mother* and *daughter*. With big daddy gods such as Jupiter, Marduk, Teshshup and Ashshur, there is no comparable dyad. At the core level of the Sumerian religion, we encounter Enki and Enlil (*en* 'lord', *ki* 'earth', *lil* 'air'), a different idea again. In the remote west of Europe, however, we have a similar idea of father and son in both Celtic (e.g. Maponus [*map* 'son']) and Germanic [Baldr] regions.

The 'two goddesses' are also identifiable in the west. They are recognisable in the Norse religion, where we find Freyja (middle-world) and Hel (underworld), not to mention the intermediary figure of the bird-like Iðunn. The Old European religion's core prototype, I have argued, featured the triadic goddesses of the cosmos. In this triad we probably find an adaptation of the 'two goddesses', but there is also a similarity with the Hattic 'core' motif of Youth-Mother-Grandmother. As the sun was 'female' in the Levant and Hatti and probably also in Minoan Crete, as well as the core Old European area, the Egyptian prototype of the triadic Ra is also relevant, the idea that Ra ages every day. This idea survived in the west even into the Arthurian tales, for we are told that

when Gawain fights, at midday he is invincible, after which his power wanes.

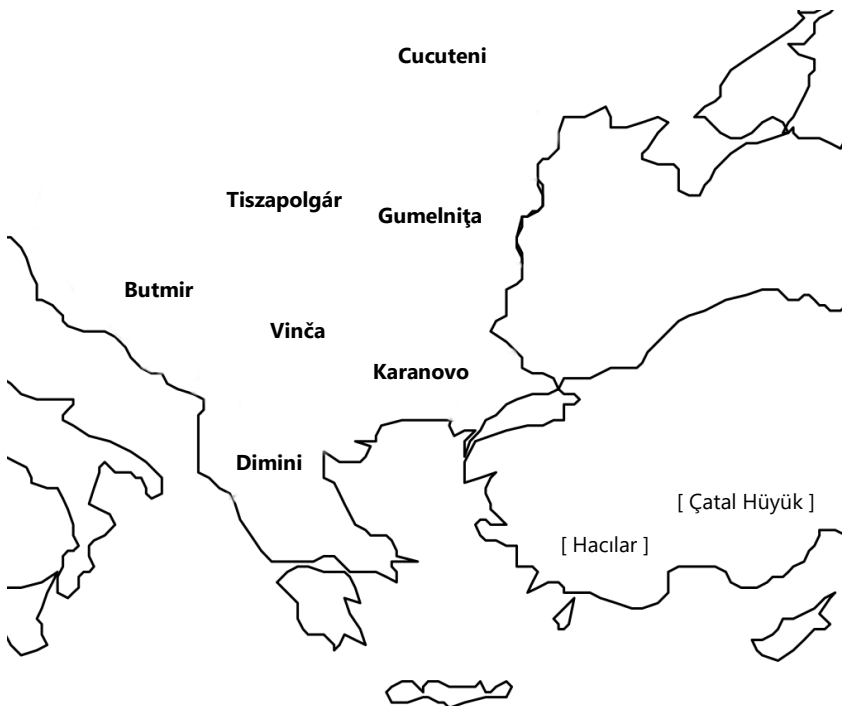
The Neolithic core area, then, seems to have consisted of a number of separate cultures in which there was no single belief, but there were beliefs that were shared in adaptive forms between them. However, the Neolithic colonists advanced from a single point — Greece — and therefore the Old European culture had a single core and a single Prototype that was itself an adaptation of the earlier core cultures. Therefore, our earliest written evidence — from Egypt and Mesopotamia — at once precedes the Old European era (being located in the older core area) *and* postdates it (being written down many millennia later). Although the core cannot provide a picture of Old Europe itself, it nevertheless underlies the Old European core. It is the foundation beneath the floor.

1.2. The Old-European Core

The earliest Greek cultures share similarities to that of Hacilar in Turkey. These very early cultures are *Sesklo*, *Karanovo* and *Starčevo*. These were small but stable communities. The ‘classical’ period of Old Europe meant larger communities of villages, even towns. These communities were also very stable in the main and as a result of this stability they survive in the form of large mounds called *tells*, built out of the many layers of habitation. I suppose the modern terminology would be ‘Village 1.0’, ‘Village 2.0’, and so on.



These major later cultures include *Gumelnița*, *Vinča*, *Tisza*, *Triploye-Cucuteni*, *Butmir* and the continuation of *Karanovo*. These are not uniform cultures but they do share core beliefs. Cultural borrowings within these cultures also existed. The Cucuteni ‘swirl’ was adapted from the little Butmir culture that, at an early stage of the Neolithic, occupied a strategically important location for trade.



‘Old Europe’, in its core area, lasted from c. 6,200 until sometime after c. 4,000 — it therefore existed for about two thousand years in a prosperous and stable form. These are the cultures in which the Old European religious prototype was formed and in which it flourished. Its last real holdout was a Triploye outpost on the margins of the steppe, a huge town finally abandoned c. 3,100 BCE. But most of Old Europe was made a ghost

long before that date.

The core of the Old European prototype was occupied by the *triadic goddesses of the cosmos*. In the core region a sophisticated art was developed and within this art a complex symbolism evolved. This artwork and this symbolism strongly indicate a matrifocal culture, but what was this culture, and why?

The immediate antecedents of Old Europe were the towns of Hacilar and Çatal Hüyük in southern Turkey. Although the artwork and symbolism here is mainly Neolithic, particularly in the earlier Çatal Hüyük a palaeolithic hunting element is also strong. This was a plastic culture that included women, but men too figured as hunters. These, especially Çatal Hüyük, were probably not matrifocal societies.

But what if we subtract hunting from society? If we have a culture in which the farming element is at the centre and hunting at the margins. I suggest that, with the crossing of the Aegean, the resultant communities were indeed built around farming and that hunting was indeed marginalised. These early Neolithic communities in Greece were therefore naturally matrifocal. Secondly, there will have been a *domestic* focus within these communities, a focus on the world of women. Thirdly, this led to a matrifocal *religion* based around the life-cycle of women and to a belief in a cosmos built around female fertility in which the fertility of the earth and the sky, and of women themselves, was the basis of life — was what made possible the life of the cosmos and of humans. Fourth, this ‘domestic’ religion we find in the artwork and symbolism of Old Europe may in fact represent only half of its religion, its domestic religion. The religion of men has perhaps not survived in Old European art. For example, Herakles is generally believed to be an archaic

hero/deity — his stone club, it is argued, clearly predates iron and bronze. If he was a part of Old European culture, is he a relic of the culture of its men? His presence is not hinted at by the Old European figurines, but if these are a product of its domestic culture that was made by women and represent the world of women, why would he be represented?

In brief, the prototype of Old European culture was obviously the culture of the first farmers in Greece and spread by the first colonists, for example, the Sesklo culture. But the later and more mature Old Europe based its beliefs on these prototype cultures.

Did Old Europe remain matrifocal? We know, for example, that copper-working was adopted in the later Old European cultures and it is likely the metallurgists were men. As the early homesteads grew into villages and towns, did hierarchies emerge? Who headed such hierarchies? If anyone did, it would likely be men.

However, the weight of the evidence is that Old Europe was not a culture in which ‘man’ was seen as having dominion over ‘woman’. It was a society in which ‘woman’ had ‘her’ own important space and in which the prototype religion remained intact. The goddesses remained powerful. The stability of Old Europe over such a long period — two thousand years — indicates it was not a warlike culture, whatever conflicts broke out from time to time and place to place.

In the Old European core area, the model of the Farmer and the Goddesses is clearly a tenable one.

1.3. A Simple Expansion

The farmers expanded from the Old European core area in two directions, **1)** into Central Europe, and **2)** along the Mediterranean coast. At length, the farmers colonised the

entire continent. The Mediterranean and Central European groups reached the Rhône and Rhine respectively about the same time and thereafter Britain was colonised from the west and the east. Finally, Ireland was colonised from Britain.

A model of a simple colonisation supports the idea that the Old European culture and its prototypes was borne across the entire continent in a simple manner, albeit along two separate paths. The first Neolithic of Britain was a step or two removed from that of the core area.

At first glance, archaeology supports the simple model of colonisation. The early Neolithic of central Europe is a monolith called the LBK culture (or *Linearbandkeramik* for short). This is agreed to be remarkably uniform. For example, early LBK houses are clearly built to a standard plan. The Mediterranean colonisation too is defined by Impressed Ware. This is the culture that moved up to the Rhône Valley.

In France, though, things become less simple and the initial process of colonising Britain, let alone Ireland, has not left one uniform Neolithic culture behind. There was no simple colonisation of Britain by people using either LBK or Impressed ‘wares’.

On the Atlantic Coast, meanwhile, a ‘megalithic’ culture evolved. It is here we find the symbols we have seen on monuments such as New Grange and comparable decorations in Iberia, Brittany and the Orkneys. Here we do at least find a *connected* culture.

However, this apparent simplicity vanishes on a closer inspection. A ‘simple’ Neolithic did not exist in these western regions — in the area of the Two Isles.

1.4. A Complex Expansion

A simple Neolithic requires a simple forward momentum of colonisation — from A to B to C to D, and so on. The archaeological evidence does not support this. It is true that LBK and Impressed Ware follow the simple model, but it is a case of thus far and no further when we arrive at Western Europe. We find, moreover, various expansions occurring *within* colonised areas — Farmer groups expanding into areas already colonised by existing Farmer groups.

Some complex movements do not spoil the simple model that much. For example, a very important early migration from Old Europe took place along the later stages of the Danube. This produced the Criş (or Körös) culture, located around and about the river of that name⁵⁷. This culture is important because it brought Old European farmers to the brink of the steppe. Beyond the brink they did not go, but the culture of the neighbouring hunter-gathering peoples clustered on the Bug and Dniester rivers were, as we shall see, influenced by the farmers. Anyway, the Criş culture was ended by an intrusion, welcome or not, by LBK farmers and from the resulting culture evolved the long-lasting and important Cucuteni/Tripolye culture.

Farmers also migrated from the core area along the Danube and into Central Europe. This immigration overlay an area already settled by LBK people. The resulting culture is the Lengyel — here we see one Farmer people intruding into the land of another Farmer people.

Nevertheless, we could say these are minor complexities

57 In Romanian and Hungarian respectively.

that do not affect the overall model.

However, when it comes to the first colonists of Britain, we encounter something more serious. It is agreed that Britain was colonised both from the west and east. In the simple model, the ‘Mediterraneans’ proceeded up the Loire into Brittany. So, the western colonists were Mediterranean Farmers. The eastern colonists would have arrived from the Rhine and Seine regions (or whatever other stretch of coast). These would be ‘Centralist’ Farmers. Britain would have been colonised by Mediterranean Farmers in the west and Centralist Farmers in the east.

Recent improvements in DNA testing — enter the haplogologists, as they may be called — indicate, however, a different model. In fact, the Mediterraneans seem first to have moved from the south and taken control of the northern Chasséean culture. From the region of the Paris Basin, they made an aggressive move east into LBK-occupied lands. The archaeological remains of this move are represented by the Michelsberg Culture. It would seem, moreover, this move involved a substantial influence from local hunter-gatherer peoples. It is also now thought that the later TBK ⁵⁸ (or *Trichterbandkeramik* for short) culture was a development of the Michelsberg Culture. The TBK expanded ever further, the expansion being demonstrably aggressive and violent. It is the TBK (c. 4,300 BCE) that may be the source culture for the both the eastern British Neolithic and the Neolithic of Scandinavia.

Worse, the successor to the TBK was the Globular Amphora culture, a patriarchal steppe Herder type of

58 This is also known as the Funnel Beaker culture.

society. Thanks to the haplogologists, we now know the Globular Amphora people were not from the steppe. These patriarchal steppe Herders were European Farmers. Their culture was not only the successor to TBK, but its people were their descendants. In terms of the model underlying this book, these Farmers had become Herders.

As we approach the Two Isles, then, we appear to be a long way away from a simple and linear movement from the Old European core. We appear also to be equally far from anything that can be described as a matrifocal society that worshipped a triadic female deity who represented the cosmos.

So, what do we find when we set foot on the Two Isles on the threshold of their Neolithic?

2. Farmers, The Two Isles

The colonisation of Britain had both a western and an eastern component. These two colonisations involved two different Mediterranean groups — the western group were the first Farmers of Armorica and the eastern the group that intruded into the LBK people's territory. Although they were therefore both descended from the first settlers of the Rhône region and therefore spoke languages that were now different but still closely-related, they are likely to represent two distinct ethnic groups.

At any rate, there was to be no uniform LBK or Impressed Ware culture in Britain. Moving from one field or forest clearing to another over Europe is quite different to moving across the sea to a remote island. In the south, we can see two broad cultural regions — along the Thames up to the 'near west' (Severn region, Wiltshire, Dorset) there seems to have been a connected and increasingly

sophisticated network of regional cultures. Another early Neolithic group can be linked to Peterborough Ware. This is probably best seen as an umbrella term for a group of small communities ('Ebbsfleet', 'Mortlake', 'Fengate'). The 'culture' probably does not represent a single 'people'. The Peterborough Ware is linked to, for example, Windmill Hill, an important 'near west' site.

What the early 'near west' and 'Peterborough' groups seem to indicate is that, although the earliest eastern immigrants came from the same original 'source culture', there was more than one colonisation. The 'near west' may represent one of these and 'Peterborough' another. The Neolithic has left few traces in many parts of the north, until we reach the remoter areas of Scotland. A flourishing early Neolithic culture is found in the Orkneys.

Social relations in the British Neolithic were clearly complex. There were two basic ethnic groups ('west' and 'east') and both these ultimately descended from Mediterranean colonists. Within the 'east' group of colonists, separate sub-groups can be observed.

2.1. Early Days

The best place to consider the earliest Neolithic in Britain is the 'near west', for this region became home to a mature and complex culture that survived into the early Bronze Age, where we see it evolve then vanish.

The first Neolithic colonists arrived in Britain c. 4,200 BCE. It is tempting to think of it as an empty land, but of course Mesolithic people already lived in it and had already started to reshape it into human form. For example, the forests that covered much of the land now found themselves hollowed out with clearings. The earliest phase of Stonehenge dates from the Mesolithic,

indicating the location was a clearing and a sacred place.

Did the early colonists drive off their hunter-gatherer predecessors, or try to avoid them, or mingle with them? Whichever, the early culture of the colonists was Neolithic and the hunter-gatherers soon disappear from the archaeological record.

The ‘near west’ landscape was dramatically changed during the early Neolithic, for the endless forest-land that covered large areas of land was cleared — wood for fuel, timber to build and space for crops and livestock. It was in this newly-shaped landscape the farmers began to create a ‘here’.

2.2. Monuments

It is monuments that most mark the early farmers in the ‘near west’. These were monuments to the dead and to the community. They bound the community to the land and provided a visible display (to itself and to others) that the land belonged to the community.

Early monument types in the ‘near west’ are *long barrows*⁵⁹ / *chambered tombs*⁶⁰ and *causewayed camps*⁶¹ and the *cursus*. These could be impressively large constructions. Though precise dating is difficult, it seems the long barrows preceded the causewayed camps which in turn gave way to the *cursus*. The purpose of these monuments is disputed, for they unfortunately suffer from the ‘Stone Circle Syndrome’ — that is, much that can be said about them is either vaporous or uncertain.

59 For example, Nutbane and Fussell’s Lodge.

60 For example, West Kennet and Wayland’s Smithy.

61 For example, Windmill Hill, Hambledon Hill, Maiden Castle, Robin Hood’s Ball and Hembury.

A few useful conclusions can, however, be drawn —

- they were a focal point of the early Neolithic communities and remained in use over a period of centuries;
- the camps at least attracted a certain amount of violence and at least intermittent attacks, indicating conflict could well up between communities and confirming they were a marker of community identity;
- the barrows may have been used for only selected members of the community (a leading family perhaps?);
- some of these monuments employ sarsen⁶² stones in their construction, as a sort of precursor to the grander later building works;
- the barrows are clearly *internal* or ‘inward’ just as the camps and cursuses are *external* and ‘outward’;
- the monuments appear to be progressively more inclusive (barrows, ?elite family; camps, the community; cursuses, ?groups of communities).

The cursus was surely a ritual pathway of some sort for a sacred or secular procession. If it was a ritual centre for a ‘community of communities’, it indicates that Neolithic societies were becoming more complex. Perhaps now people thought in terms not just ‘here’, but a *here of heres*.

2.3. Land's End

One thing that time changes is perception. Things become important that once weren't; things are forgotten that were once remembered, other things remembered

⁶² Probably derived from ‘saracen’, presumably implying people found them alien and threatening.

that were once forgotten. New things are conceived that were once inconceivable. Anaxagoras, for example, was a scientist of brilliant insight — he said the sun was bigger than the moon but further away and that the moon reflected the light of the sun. But when he argued that the sun was made of molten metal, how could he have conceived of the nuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium? How could the Greek atomists have conceived of quarks and electrons?

Location also changes perception. Is *the centre* ‘in the land of the Carnutes’ or is it in Mide or is it Delphi⁶³? Our perception of ‘ancient history’ is always changing, depending on whether we are reading a Sumerian, Egyptian, Elamite, Ugaritic, Biblical, Hittite, Greek or Roman text. China was an impossibly remote place to the Greeks, but ‘here’ to the Chinese.

To the Neolithic colonists, each stage of the colonisation involved moving into a *terra incognita*. Reaching the Atlantic coast, however, must have seemed like reaching the edge (or end) of the world. Land’s End. Britain itself must, for the first pioneers, have been the subject of a certain fascination. Ireland too. Before the colonists made ‘here’ into home, they must in the early days have seen the new land as itself being close to the end of the world.

So, the pioneers colonised, ever northward. Here we must note that the colonists of the ‘real’ Land’s End came from the ‘real’ Finisterre. They were prepared. But as the island was explored, eventually the colonists arrived at a new End. Beyond Caithness lay islands, and beyond these more islands (that is, Shetland). It was the Orkneys

63 Julius Caesar tells us that the centre of Gaul lay in the territory of the Carnutes tribe (who lived in the Lyons area); Mide means ‘middle’ and was thought to contain the centre of Ireland; Delphi was the *omphalos* ‘navel’ of Greece.

that were close to the mainland, though. Shetland may have been closer to Land's End, but it was too remote for a cult. But it is plausible that once upon a time the Orkneys were of central importance to Neolithic Britain. The edge of the world — Land's End!, Finisterre! — had been found.

As I have pointed out, the actual Land's End cannot have had a great emotional impact to the people of Finisterre. But the Orkneys is another thing entirely. The archaeological evidence is suggestive that the area of the Orkney islands was a special place in the early Neolithic and if we consider that it was at the edge of the world — at Land's End — this would be unsurprising.

It also raises the interesting possibility that it is a visible indication there was a degree of contact and communication throughout Britain. It was not like people watching the moon landing live on television, of course, but there may have been a general recognition that humanity had reached a comparable threshold. In terms of emotional impact, a comparison between the Moon and the Orkneys is a useful one. There is direct evidence of long-distance communication. Artefacts from the Lake District have been found in the 'near west', and Grooved Ware is found all down the eastern half of Britain. This pottery style may have originated in the Orkneys.

Unfortunately, theories about a nationwide cult with an organised priesthood, which is less than likely, have diverted opinion away from the idea of a connected belief. If we say that **1)** communities at this time are likely to have had religious figures who may as well be named 'priests' and **2)** communities in communication with each other (as Grooved Ware suggests they were) may have *self-organised*, it is more than plausible that at this time there was both a sense that Britain was a 'place' and that

it was widely known that, at the far limit of this place, lay the edge of the world and that this was a holy place, as holy as St. Thomas Beckett's tomb or the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Perceptions change. But although now the Orkneys are perceived as a remote and windswept place, the early Neolithic people may have seen it as a land that, because of its remoteness from humanity, was especially near to the gods.

2.4. Landscapes

The early stages of the great megalithic constructions in Salisbury Plain can be said to begin c. 3,100 BCE with *Stonehenge I*. The less certain dates for Avebury suggest c. 3,000 BCE for the beginning of its construction.

The history of the construction of both Avebury and Stonehenge need not be rehearsed here in detail. What is significant is that they are clearly part of a regional — probably inter-regional — community. If it is correct that the sequence BARROW > CAMP > CURSUS indicates an ever-expanding level of community involvement, then the Salisbury Plain and Avebury complexes would seem to mark the next level of expansion.

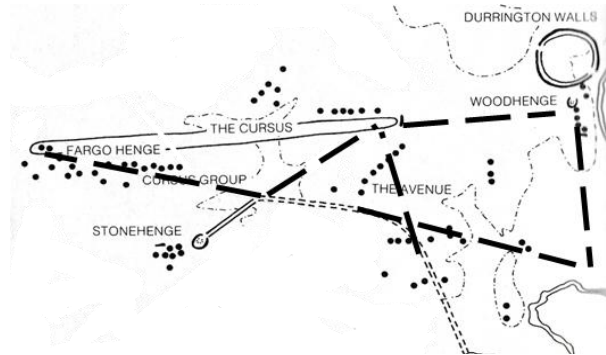
It is possible to detect territorial boundaries in the early Neolithic via the causewayed camps, but territories are better defined in the 'classical' period. Five centres can be delineated in the 'near west' — 1) Mount Pleasant, 2) Knowlton, 3) Stonehenge, 4) Avebury, and 5) Marden. Each of these areas contains a complex of different types of construction. Each is an integrated monumental landscape.

Avebury is probably the best starting point for discussion. It is situated in the vicinity of Windmill Hill and the West Kennet Long Barrow and is therefore clearly the

successor culture to it. The monumental landscape here includes the henge (and stone circle) of Avebury itself, the 'West Kennet Avenue' and the 'Beckhampton Avenue' (for the latter of which only ghostly remnants remain), The Sanctuary and Silbury Hill. The river Kennet itself is a key part of the landscape.

The Salisbury Plain complex is in the region of both the causewayed camp Robin Hood's Ball and the eponymous Cursus. As well as Stonehenge, there is Woodhenge, the gigantic Durrington Walls and 'The Avenue'. On the map at least, there seems to be a remarkable set of processional

links that can be inferred. The 'target' of The Avenue is clearly the River Avon, but there is a bend in the path. Going straight on in the direction of the



path from the river, the eastern end of the Cursus is reached. Proceeding along the bend, you arrive at the western end of it. The existing Avenue then turns left to lead you to Stonehenge. If you trace back your steps and continue in a straight line, you not only pass the eastern end of the Cursus but, if you keep on going, you arrive at the top edge of Durrington Walls. If you start at the eastern end of the Cursus and continue in the direction of that monument, you will end up at Woodhenge. Just as The Avenue takes you to the River Avon, so Woodhenge (and, by extension Durrington Walls) is fast by that river.

The similarity — there is certainly not *identity* especially in construction style and technique — is striking. We can

perhaps compare a Victorian and medieval parish church. Not identical, similar. It is the *ideas* behind the buildings that matter.

So, what matters here is the idea of a procession to a river, where the community gathers together in its community centres for whatever ceremonies were conducted there. We can look to baptism and conceptions of healing and renewing if we want to try to understand the meaning of the landscape, but a river suffers from the usual Stone Circle Syndrome — all interpretations are uncertain or vaporous.

What interests us here is these monumental landscapes involved complex interactions between the communities within each region — and also without, for it would seem that people came from distant regions for whatever ceremony or festival or gathering. Analogies here are useful. The Alþingi in Iceland, for example, was a gathering of people from all over the island. Comparable to that is Uisnech, which hosted festivals for people from all over Ireland. In Ulster — the land of the Ulaid — it is likely that Isamnion (the later and mythical Emain Macha) hosted festivals and gatherings for people from all over the province and perhaps beyond.

Avebury is again interesting here, for the Windmill Hill causewayed camp surely performed a similar function to our later complex and if so, the West Kennet Long Barrow did before that. These were ritual centres *without a ritual landscape*. The barrow may represent a time when the region was thinly populated and emerging from the pioneer period. A 'here' had been created and the community was built around the great Ancestors who inhabited the barrow. Windmill Hill may indicate the end of the pioneer era, when the sense of a single pioneering group with a single origin has dissipated and dispersed

and the great Ancestors were no longer a reasonable way to bind the community together. Now the community communed, as it were, in a public open space — Windmill Hill. Situated of course on a hill. The ritual landscape of Stonehenge and Avebury seems to be a logical extension of this. The community is no longer merely ‘here’, it is becoming engraved into the land itself, a land of paths connecting points of public places and bathed in the holy water of the sacred river.

2.5. Circles

‘Circles’ are *stone circles* but also *henges*. These monuments seem to divide Britain into two — circles are *western* and henges *eastern*. In the previous section we discussed Stonehenge⁶⁴ and Avebury, each of which is both a henge *and* a stone circle and both participate in a complex ritual landscape. But in this they are atypical. In general, henges and stone circles are separate forms of monument and are simple and no doubt local ritual centres.

Were circles and henges functionally different? The Stone Circle Syndrome strikes again here, unfortunately. But they were *structurally* different, so we can say logically there *is* an observable difference.

We have seen what may have been a progression from Windmill Hill to the Avebury ritual landscape — from a simple ceremonial centre to a ceremonial complex. Could the circles and henges simply represent this earlier stage? No comment is needed on the extraordinary amount of work — including planning — that was required to build the ceremonial complexes. A much

⁶⁴ From which the term ‘henge’ comes. In the name of the monument, the word means ‘hanging’ - ‘the hanging stones’. This in turn may have implied ‘gallows’.

smaller amount of planning and work was needed to build a stone circle or a henge. Here the analogy would be between a parish church and a cathedral. There is a reason there is just one Notre Dame de Paris. The circles and henges probably served small communities, like a parish church. They are widespread up and down Britain, and — while for example the north barely registers any early Neolithic human presence outside of the Orkney region — these monuments indicate the existence of communities existing all over Britain. Everywhere had a ‘here’.

As we have seen, the original colonists consisted of two ethnic groups (though both originated in the Mediterranean colonisation from the Old European core area) — one from Brittany and the other from the Michelsberg/TBK regions facing eastern Britain. Could the west-east divide indicate the survival of these two ethnic groups? The Stonehenge and Avebury cultural landscapes may reflect a similar phenomenon — they are in fact different, but simultaneously they are clearly built upon similar ideas. The *idea* of the circles and henges appears to be the same. They are circular (or ovular) meeting places.

To understand the stone circles and henges, we need to think in terms of a self-organising system and not an omnipotent central power. Parish churches again. These were not built by a central power according to a big plan. There was a parish. There was a church. In the Neolithic context, Grooved Ware might be a visible sign of a ‘glue’ that could have bound a common religious belief together over a wide area. It appears all over the east, especially associated with henges. If it originated in the Orkneys (unfortunately subject to debate as I write this), that would be of great significance. I have suggested those islands will have been viewed as special by the early

colonists — the place at Land's End where humans could commune with the gods.

Grooved Ware is associated with — at times at least — henbane, a poison ('hen's death') but also a hallucinogenic. A modern parallel might be the Japanese food-cult of Fugu — the deadly-poisonous fish that is safe to eat. If prepared properly. The poisonous nature of henbane may have been part of its allure and is also suggestive of an *ordeal*. Grooved Ware was not a 'local' pottery type. Whenever it appears, it is not foreign, but it is not local. This indicates very strongly indeed that it was part of a cult and that, therefore, the henges were too. Perhaps the stone circles did have a different function to the henges and that is why Grooved Ware is not associated with them.

The stone circles and henges mark a significant stage on the 'humanising' of Britain. We start with the barrows and the Ancestors of the pioneering community, the causewayed camps the heart of a wider community, the Avebury/Stonehenge complexes defining the community — and here now the circles and henges — whether they opposed or complemented each other — binding communities throughout the island within a common culture.

2.6. Beakers

The previous two sections omitted something important — *Beakers*. This innocuous word masks one of the most important archaeological cultures in Europe. Its proper place lies with the following chapter about herders, but it is highly significant to this chapter too.

The Beaker Culture has been the subject of controversy and confusion for many decades. Was there a Beaker 'Folk'? Did this 'folk' speak an Indo-European language?

If so, was it a ‘Celtic’ language?

One problem was chronology, impossible to even attempt before radio-carbon dating (though of course it was attempted). Beakers are found all over western Europe — Iberia, France, Britain and Ireland — all the way into Central Europe. What was the sequence of the various sorts of Beaker? Without an accurate chronology, how could such a sequence be worked out?

A more basic question is — *what* were the Beakers? What do they represent? They are clearly of great significance, given their widespread presence. But if they are only pots, what can pots tell us beyond the fact that people who used Beakers used pots?

In the past few years, many of the mysteries about the Beakers have been at least greatly lessened. Better chronologies have led to a plausible overall sequence and the haplogologists have made important findings.

The Beakers are of key significance to the Neolithic of the Two Isles, for the Beaker period sees the final grandifying of the ‘near west’ ritual landscape. Yet the haplogologists tell us that the people who brought Beaker culture into Britain were steppe people — our ‘Herders’. Not only that, there was massive gene replacement, so much so that the male DNA types of the farmers more or less disappear. So, the Beakers seem to represent the end of the farmers in Britain, but the archaeological record suggests a good deal of assimilation. It has in fact always been difficult to argue for a Beaker ‘invasion’ on account of the archaeological evidence. Settlement, yes — but a violent invasion?

In fact, this was one of the great advances of understanding the Beakers, to see them not just of ‘pots’ but as expressions of a culture. A status symbol. This was linked to beer drinking, to milk drinking, but the most

convincing connection was the indirect link to metallurgy. The Beakers are connected to copper (and by extension gold). The Beakers represent the first usage of metal in western Europe. Just as the farmers were pioneers in agriculture, the Beakers were made by the pioneers of metalworking and during this pioneering period smiths were very likely thought to possess mysterious if not magical — yet also most definitely utilitarian — powers. A Beaker was in some sense clearly a symbol of this power.

Metalworking it was that, bit by bit, overthrew the Farmer culture and replaced it with a warrior one. These were often warrior-farmers, it is true, but nevertheless they were warriors. At some point, metalworking became less wizardry and more craft, and copper gave way to bronze and bronze-working was weaponised.

In the ‘near west’, this development can be symbolised by the change from Stonehenge and Avebury to the Wessex barrows, which probably represent a warrior dynasty or group of dynasties. After these rich burials, Wessex becomes somewhat of a backwater, its days of being a cultural centre disappearing into the past.

Yet for all that, it is the Beakers that represent the last days — perhaps the peak days — of the ‘near west’. The mystery of the Beakers is therefore with us still — how come the people who made the Beakers annihilated the farmers and at the same time upheld their culture?

2.7. Ireland

The early Neolithic in Ireland was clearly carried overseas by colonists from south-west Scotland. From this point, the island can be clearly seen across the North Channel. Other colonists, however, may have reached the island from further south. The wider context here is that

the west of Britain was itself colonised by groups belonging to the Mediterranean group of Farmers. Eastern Britain too seems to have been colonised by peoples descended from this group, but these came from Michelsberg and TBK regions. This strongly suggests **1)** that a vast coastal area from Iberia to Scandinavia belonged to a closely-related ethnic and linguistic group, and **2)** within this group, Ireland and western Britain were populated by a different ethnic group to eastern Britain. However, Neolithic Ireland is an enigma and offers little help in telling us who ‘the Irish’ were. Evidence for ‘a people’ in Neolithic Ireland is non-existent and the likely probability is that there *was* no one single people.

The archaeology of Ireland can in general be summed up in a single word — *dearth*. This applies to the Bronze and Iron Ages as well as the Neolithic. There is a dearth of artefacts, rc-dates and excavations, meaning that the poor generalist generally has nothing to generalise with. The exception in this period is the *megaliths*.

Irish megaliths are conventionally categorised into four groups — *wedge tombs*, *portal tombs*, *passage tombs* and *court cairns*. These are found clustered in the north, except wedge tombs found mainly in the west and southwest. The fact that there are different types of megalith, each with a well-defined construction method, most likely indicates the building traditions of different groups of people.

Perhaps the north-south division is significant. Wedge tombs were maybe built by colonists from southern Britain and the northern megaliths that seem to have a similar function — the portal tombs and court cairns — the work of northern colonists. As for the passage graves, these far more monumental constructions may have been

used by a collective of communities comparable to the Stonehenge and Avebury complexes — perhaps they served a ‘community of communities’ that may have extended throughout the island. If the Boyne region really was recognised as a central cult area, such a belief would strongly suggest the origins of the later Tara⁶⁵ cult of early pre-historical times.

As with Britain, the Neolithic in Ireland ended in and around the time of the Beakers and with these, it is time to take our leave of the Farmers and turn to the Herders.

⁶⁵ It may also be significant that the great Carrowkeel passage tomb is near the site of the second *Cath Maige Tuired* (‘battle of Moytura’) at Lough Arrow.

3. Herders

3.1. The Pontic-Caspian Steppe

Within the steppe model of Indo-European expansion, it is now possible to provide an evidenced and plausible outline of Indo-European prehistory via archaeology and aided (or supercharged, really) by genetics. We can say with a good deal of confidence the story of the Herders begins on the Pontic-Caspian steppes.

If we begin at the beginning, we must mark out the earliest phases of Indo-European.

The first and longest phase must be *pre-Indo-European*. This phase, in its literal sense, goes back to the murky origins of language itself, which almost certainly occurred before the appearance of *homo sapiens*. A narrower definition, however, might focus on a time before the assumed ur-language was spoken. During this time, we can say that not only the ancestor of Indo-European itself was spoken (the ‘pre-’ language), but also what might be termed *para-Indo-European* languages. These were long-lost languages related to pre-Indo-European and descended from a common ur-language. A novelist writing a story set in this period might imagine, for example, a ‘para’ people whose basic family unit consisted of a *matti, a *patti and *sunullen (plural, ‘children’). This common ur-language will in turn have had para-languages all descended from a yet earlier ur-language and so on back in time.

To try and imagine this process, let us take a certain aspect of Indo-European culture — its chief deity ‘The Shining One’ (*Deywós). All other para-Indo-European peoples are likely to have had a similar chief god. For some, the name may have been the same name in the

local language. Perhaps one people worshipped *Thelos, another *Diwassa. Other para peoples may have known *Deywós as *Tenne (‘thunder’ - *(s)tenh₂-) or *Ullipatti (‘all’ - *h₂olyos + ‘father’ - *ph₂tér). It is likely the ur-people who spoke the ur-language of the para-Indo-European peoples did worship the sky just as the ur-Indo-European people(s) certainly did. Perhaps, let us say, they even called him something like *Tiyes, something still recognisable to us today. Perhaps, 12,000 years ago, people called on this *Tiyes* just as Spanish speakers today call on *Dios*. That is, we might recognise a language a culture we could still call ‘Indo-European’, one stocked with words and ideas still familiar to us.

This familiarity must however dwindle along with every sequence of ur-language and para-languages. Even if, 30,000 years ago, speakers of a language we could define as ‘pre-Indo-European’ — even if we could hear such a people speak, and discover that their main deity was called ‘Djowo’ — it is inconceivable this people would be ‘Indo-European’ in culture in any meaningful sense.

Such a speculation enables us to focus on the fact that the speakers of Indo-European itself were steppe-herders and had a culture based around such a habitus. However, this culture *was* developed from earlier hunter-gatherer societies — our pre-Indo-European and para-Indo-European peoples — and it is in these societies that the roots of Indo-European culture developed as a recognisably Indo-European entity. After an indeterminate while over the long sequence of ur- and para- languages this entity will dissolve into nothing. Something that could be called an ‘Indo-European’ culture will though have existed many thousands of years before that language was ever spoken.

Ignoring *proto-Indo-European*, the final phase consists of,

probably, two stages — *Indo-Anatolian* and *Indo-European*. The former may be a para-language of the latter, but it is usually treated as an earlier form of Indo-European, an idea which has a high level of archaeological support. The story of this final phase begins when groups of hunter-gatherers at the far west of the Pontic-Caspian region, clustered around the Bug and Dniester rivers, encounter farmers belonging to what we now call the Criş culture. This occurs sometime around 5,800 BCE. The Criş ‘people’ farm and they herd cattle, goats and sheep. But the hunter-gatherers do not take up farming — they became herders.

It is as a result of this meeting, between these farmers and herders, that much of the world today, for good or ill, speaks a language descended from Indo-European.

3.2. Pre-Indo-European

The people of the Bug-Dniester culture probably did not speak the parent Indo-European language, but rather a now-lost para-language — the Criş culture of the Farmers later developed into the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture and this crossed over into the Bug-Dniester region. The local culture and its language were absorbed.

However, the hunter-gatherers in the region of the rivers beyond the Dniester were also influenced by the farmers. The Dnieper-Donets culture begins about 5,800 BCE, but after c. 5,200 BCE (Dnieper-Donets II, lasting until about 4,200 BCE), these hunter-gatherers began herding livestock, mainly goats, cattle and sheep but also horses and pigs. It is with the Dnieper-Donets culture we can see a pre-Indo-European sphere in the Pontic-Caspian region, for this culture is clearly linked to regions further to the east.

The pre-Indo-European story in fact can be said to begin

with the Elshanka culture in the Volga region, focused on the Samara and Sok rivers. This dates from the 7th millennium BCE and was a hunter-gatherer region in which, from around 6,700 BCE, pottery was made. The pottery of the Bug-Dniester culture derives from Elshanka types and the culture itself developed into first the Samara (5th millennium BCE) and then the Khvalynsk (c. 4,700-c. 3,800 BCE) cultures.

With the Khvalynsk we almost certainly enter into the world of the speakers of actual Indo-European.

3.3. Sredny Stog

One of the most important 'Indo-European' archaeological cultures is the Sredny Stog (c. 4,400-c. 3,400 BCE), located on the steppe to the north of the Black Sea. A currently popular, and very plausible, idea is that the people behind this culture spoke Indo-Anatolian.

Sredny Stog overlies the earlier Dnieper-Donets II culture, but there is also a clearly-marked intrusion from the east not only of a Khvalynsk influence but also of Khvalynsk people. The language of Sredny Stog may therefore have been the language of the Khvalynsk immigrants and the Caspian region therefore the actual 'homeland' of Indo-European. The Dnieper-Donets language was probably therefore a para-Indo-European one.

The remains of the Sredny Stog complex indicate a confident and mature culture that dealt with the sophisticated Cucuteni-Tripolye people to the west on an equal footing. The Sredny Stog people were nomadic, domesticated the horse and, from Phase II of the complex, employed cord-decoration to their pots. Sredny Stog provides a good 'fit' with most models of the reconstructed

Indo-European culture.

The Sredny Stog people looked out at an Old Europe that was a sophisticated, wealthy and venerable network of towns and cultures. This period also indicates the shape of things to come. I will give two examples.

First, the wealthy Old European town of Varna⁶⁶ is famous for its 'Necropolis', a very rich cemetery of 300 or so burials dating from around 4,200 BCE. Varna is in itself interesting in terms of this study, for it is a settlement of our farmers that indicates a very large degree of wealth-inequality. It was ruled by men and it was not 'matrifocal'. A recent large-scale DNA study also found that one man buried in the necropolis was from the steppes. He was probably one of the first 'Herders' to settle amongst the 'Farmers'.

More disturbing for Old Europe is the culture around Bolgrad. The towns in this region were all abandoned around the same time c. 4,200 BCE. The Bolgrad culture is situated near to the Suvorovo and Novodanilovka cultures, both of which are closely related to Sredny Stog. The Novodanilovka, in fact, may represent the burials of the Sredny Stog~Suvorovo elite. The now-emptied lands of the Bolgrad people, at any rate, were quickly occupied by people from the steppe, perhaps the earliest example of steppe expansion yet discovered.

Around 4,200 BCE, Old Europe collapsed and with this collapse there were to be many more 'expansions'.

66 On the west coast of the Black Sea, near to where the Roman poet Ovid spent his last years in his Tomis exile.

3.4. Expansion

3.4.1. Collapse

Around 3,900 BCE the weather went bad and it seems Old Europe — the core region of Gumelnița, Vinča, Karanovo, Tisza and the rest — went with it. This was the so-named *Piora Oscillation*, of unclear cause but demonstrable effect. It made the cosmos grow colder and rain and floods to come and the good soil of the farmers get washed away.

The result was, initially, a reconfiguration of Old Europe and a noticeable leap in the steppe influence on the cultures of the core region. New archaeological cultures appear that, while perhaps still dominated by the farming peoples, are in many ways extensions of the steppe.

Around 3,600 BCE, the *Cucuteni-Tripolye* area suddenly became highly urbanised. Towns, some very large in size, sprouted up, an indication of people clustering together for defence.

To the west, around what is now Hungary, the *Baden* culture appears around 3,500 BCE, linked to the *Coțofeni* of Romania beginning around the same time. These seem to be Farmer societies that adapted to steppe culture. Vinča vanishes.

Cernavoda people located in the lower Danube, meanwhile, bred horses, and there is evidence of a steppe-influenced drinking culture. Cernavoda has significant links to Sredny Stog. It overlies both the Karanovo and Gumelnița areas of the Old European core.

We have met with the elegantly-named *Globular Amphora* culture of northern Europe. Often assumed to have been Indo-European speaking, it was a proper

Herder society extending over much of north-central Europe. In recent years, haplology has determined that these people were descended from the Farmers of Old Europe. The culture seems to represent an adaptation of TBK people⁶⁷ to the steppe way of life.

By about 3,300 BCE, even the giant Cucuteni-Tripolye towns are gone. The process that began back in the days of the steppe-man of the Varna necropolis was now complete.

3.4.2. Afanasievo

Around 3,500 BCE a culture named Afanasievo appears in the region of the Altai Mountains and Minusinsk⁶⁸ Basin. This was a steppe culture with clear origins in the Repin culture that was located at the eastern end of the Pontic-Caspian region. In a way, this is probably one of the least enigmatic ‘expansions’ of an Indo-European speaking people, for the Afanasievo is 1) clearly intrusive, 2) has a clear origin (or ‘source culture’) and 3) its origins lie in the very core of the Indo-European speech-area.

Now, when Aurel Stein was exploring the Tarim Basin in what is now Xinjiang, he found manuscripts that dated from about the 5th to 8th centuries CE written in a previously unattested Indo-European language promptly named Tocharian. In fact, there were two languages — different yet related — and a third variant has been inferred from place and personal names mentioned in other documents (so we have Tocharian A, B and C). This group of languages, to the surprise of many, turned out to be *centum*⁶⁹. The known steppe languages at this time

67 Who, it will be recalled, in turn represent the Mediterranean colonists from Old Europe.

68 Turkic *Min Usa* (‘thousand rivers’).

69 The great divide, or trivial distinction if you prefer, within the Indo-

were Iranian, a *satem* Indo-European language group. Tocharian was therefore an extreme outlier and it has long been a matter of controversy as to how a centum language came to be spoken in the Tarim area.

The most plausible explanation for this nowadays is simply that Tocharian is a descendant of the language spoken by the Afanasievo people. It is true that there is no agreed path in the world of things — no archaeological sequence — from Minusinsk to Tarim, but the regions are close enough to each other. For our purposes, this interpretation enables us to infer that Tocharian gives us a crude idea of the form of Indo-European around 3,500 BCE, at least in the Repin area.

3.4.3. Usatovo

Another important culture that was probably another early Indo-European region is the *Usatovo*, on the east coast of the Black Sea. This is dated from around 3,300 BCE. This culture features residual Old European characteristics, but the steppe element seems to predominate.

It is the Usatovo culture that was positioned face to face with the final days of the Cucuteni-Tripolye people, collected perhaps uncomfortably in their far and wide towns. It is a popular view that the people of the towns were in some way subject to the Usatovo people, perhaps in a similar manner to the way the Rus were later subject to the Tatar Horde.

To the south lay the *Ezero* culture, another Farmer-Herder hybrid that can also be linked to the Cernavoda

European languages — the *centum* vs the *satem* languages, named from the Latin and Sanskrit word for ‘hundred’. As can be guessed from the name, where the one group had a ‘c’, the other prefers an ‘s’.

culture we have met with earlier. If the Cernavoda people spoke a language related to Indo-Anatolian, therefore representing an earlier movement from the steppes in the Sredny Stog period, Usatovo is more likely to represent an early form of Indo-European itself.

An important part of Usatovo is trade, both with Anatolia and with the North Caucasus, where we find the very wealthy *Maikop* culture. This is significant because Maikop is linked to Mesopotamia, to the pre-literate *Uruk* culture. This is the world's first civilisation of cities and the antecedent of Sumer. Uruk begins around 3,700 BCE and was clearly in an active search for trading partners to feed its growing needs. Maikop seems to be one trading point. In eastern Anatolia we find another in the form of cities such as Arslantepe and Hacinebi, both fortified towns that traded in copper.

With its trading networks, Usatovo was clearly part of a much larger world and this was a world of metal as well as corn and wool.

3.4.4. Kemi Oba

Another possible expansion, possibly a very significant one, comes with the Kemi Oba culture of the Crimean Peninsula, which flourished from c. 3,200-c. 2,600 BCE. This culture is linked to the Mikhaylovka culture (c. 3,600-c. 3,000 BCE). These maritime cultures seem to have been seafaring, with connections to the Cyclades in the Aegean and to the earliest layers of Troy, c. 3,300 BCE.

Kemi Oba is notable for its grave stelae. Similar such stelae are to be found far away in the Rhône area and also northern Italy. The two sets of stelae clearly indicate a high level of contact along the Mediterranean coast. Perhaps, though this is of course less clear, there may

have been a movement of people.

3.4.5. Vučedol

Vučedol (c. 3,000- c. 2,200 BCE) is an intriguing and cosmopolitan culture situated over a large region inland along the eastern Adriatic coastline, up the Danube and beyond, even up to Bohemia. It overlies the earlier Baden culture that, as we have seen, appears to have been an Old European adaptation of steppe culture. Migrants from the steppe, however, probably dominated the Vučedol culture and an early Indo-European language may have been spoken there.

3.4.6. Carts

The Yamnaya culture dates from about 3,300 BCE and lasted until about 2,500 BCE. It dominated the Pontic-Caspian steppe within a common societal framework and is perhaps *the* Indo-European steppe culture. Indeed, the language of the Yamnaya people is very likely to have *been* Indo-European. This to say, the ur-language itself.

Yamnaya probably originated to the east, in the Caspian area where we find the Repin and Khvalynsk cultures. It seems to represent a major cultural innovation — the wagon. This useful contraption enabled the steppe people to survive away from a riverine habitus. A family could, as it were, live off its wagons and their flocks could follow them into the deep steppe. If we were able to go back in time and watch the Yamnaya herders, we would probably observe the following behaviours —

- The Yamnaya people, having a common culture, are likely to have had a common identity.
- This identity will have been enforced on the one hand by *personal bonds* and on the other by *ritual*.

- These personal bonds were reinforced by feasting and ‘friendship’. This latter was the society of the *arya*. The ‘friends’.
- Opposed to the friend was the enemy. Opposed to the guest was the stranger.
- The *arya* may have defined themselves at some level by ritual. The men of the carts performed ‘the rituals’. An *arya*, at the fundamental level, may have been a man who participated in the *arya* rituals. Therefore, a fundamentalist view of the ‘stranger’ may have been one who does *not* perform the rituals. An *unarya*.
- The rituals had to be performed by someone, and this someone was the priest. Whether or not there was a separate ‘caste’ of priests, the priest was important to the Yamnaya people. He made the rituals to run on time.
- The Yamnaya probably had Big Men, men richer and more influential than other men. Yamnaya culture was therefore probably dominated by the relationship between the Free Men and the Big Men and this society needed both to function.
- Yamnaya society was likely built around an uneasy balance between war and peace. There were always the forces of war — the makers of war — but also the makers of peace. The *arya* — the ‘friends’ — were often enemies, but equally often they really were friends.

Archaeology shows that there were large-scale movements of Yamnaya people into south-eastern Europe, the core area of Old Europe. The main target regions were the Balkans, the Danube Valley and the Carpathian Basin. It is likely, given the large scale of

settlement here, that henceforth this was a predominantly Indo-European speaking area.

3.4.7. Cords

To the north of the Yamnaya region, we find the enigmatic Corded Ware complex, beginning around 3,000 BCE. According to the haplologists, it would seem that the people associated with this ware were related to the Yamnaya people, but not descended from them. In terms of DNA at least, they are a *parallel* people.

Corded decoration of pots is observable in the later Sredny Stog period. It is of steppe origin. The earliest stage of Corded Ware itself is possibly located in the complicated ethnic web woven around the Lvov region. Here we find 1) the last redoubts of the Cucuteni-Tripolye people, in their doomed defended towns, 2) the expansive Globular Amphora people reaching the region from further west in Europe, and 3) Yamnaya, of course.

Between c. 2,900 and c. 2,700 BCE, we find Corded Ware in an ever-larger and speedily expanding area west from Lvov, all the way in fact up to Belgium. The expansion covers a similar area to that of the TBK culture and the succeeding Globular Amphora culture. This was a movement of people, not just pots, haplologists have confirmed. The Corded Ware people were not descended from the Old European farmers. It is likely, then, that by the early third millennium northern Europe was inhabited by people who spoke Indo-European languages.

The Lvov region, however, seems to be still more significant in terms of Indo-European expansion, for in around this area, around 2,800 BCE, we encounter the Middle Dnieper culture. This was influenced by three cultures — Corded Ware, Globular Amphora and Yamnaya. With the Middle Dnieper, the steppe people

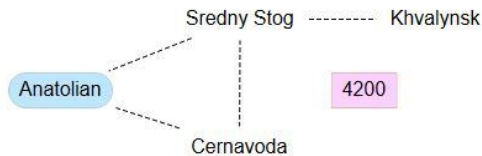
entered the forests to the north of their steppe-land.

Middle Dnieper is important because it was the first stage of a vast migration to the east. The next stage was the Fatyanovo culture. From this culture, yet further east, we find the Abashevo culture. Migrants proceeded again eastward where the Sintashta culture is followed by the great Andronovo complex that now roved all the way up to the Altai mountains

3.4.8. Languages

Corded Ware took Indo-European speakers into Belgium, and Andronovo to the Yenisei River. The language of the Herders might now be encountered over a truly vast span of territory. But what *were* these ‘Indo-Europeans’? Each expansion, clearly, had its own story and its own unique features. If we consider where each expansion ‘landed’ and also how known Indo-European languages are inter-related and how they can be grouped (often a controversial topic, it must be said) we can suggest which language groups ended up where and when. With some reasonable confidence, these early expansions explain surprisingly well and comprehensively the ‘layout’ of *most* of the later-attested languages in the family. So, if we divide this ‘expansive’ period into just three stages, what do we find?

Stage I. Sredny Stog.



In this first stage, roughly dateable to c. 4,200 BCE, we find the Sredny Stog and Cernavoda cultures near the ‘homeland’ above and to the left of the Black Sea. The peoples of this first expansion

period may have spoken *Anatolian.

Stage 2. Afanasievo.

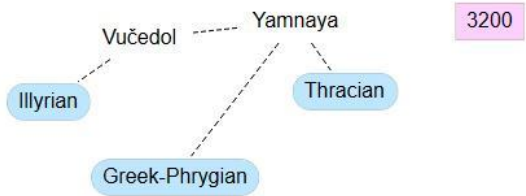


This second stage, dateable to around 3,500 BCE, is the first expansion east, to the Afanasievo region. This is probably the least enigmatic of the expansions. The language of the Afanasievo culture must have been a very early form of Indo-European that developed into Tocharian.

Stage 3. ‘Yamnaya’.

This can be divided into three sub-stages that ultimately may be thought of as part of a single ‘Yamnaya’ expansion.

3-A. Old Europe.



The first of these expansions is effectively a successor to our *Stage 1*. Although the internal groupings of attested languages are eternally controversial, particularly for barely-attested languages such as ‘Illyrian’ and ‘Thracian’, recent work on groupings allows us to achieve a consistent set of connections that plays well with both archaeology *and* geography.

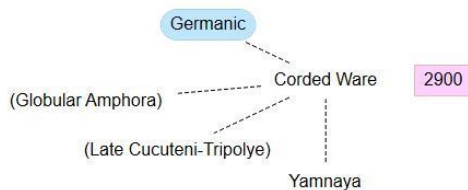
First, we can argue that *Phrygian* is closely related to *Greek* and in turn to the inferred languages *Paeonian* and *Macedonian*. This would indicate a *centum* Sprachbund incorporating Greece and the area to its north. In the more northerly parts, this underlies what in early historical times was a Thracian-speaking *satem* region. We can also point to a relatively close relationship between Greek and Tocharian. For example, they share certain words for ‘leader’ (*tagos* and *wanax* in Greek <> *tassi* and *nātäkin* in Tocharian).

Because the ‘Tocharian’ expansion can be dated to around 3,500 BCE and is therefore descended from one of the Yamnaya languages *at that time*, that would explain the both close link between Greek and Tocharian and the shared vocabulary.

Second, *Thracian* can be grouped with *Armenian* and perhaps *Albanian*. Greek and Armenian have often been grouped close-together, but such a close relationship has never been proved. Likewise, Thracian and Phrygian have often been taken to be almost dialects of each other, but this assumption again has always led to a dead-end. Assigning { Greek | Phrygian } to one group and { Thracian | Armenian | Albanian } to another resolves a lot of former problems. Greek and Phrygian can thus indeed be linked to Thracian and Armenian, but more distantly.

Third, *Illyrian* — the shadowy ‘language’ spoken over a wide area covering modern Albania and most of the former Yugoslavia. Illyrian is often linked to the Italic languages across the Adriatic⁷⁰. However, it makes more sense to link it to the Greek and Thracian groups. The *Vučedol* culture (dating from around 3,000 BCE) covers a similar area to that of the later Illyrian tribes.

3-B. Corded Ware.

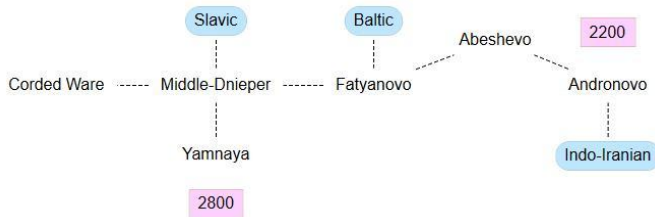


The Corded Ware may have its origins in the complex web of peoples settled (or unsettled, at that period in time) around the Lvov region, from which it rapidly expanded west as far as Belgium. Part of this westward expansion includes both the Single Grave culture, in and around Denmark, and the more northerly Battle Axe culture. These cultures are probably the context in which the

⁷⁰ In fact, there were probable Illyrian languages spoken along the south-east coast of Italy.

*Germanic languages developed. We can make a parallel between 1) Afanasievo > *Tocharian and 2) Corded Ware > *Germanic. I believe the more general Corded Ware language can be called *Central-Indo-European* (CIE) of which *Germanic is the one surviving example.

3-C. Middle-Dnieper.



The Middle-Dnieper expansion is both more involved and more straightforward than the other Yamnaya expansions, involving a sequence of movements — Slavic (Middle-Dnieper itself) > Baltic (Fatyanovo) > Indo-Iranian (Abeshevo > Andronovo). This is a convincing sequence in which everything fits. There is a linguistic fit, a geographical⁷¹ fit and a cultural fit.

This Yamnaya stage also jigsaws very neatly with *Stage 3-B*. Slavic and Baltic and Indo-Iranian are the *satem* Indo-European languages *par excellence*. Can it be a coincidence these languages follow such a sequence in the archaeological record? The principle of Occam's Razor suggests that *ur-satem* languages were spoken by Middle Dnieper people. The peoples who 'expanded' from this area by definition also spoke *satem* dialects.

Because *Stage 3-B* also suggests the Yamnaya language itself was a *centum* dialect at this time, as witnessed by the Greek group, we can infer that, after the 'expansion' of that group, a dialect that would develop into Thracian (and Armenian and Albanian)

⁷¹ For example, **1)** old Baltic river names are found all over the Fatyanovo area, **2)** the intermediate Abashevo area shows strong contacts with Uralic-speaking groups that matches linguistic evidence of contact with early Indo-Iranian speaking people, and **3)** the Sintashta and Andronovo horizon is universally believed to involve Indo-Iranian groups.

evolved. Influenced by the Middle Dnieper language, the Yamnaya or post-Yamnaya dialect was satemised. If the Vučedol culture represents the intrusion to the Adriatic and Danube of peoples speaking a dialect that would become Illyrian and if that language is a *satem* one, this would suggest the western steppe people's dialect had been 'satemised' by about 3,000 BCE, when Vučedol appears.

However, one issue emerges from this model of the Yamnaya expansions. The Middle Dnieper is part of the Corded Ware complex, but if this region spoke a *satem* dialect, Germanic ought to be a *satem* language and it isn't. We conclude then that the colonists who expanded across Central Europe were a different people, speaking a different dialect of Indo-European to those of the Middle Dnieper. This interpretation might explain the curious character of *Germanic. Long ago Antoine Meillet, in his classic study of the Germanic languages, called it a 'cut down' version of Indo-European. *Germanic languages have fewer case endings than Indo-European, but did it *lose* these endings or were they never there? We have seen that the relationship between Corded Ware and Yamnaya was complex, so in the model I follow here, *Germanic may be an outlier language to Indo-European — that is to say, the language of early Yamnaya. *Germanic, then, is perhaps best explained as a 'regional' dialect of Indo-European.

3.5. Metal

3.5.1. A Simple Model?

Recent genetic studies have confirmed beyond doubt an old on-off theory that in some sense the Beaker complex marks the period when Indo-European speakers first entered Western Europe, and in very great numbers. That is, archaeology defines one single culture and haplology one single period. As we have seen, however, the simple model of farmer colonists vanishes upon detailed examination and so too does a simple Beaker model of Indo-European expansion.

By the end of the Corded Ware/Yamnaya period, Indo-European languages had spread over a vast area. What is more, we can with some degree of confidence map these pioneering groups to early historical peoples such as the speakers of Greek and Germanic and Indic and Iranian languages. What is glaringly missing from this model is most of the European languages (Germanic aside). What were these languages, and how to they relate — do they relate at all? — to the steppe expansions?

The remaining Indo-European languages of Europe probably form a broad group. Illyrian may belong in this group, though I have connected it with the languages of the early expansion into Old Europe. The two major and best-attested families are Italic and Celtic (very often grouped as *Italo-Celtic*). However, obscurer ‘languages’ such as Ligurian and Lusitanian can be plausibly added to the group. It should be noted that *Italo-Celtic* is a little controversial. Some believe Italic and Celtic are not descended from a common language. For that matter, this is even true of Italic. The main branches of this family are Latin and Osco-Umbrian (or Sabellic). Do these groups really descend from a common ‘Italic’ language? If we add the obscure Venetic to the equation, things get still more confused. In this book I follow the view that Venetic belongs to the Italic family, though it has also been classified as an independent or an Illyrian language.

This distribution of languages leaves things open to doubt that we even see an ‘Indo-European’ expansion, but rather movements of individual peoples speaking languages *descended from* the ur-language. For example, was Italy ever settled by a people speaking ‘Indo-European’ whose languages developed into Venetic, Osco-Umbrian and Latin? Or even a people speaking *Italic (if such a language ever existed)? Or is it more likely there were three ‘expansions’ from a core ‘Italic’ area located

outside of Italy?

If we consider issues such as these, a simple Beaker model starts to seem *too* simple, too monolithic. However, the idea of a single group of languages — let us call it ‘Western’ (and consisting of Italic, Celtic, Lusitanian and Ligurian) — still seems to me to work well. The question then is whether this simple abstraction itself works with the simple Beaker model.

If we now consider the Celtic languages, together with Lusitanian, we do notice a striking thing — they are mostly clustered in the west, precisely in the core Beaker region. The culture seems to be the perfect vehicle to explain Celtic languages in Spain, France and the Two Isles. In addition, as the Tagus estuary may be the earliest Beaker region, which is where Lusitanian speaking tribes were later located, so much the better.

3.5.2. A Complex Model

Alas, a simple model is tempting but here it will not work.

Radiocarbon dating has established ever more conclusively that Beaker pottery is native to the Iberian Peninsula and developed in the Extramadura region of Portugal, especially in the Tagus region. This was a copper-using area that acquired both wealth and a wealthy elite. This region developed fortified habitations (‘castros’), though whether the aggression indicated by this phenomenon came from the inhabitants or outside groups intent of grabbing their wealth is unclear. At any rate, the elite assigned to itself elite trappings and was buried with elite (relative) pomp. At some point around 2,900 BCE these trappings began to include Beakers — in the archaeologist’s jargon, these were *Maritime* Beakers. At least as far as I interpret the evidence, I believe it is significant that it seems at this point far more

realistic to speak of *Beakers* rather than a *culture* or a *folk*.

Another copper-based culture in south-east Spain, and seemingly a different variant of the same broad cultural development, was *Los Millares*. Again, this is clearly a local development. Unlike the Tagus groups, the Los Millareans developed a superb art style, based on their Owl Goddess. They seem therefore to have been an Old European people. Nevertheless, Los Millares was also fortified. Again, whether this illustrates aggression or defensiveness is unclear but whichever, this was a society that knew conflict.

In the Iberian Peninsula then, we find the first — Maritime — Beakers and in what is clearly an indigenous context. It is from Iberia that the Beaker spread — which is to say *the Beaker idea*, that so-important aspect of the Beakers so hard to define. In simple terms, it spread to the mouth of the Rhône and to Brittany. From Brittany we can trace the expansion of the culture along the English Channel coast of France to the Seine and Rhine regions. This latter region was occupied by Corded Ware people and from that area there was a significant Beaker expansion east, into Central Europe. This led to a new Beaker style represented by the AOC and AOO types (that is, All-Over-Corded and All-Over-Ornamented). Here we also begin to find a ‘Beaker assemblage’ — copper knives, arrowheads etc.

It should be obvious from this brief overview that the expansion of Beaker influence is a poor fit for an explanation (at least a simple explanation) of how Western Indo-European — let alone Celtic — came to be spoken in Western Europe. The cultures in which the Beakers developed are unlikely to have spoken an Indo-European language at all. Yet the genetic evidence

cannot be denied and it suggests that people with steppe-ancestry *did* come to dominate this area during the Beaker period or shortly thereafter.

3.5.3. Who Were The Beakers?

Early interpretations of the Beakers emphasised not the pots but the supposed ‘folk’. As this said folk was assumed to be Aryan and it as appeared to exemplify the narrative of manly warriors performing heroical sweepings-into, there grew up a sort of *modern* Cult around these supposed Aryan ancestors. One great advance in understanding of the Beakers that went beyond the Cult was *classification* — the 1970 work of Lanting and van der Waals (the ‘Dutch Model’) provided a good basis with which to classify the Beaker types both in time and by location. Further progress was made by attempts to *interpret* the Beakers — to see them not as just pots but in terms of their *function*. The Beakers, it was now emphasised, had a cultural significance to their makers. The most recent great leap forward comes from the latest techniques in genetics. These have confirmed the Beaker complex *is* to be related to people with steppe-ancestry.

Yet it may still be asked — but who were these Beakers?

This is not an easier question to answer now than then, despite the considerable progress in understanding them since the ‘sweeping-into’ days. There seems to be the basic paradox that the Beaker ‘folk’ were Herders not Farmers, while archaeology indicates that the Iberian Beaker folk — *the* original ‘Beaker folk’ — were Farmers not Herders. The way to resolve the paradox of these Farmers who were Herders is to argue it is not a paradox at all.

If we re-regard the basic history of the Beakers, we see them ‘expand’ out of Iberia and into Brittany and the

Rhône ‘bouche’ region. From Brittany they reach the Seine and Rhine areas. From there they ‘expand’ into both Britain and Central Europe. The area stretching from the Rhine inland to Europe was a Corded Ware region, and here we find not only a new cord-decorated Beaker type, but a Beaker ‘kit’, a stereotyped collection of items associated with Beakers.

A key to understanding this moment is to emphasise an underlying pattern with the Beakers — that everywhere in the expansion they appear to overlie the ‘host’ culture. The Beaker seems to have had a specific significance that, so to say, *hovers over* each local culture. The Beaker phenomenon in the former Corded Ware regions is therefore not aberrant — the people here adapted and added to what they saw as significant in the cult(ure). This is the great generalisation that makes it possible to simplify our Beakers — the Beaker in-itself had a great significance to the people who made them. Perhaps it can be compared to a Christian *icon*. Icons can be manufactured by people whose religious beliefs are shallow or even non-existent, but even if this is so, *the icon itself retains its significance* at some level.

There have been various attempts at explaining the significance of the Beakers.

First, the Beaker itself is a *receptacle*. For what? Milk? Alcohol? Both these suggestions are extremely helpful, but they cannot explain the Beakers. The first implies that the Beakers are essentially *functional*. Their function is to hold milk. But the Beakers are clearly *not* essentially functional. The second implies that they are ritual vessels, for intoxicating ceremonies. But this does not explain the Beakers either, as many Beakers did not contain alcohol. Many a Beaker, in fact, was empty at the time it was deposited.

Second, and much more useful, is the suggestion that the Beaker was a status symbol. The people of the Extramadura, where very early Beakers are found, certainly had elites and Beakers seem to be associated with these elites. In fact, this interpretation is close to a general truth, for in all regions Beakers and status can be linked. However, the contexts in which Beakers are found vary so widely that it is less and less plausible that *every* Beaker represented the high status of its owner. There are, I believe, enough exceptions to disprove the idea that a Beaker *was and was only* a status symbol.

The way forward is to view the Beakers along *with* their owners. That is to say, the Beakers are associated with what must have seemed a prestigious *belief system* which was by the natural order of things followed by the owner and not the pot. We can infer therefore the following chain of actors within the Beaker culture complex — 1) the belief, 2) the believer, 3) the symbol. It is these three things in combination that drove the complex.

A remarkable thing about the Beaker is its standardisation. As there are different types of Beaker, that may seem off the mark. However, the material is somewhat standardised (so Beakers are of a similar colour, as they are made out of similar (oxidised) clays). The detail of the decoration differs at the micro level, but in general Beakers are decorated with finger, bone, comb or cord and the result is always *Beaker-like*. The intention always seems to be to *make a Beaker*, in the same sense that you might intend to make an icon of the cross. Each Beaker, it seems, was made for a similar purpose because each was *part of the same belief*.

The story of the Beakers begins in a copper-producing culture that lived in fortified ‘towns’ and had an elite. In this culture, the Beaker was probably a symbol of this

elite, perhaps its chief symbol. But the wealth of this elite lay in copper. It is likely that the Beaker, if it symbolised this wealth and this elite, also symbolised copper — that is *metal* and metal-mining and metal-forging and metal-making, all of which can be summed up in the figure of the *smith*. We perhaps can see here a powerful combination of *wealth* and *magic* and *role*. The smith with his mysterious, alchemical powers transformed rock into wealth. Magical power into political power.

Now, this is a model of power that is eminently transferable. If we take Brittany, for example — metalliferous Brittany — if ambitious Tagus entrepreneurs went prospecting in that region, they might quickly be received in awe there, for the process of alchemising rock into wealth and power by the magic of the smith can be performed as well there as in and around the Tagus. What goes for Brittany goes, of course, for other Beaker places. We can add further that, for Brittany, the people who lived there were probably Mediterranean farmers, just like people in the Tagus region. In this area, any newly-arrived ‘Beaker’ prospectors may not even have been viewed as ‘foreigners’. It is not hard to imagine how the combination of the belief and the believer and the symbol would have possessed a good deal of social power at this time and place.

This goes too, of course, for the Seine and Rhine regions, but with a difference. The peoples here likely spoke Indo-European languages and were therefore clearly ‘foreign’ to the Iberian originators of the ‘cult’. I suggest, then, that these Indo-European-speaking peoples retained the core of the cult but also transformed it. This would explain why in this region a ‘Beaker kit’ evolved. In this region, the symbol was the kit, not just the Beaker. Archaeology tells us that the kit was in no way driven by any sort of

orthodoxy, for it is rare that the entire bundle of ingredients is found. But there was a kit — the archer's wristband, the copper dagger, etc. In my view, the model of the belief, believer and symbol, and the ability of this for the smith to create wealth and power out of mere rock — all this adds up to a simplification that can explain the Beaker cult in general.

There is, however, one final component. It is important here to note the significance of the cult being adopted from the Iberian 'farmer' people by the Corded Ware steppe people. Here we might see the belief move from the farmer's communitarian belief system to the herder's individualistic one. Of course, it is possible to doubt how communitarian the elitist Extramaduran fortified cities were, but I believe the underlying basis of society will have conformed to this belief. A comparison here can be made to Sumer in its earliest appearance in the world of words. Sumer was cities. A city was ruled by a Big Man (*lugal* — that is *lu* + *gal*, or 'man-big') who lived in a Palace (*egal* — that is *e* + *gal*, or 'house-big'). But the Lugal in his Egal was part of the community — in a sense *was* the community, *was* the city. Above the Lugal towered the God of the city. The basis of Sumer, then, was the city and the king and the god, and the city was the king and its people (often thought of as the shepherd and his sheep). This is a profoundly different belief to that of Louis XIV when he declared that he *was* the state. The King, in this view, was one thing, the people he ruled over quite another.

I suggest, then, that a cult with magical properties allied to the pragmatics of wealth and power was adopted by the Corded Ware people to create a belief yet more potent — of wealth and power detached from the community, a *personal* wealth tied to a *personal* power. It is in this that the power of the Beaker cult may have lain, for such a

belief would cut into the communitarian beliefs of the Farmers — for example the Farmers of Britain and Ireland. For them, it was a simple case of adapt or die. What is more, the Beaker cult represents the early stage of metallurgy. Quick on the heels of copper came gold and tin — and bronze. At some point the magic sheen of metal dispersed and fell away, but the hard core of wealth and power remained. Metalworking was now a *technology*. It no longer alchemied. It *crafted*. It is within this process that the widespread adoption (or enforcement) of Western Indo-European languages spread.

But how?

3.5.4. Western Indo-European (WIE)

The basic indicator as to who the Corded Ware people were is surely the Germanic languages. The simplest way of explaining the origin of the Germanic-speaking peoples is to start with the *Single Grave* culture (c. 2,800-c. 2,200 BCE) of Denmark and the *Battle Axe* culture (c. 2,800-c. 2,300 BCE) of southern Scandinavia. Both these cultures have Corded Ware origins and both overlie the TBK culture. The Battle Axe peoples lived side by side with peoples of the Pitted Ware culture (c. 3,500-c. 2,300 BCE), just as earlier TBK peoples had. The Pitted Ware peoples were hunter-gatherers to whom violence was all-too familiar and both TBK and Battle Axe settlements were often fortified.

Around 2,300 BCE a new composite culture emerges based on a fusion of the Pitted Ware and Battle Axe peoples. It is out of this ‘fused’ culture the almost-certainly Germanic Northern Bronze Age appears. When did *Germanic develop, though? Did the European Corded Ware people speak a language that could be called *Germanic? Did the Single Grave people? The Battle Axe people? Or did *Germanic only develop after c. 2,300?

What we can say for certain is that the first Corded Ware people must have spoken a single language that can be called Central-Indo-European (CIE). The complex originates from a single point and expands rapidly and must have spoken a common language, the language of the earliest Single Grave and Battle Axe peoples. But if we now consider Western Indo-European, can this too be derived from the ur-Corded Ware language too? Are *Celtic and *Germanic both Corded Ware languages?

In my view there are two approaches to the problems of Western Indo-European (WIE) — via the Kemi Oba (WIE?) or Únětice (CIE?) cultures. The latter overlies both Corded Ware and Beaker regions and is itself one of the key archaeological cultures of Central Europe. It is perhaps the first culture in which genuine chieftainships manifest themselves in the material record. There are two important issues with Corded Ware — 1) that its close link to *Germanic moves us away from *WIE, and 2) its location in Central Europe that moves us away from where WIE languages predominate. Kemi Oba, on the other hand, is an outlier solution towards an explanation to the situation of WIE.

A. The Kemi Oba Approach (WIE)

It is with Kemi Oba (c. 3,700-c2,000 BCE) and Mikhaylovka (c. 3,600-c3,000 BCE), both located in maritime regions around the Black Sea, that sea-going ‘expansions’ are evidenced. The Cyclades and Troy are in the vicinity, but the mouth of the Rhône and the Po Valley have clear connections with the Pontic culture — more or less identical figurines are found in both areas. It is worth considering Kemi Oba as a plausible ‘source culture’ for WIE. The idea is attractive mainly because it places a plausible WIE ancestor-people in the right place certainly, but also at roughly the right time.

One of the interesting problems of Indo-European studies is the

relationship between Italo-Celtic⁷² and Indo-Iranian⁷³. There are striking similarities within these groups, two of which are especially significant.

The establishment of a dual 'king'-'priest' system, one of the cornerstones of the dumézilians — *raja/brahman* (Vedic), *rex/flamen* (Latin) and *rix/druid* (Gaulish). The titles for 'king' moreover are the same. Although it is nowadays thought unlikely, 'brahman' and 'flamen' may be the same term. But the existence of a priest is the important thing.

The 'colour' system (*varna* in Sanskrit) is significant too. The early vedas specify a class system with three or four categories⁷⁴ (king, priest and warrior at the core, and farmer perhaps also but perhaps an outlier). This is another dumézilian cornerstone. What is significant here is that the term *varna* ('colour') very likely means what it says. In the Irish sagas, *red* and *white* appear to be associated with the *ri* and *druí* (the Gaelic equivalents of *rix* and *druid*) very closely. In the Mahabharata we are told the *brahmin* colour was white and that of the *kshatriya* red. An exact match.

There is little trace of such a system in the Germanic or Greek speaking areas. Although a formal kingship seems to have evolved from the period of the early Roman empire, when Germanic tribes lined themselves up along its borders, it does not seem that the Germanic peoples had formal 'kings' at least immediately prior to this. Rather, there were *ad hoc* leaders as circumstances required. So, the leader of the *folc* (men gathered as a fighting group) was a *folcing*, the leader of the *theod* (people-in-general) a *theoden*⁷⁵ and very probably the leader of the *cyn* (extended family group) a *cyning* (from which the modern English *king* derives). The *rex* and the *ri(x)* seem to be both formally appointed leaders.

We have seen that the common Greek and Tocharian word for

72 Mainly via Latin and Gaelic Irish.

73 Mainly via Avestan and Vedic.

74 Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra.

75 The (in)famous *Teutones* tribe are 'the people of the Theoden'.

'lord' (*wanax/natak*) is enough to see a connection with the Repin archaeological culture, for this seems to be the 'source culture' for both Afanasievo (Tocharian) and Yamnaya (connected to Greek via 'expansions' into Old Europe). Perhaps it is at this date the dual king/priest roles were established and within the Yamnaya complex the title **h₃r^éǵs* was devised. That is to say, the notion of a formal chief evolved *after* the **Greek* migration into Old Europe. But this is hard to reconcile with the Corded Ware people of Europe. Although Germanic has a concept of *Recht* ('law') and *Reich* ('kingdom'), there was no *rex* or *rix* or *raja*. Neither was there, at least in the historical era, a formal priest.

The Kemi Oba, then, with its figurines indicating a hierarchical society and on the fringes of both Yamnaya *and* pre-Yamnaya, is on these grounds at least a good candidate to be the 'source culture' of WIE.

Is it however too remote? Perhaps. But the Rhône region is one of the earliest adopters of the Beaker cult. In the Kemi Oba model, the Beakers in this area would represent an Indo-European people who, just like the Corded Ware groups to the north, succumbed to the allure of the cult. Which is to say, to the allure of wealth and metal. Moreover, in the post-Beaker period, we encounter the Rhône culture (c2,200-c1,500 BCE), centred around eastern France and extending into Switzerland. This culture is related to the Únětice culture and more so to the Straubing culture of Bavaria.

The case for Kemi Oba, at least as I have outlined it, is hardly watertight and far from conclusive. But it is not a hopeless one. For a start, it does place a WIE group in what was to become part of the Celtic-speaking core area.

B. The Únětice Approach (CIE)

The Únětice approach is far 'safer' than that of the Kemi Oba. It should be noted from the first that Únětice is a Bronze Age culture (c. 2,300-c. 1,600 BCE) overlying earlier Corded Ware and Beaker periods. It is therefore very much a post-Indo-European culture.

Probably the best way Únětice can explain WIE is with its wide range of contacts. Situated near the centre of Europe, around Bohemia, it is linked (directly or indirectly) to a vast area of wealthy metal-using chieftain-ly cultures. To the east, for example, there are the wealthy Otomani and Wietenberg cultures, each with links to pre-Mycenean Greece, and to the west the Wessex and Rhône cultures. There also links to Brittany, Cornwall (e.g. the Rillaton Cup with its Mycenean connections) and Ireland (e.g. an Ireland-connected lunula⁷⁶ has been found in an Únětican context).

The Únětice, at least in some areas and at some times, was clearly ruled by chieftains who would certainly — no doubt especially in their own opinion — be worthy of the title ‘rex’. We would not be surprised to find chiefs of the rituals here too. If that is the case, a *varna*-type system would fit such a culture.

The issue here is the post-Indo-European nature of Únětice. If the king-priest and colour system date from the Indo-European period itself, and the evidence is very strong that it did, then whether the culture had kings and priests and colours is quite irrelevant. These did not develop within the culture itself. They were inherited from, presumably, the ancestor Yamnaya complex.

The case for Únětice is, then, that is a sort of hub for a large network of trading chiefs stretching from Ireland into Greece. This is clearly, at a superficial glance, something big enough to explain the expansion of WIE. However, the very nature of the archaeological evidence suggests Únětice grew wealthy via trade. It was in a good location. The last thing the evidence suggests, then, is Únětice chiefs doing the sweeping-into thing and demanding all and sundry to speak WIE.

Únětice represents something very significant, but that thing is an undoubted and widespread trading network the foundations of which were laid before, presumably in the Beaker period. The

76 A crescent-shaped necklace made of gold (and therefore better named a ‘sunular’ in my opinion!).

people participating in the network had migrated prior to Únětice, very likely in a complex web of migrations from various regions.

So, if we place these two approaches side by side — Kemi Oba and Únětice — while at first we see one of the most important Bronze Age cultures on the one hand and on the other a small group of figurines comparable to others in the Crimea region, I wonder if the comparison in the end follows the path of the tortoise and the hare and it is the unlikely path turns out to be the correct one.

4. Smiths

After the Beakers comes the world of bronze and iron. It is in Central Europe that we find a great sequence of archaeological cultures — the *Únětice* (c. 2,300-c. 1,600 BCE) > the *Tumulus* (c. 1,600-c. 1,300 BCE) > the *Urnfield* (c. 1,300-c. 750 BCE) > *Hallstatt* C-D (c. 800-c. 450 BCE) > *La Tène* (starts c. 450 BCE). By the end of this sequence, the world of things has entered into the world of words.

These great cultures have generally been seen as consisting of *the* Indo-European sequence in Europe and many sweepings-into have been imagined to occur emanating from it. It has also long been assumed by many to have been ‘Celtic’ and in fact the location of the ‘Celtic homeland’. This is an assumption that was and is perfectly plausible and it has ensured that the ‘Únětice approach’ has been the most popular, if not default, one over the years. To take *Celtic itself, this could be a Beaker, an Úněticean, a Tumulus, an Urnfield, a Hallstatt or most popularly a La Tène language.

If we take a step back, however, we might wonder if this idea is really so convincing. Where are the WIE languages — Venetic / Latin / Osco-Umbrian; Irish / Gallo-Brittonic / Lepontic / Hispanoceltic; Lusitanian; Ligurian — where do we find these spoken? The quick answer is — not in Central Europe. The geographical discrepancy is striking. How can the Tumulus culture explain this spread of languages? Or the Urnfield culture? As for the La Tène, it seems clear to me that here verifiable invasions have led to the historical *Galatae* being absurdly confused with the ur-Celts. It was once popular to see the ‘arrival’ of ‘the Celts’ being explained via this culture.

However, it is important to define what exactly the problem is we are trying to resolve. I would define this as — *the problem of the expansion of 1) WIE and 2) the language groups and languages that descended from it.* We can immediately see that the various Celtic and Italic languages indicate the unlikelihood of a simple equation such as **WIE > Latin*, or **WIE > Irish*. Because **Celtic* and **Italic* represent different languages, the equations are likely to be **WIE > *Celtic* and **WIE > *Italic*.

If we ask what **Celtic* represents, the answer is that it is both an ur-language (or group of dialects) and its descendants. Languages within the group differ not only over place but over time. For example, if we take **Irish* and **Brittonic*, we can imagine studying them at various stages of their development — say, 1,500 BCE, 1,000 BCE and 500 BCE. Here, we would have not two languages — Irish and Brittonic — but up to six. The total might be less than six because at some point back in time, **Irish* and **Brittonic* were perhaps mere Q-Celtic dialects of each other, or even the same language. If we trace the language back to ur-Celtic itself, that must certainly be the case. The same principle goes, of course, for **Italic*. In a sense, therefore, every language is a dialect of its historical self.

If we were to simplify the WIE languages when we first meet them in the world of words, we can attempt to localise a core region for each group — **Lusitanian* in Iberia, **Celtic* in north-west Europe (extending at some point into the Two Isles), **Ligurian* in the Rhône region and **Italic* in Italy. WIE itself can be localised either with the Corded Ware complex of Central Europe, or with Kemi Oba immigrants in the Rhône valley, each of which would indicate a date of a century or so after 3,000 BCE.

In other words, although the great archaeological

sequence of Beaker > La Tène is of great significance in itself, it is peripheral to the fundamental ‘shape’ of the WIE group of languages.

4.1. WIE In Europe

We have seen that the Beaker complex superficially provides the perfect explanation for the expansion of WIE, but with a closer analysis of the evidence this explanation evaporates, not least because Beakers first appear in areas that probably did not speak Indo-European languages. In my view, however, it is in the late- and post- Beaker period that *WIE did indeed expand into Western Europe. The importance of the Beakers, I believe, is that 1) they joined up the cultures of the area and 2) introduced into Indo-European-speaking areas a new and powerful ideology of the Big Man and his personal wealth within the new world of metalworking.

This process is best seen *after it had happened* rather than the far more elusive period when it was *happening*. As we have seen, it is in the Early Bronze Age (EBA) we see a widespread network of metalliferous chiefs — *Ireland, Wessex, Armorica, Rhône, Hilversum, Northern Bronze Age, Únětice, Otomani, Wietenberg*, where we stop at *Greece*. Especially relevant at this point for the Two Isles is the clear contact between Ireland, Armorica, Wessex and Central Europe.

Within this trading network, we can envisage the first spread of *WIE in the following way —

- ***Ligurian.** The Rhône bouche evolved an EBA culture with close links to Straubing and Únětice, and this culture overlay not only an earlier Beaker region but it was here Kemi Oba immigrants seem to have settled. This was the original *Ligurian-

speaking region.

- ***Lusitanian.** Peoples with steppe-ancestry arrived in numbers during the EBA. For example, the copper-working Los Millares culture is gone and a new El Argar culture appears, peopled by many with said steppe-ancestry. These were the original *Lusitanian-speaking regions.
- ***Italic.** 1) The probably Beaker-related *Polada* culture of the Po Valley, extending into the area around Venice, is a suitable candidate for the earliest *Venetic-speaking region. 2) There is a clear cultural continuity in Latium back to the *Latial* culture and the preceding *Apennine* culture. This indicates strongly that *Latin was spoken in Latium at least since c. 1,600 BCE. 3) The *proto-Villanovan* culture seems to be related to the Central European *Urnfield* culture. I suggest a significant intrusion of people from the north resulted in the development of the *Oско-Umbrian* dialects and these developed not because the intruders spoke these languages, but because their language remodulated the local Italic languages. As the development of ‘p-Italic’ and p-Celtic may be interrelated, that process may perhaps also be related to this period. All this would indicate that *Italic was long-established in Italy.
- ***Celtic.** It is when considering the localisation of ur-Celtic that the advantages of trying to *envisage* its location relative to the other WIE groups becomes clear. The only sensible location for the ur-language is to the north of the other three groups. Therefore, we can immediately note the Armorica-Wessex-Ireland region of our grand EBA sphere of trading chiefs. This is very likely to be *Celtic, but

it may be that the ur-Celtic region went wider — perhaps extending along the Danube and taking in Straubing and Únětice regions?

We can now approach the question again — Únětice or Kemi Oba?

With the Únětice approach, we are saying something like the following. First, the Corded Ware brought Indo-European speakers as far as Belgium in double-quick time and this was an early form of Indo-European close to the parent itself. Second, an Iberian copper-producing Beaker cult spread to the westernmost Corded Ware groups, and these adopted the cult. Beakers (and people?) now spread back east along the Danube. Third, in the late eneolithic and EBA Indo-European languages expanded west — into the Two Isles, France and into Spain (and Italy too?). This language group was what I have called WIE.

With the Kemi Oba approach, the emphasis is different. 1) We begin with a core Rhône Valley area. 2) This adopts the Beaker cult from people in Iberia. 3) The expansion here is into Armorica, Wessex and Ireland. 4) There is another expansion into the Po Valley (Polada). 5) A third expansion leads from France into Iberia. 5) The Corded Ware and Danube regions are peripheral and speak a different form of Indo-European of which the surviving dialect is *Germanic.

The former approach is rightly more mainstream and fits better with conventional interpretations of archaeology. Does archaeology for example indicate any such movement of people from the Rhône region to either the Po Valley or Armorica? However, the Kemi Oba approach I believe is *conceptually* preferable.

There is the problem of important shared cultural ideas within Italo-Celtic and Indo-Iranian but not it seems

Germanic.

Can WIE and *Germanic be derived from the language of a single culture? If that language was Indo-European itself, or a very early form of it, of course ‘yes’. But was the Central European CW complex host to such a language?

The Rhône region perhaps explains the spread of the WIE language groups better than the Corded Ware complex.

If the Corded Ware complex spoke WIE, it is curious that the languages spoken there in earliest historical times are not WIE but Germanic. It is not even clear what language(s) were spoken in Alps in the late Hallstatt C and D periods — 1) groups of Galatae were clearly dominant in the west when the Greco-Roman evidence begins (*Helvetii*, *Vindelici* and the kingdom of *Noricum*), but 2) the enigmatic Raeti in the east wrote inscriptions in a form of Etruscan (*not* a WIE language) and tribal names are generally Indo-European but of what type is unclear.

A non-WIE but still Indo-European language dating from the Corded Ware period would explain the inferred existence of ‘Alteuropäische’, an idea that becomes ludicrous if pushed too far (see for example the once-popular ‘Illyrian’ craze⁷⁷), but seems to me basically sound and requiring some sort of explanation.

So let us repeat our litany of names — *Ireland*, *Wessex*, *Armorica*, ***Rhône***, *Hilversum*, *Northern Bronze Age*, ***Únětice***, *Otomani*, *Wietenberg*, and *Greece*. It will be seen that whatever approach we take, both our bolded regions are a part of a larger jigsaw in which we see the overall picture of this EBA trading network. In either

77 That envisaged this barely known or understood ‘people’ occupying vast swathes of European territory.

interpretation, I believe, the same conclusion is to be reached for the Two Isles — the network in Ireland, Armorica and southern Britain was controlled by people who spoke *WIE and probably *Celtic.

4.2. WIE In The Two Isles

4.2.1. Invasions

The narrative approach I have taken in this book — following our Farmers and Herders — tries to impose onto the disparate archaeological record a simple abstraction that is nevertheless generally accepted. It is interesting that in both cases both with Farmers and Herders, the simplicity breaks down at the same point. The initial ‘waves’ of Farmer colonists out of the Old European core can be tracked by the very uniform early LBK culture in Central Europe and Impressed Ware along the Mediterranean coast. The initial wave of Herder colonists can be seen in the Corded Ware complex (and perhaps immigrants to the Rhône area from the Black Sea region). The simplicity of both these breaks down in and around France.

With the Farmers, at least we can retain the simplification that they spoke a ‘Farmer language’. With the Herders, though, our problem is we are faced with many stages of language development. Which is the relevant stage at which point? *Indo-European? *Western-Indo-European? *Celtic? Or *Irish and *Brittonic? As we get closer to the world of words, it is more a matter of *Belgae* or even a tribe such as the *Atrebates* who migrated from Belgica to the Solent region. The most important starting point is to define the problem clearly, which is *language replacement*. The basic fact remains that *Irish was the language of Ireland* and *Brittonic was (at least more or less) the language of*

Britain. To simplify further, *Celtic was the language of both of the Two Isles. Moreover, it was also the language spoken in some or all of the Alps, in Belgica and northern France and over large regions of Spain, even before the large folk movements of the La Tène period after c. 450 BCE.

If this is the problem, then we should be careful to distinguish the natures of both language replacement and mere invasions.

3.2.2. Aspects of Invasions

A) Invading Names

In the historical period, many folk movements are recorded, but they do not necessarily lead to language replacement, let alone a long-lasting one. For example, the Croats ('Hrvat') have what seems to be an Iranian name and the Bulgarians a Turkic one, but both peoples speak Slavic languages. On the other hand, when we look at the Germanic folk movements, we note how often the tribe or confederation left behind their *name* but *not* their language — *France*, *Allemagne*, *Saxony*, *Lombardy*, *Andalucia* (probably named after the Vandals), *Burgundy*, *Normandy*, and so on. English represents quite the exception.

B) Invader Exhaustion

The English invasion of Britannia, which was purely aggressive, indicates that such levels of aggression cannot be maintained indefinitely. After the *invasion* came consolidation. Small British (i.e. *Welsh*) communities kept their own identity until after the Norman Invasion, but most of the British who survived chose assimilation. The first named English poet, Caedmon, for example had a British name. Of course, once these English communities had consolidated, they

often expanded (in particular, Mercia and Northumbria). But expansion is not invasion. We can also note that the English invasion of Britain, even with later expansions, falls far short of fulfilling a language replacement over the entire Two Isles. The early English attack on the Orkneys is the exception that proves the rule. This extension of the invasion was not followed up. Clearly the English saw they had no real traction that far north, nor any hope of attaining it.

C) Cultural Warping

The Viking and Norman invasions of Ireland provide another example of the possible effect of an invasion. The Irish writings make clear from the first the importance — a somewhat mysterious, but very real, importance — of the Royal Site of Tara. The Vikings established towns in Ireland, one of which was Dublin. This town quickly became of political significance, especially for the Lochlanners. Meanwhile, we see an ever-increasingly ferocity among the Irish for predominance, linked in some way to the title ‘High King of Ireland’. This was held first of all (in the early historical period, that is) to be the provenance of the Uí Néill dynasty, but then the Dal Cais from Munster challenged the Uí Néill. Finally, dynasties from Connacht joined in and terrible struggles broke out, involving grand armies and even navies, all to be ‘High King’ and bask in the glory of the magic of Tara. When the Normans came, the Irish were more or less destroyed, beaten back to what was effectively a ‘reservation’ in the north west. The Normans cared nothing for the sacredness and traditions concerning Tara, but they would prefer to prevent a ‘High King’ at any cost. So, Tara fell and Dublin, the Viking town, rose.

The Norse in no way *transformed* Irish culture, but they did in the end *warp* it.

D) Little Peoples

In the City of London, a trip to Lombard St. will introduce you, in a roundabout way, to what might be called a 'little people'. Now the Langobards were a powerful Germanic tribe who invaded and took control of the Po Valley region that is now named *Lombardy* after them. The Lombards were not a 'little people'. But in London they *are* — *there* in their single street with its origins in the time of Edward I, a small group of Lombard merchants are memorialised.

A medieval Welsh manuscript mentions a coastal group of people called 'the dark folk'. It even gives the names of a decent number of these dark folk and these names are certainly not Welsh, or even Indo-European-looking. Aboriginals, these Dark Folk? One day though, someone with a knowledge of Gaelic came across this text and immediately recognised that all the names, though very heavily corrupted and distorted, were clearly Irish ones. The dark folk were in fact a small group of Irish immigrants. That is another 'little people'.

It is best to keep the possible existence of little peoples in mind at all times when thinking about the period when Prehistory starts to merge with legend and the first historical records, a period where information is there but in minimal and confused and corrupted forms. Little peoples may be hard to spot, or altogether invisible, but there is always the possibility a little people holds the key to understanding a difficult name or obscure tradition.

Little peoples come in different forms and I describe some of these below.

Modern Little Peoples

Little peoples often go unnoticed, or barely so. China is Chinese and Vietnam Viet, but the (long-ago assimilated) *Yue* peoples also

lived to the south of China (the name is equivalent to 'Viet') and the *Hmong* people live in the mountainous regions of Vietnam. There is still a *Frisian* people in the Netherlands, who speak their own language. In Yemen and Oman, there is a number of little peoples speaking South Arabian languages — *Mehri*, *Soqotri*, *Bathari*, *Hobyót*, *Shehri* and *Harsusi*. These languages, moreover, are different to the South Arabian languages that were once spoken in the south, the languages of the old kingdoms of Saba', Himyar, Hadramaut and different also to the languages over the Red Sea such as Axumite, Ge'ez, Tigrinya and Amharic. They are modern little peoples, but clearly ancient peoples too. Other little peoples include the *Aromanians* (who are the Romanians of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece), *Arbëreshë* (Albanians of Italy, speaking a very archaic dialect of the language) and *Sorbs* (a Slavic-speaking group in eastern Germany).

Ancient Little Peoples

These include some or all of the Alpine tribes of the *Leponti*, *Quariates* and *Camuni*, the north east Italic 'North Picenes', the *Paemani* and *Caeroesi* of the Rhine, and the *Paeones* of south east Europe. On a grander scale, we might mention the *Ligurians*, the *Euganei*, the *Oscans* and the *Umbrians*, all hailing from Italy.

Invisible Peoples

In Galloway lived a people called the *Greenies*⁷⁸, considered 'foreigners', also known as *Gossocks*, implying servility (W. *gwas* 'servant'). Another people in that region were the *Fingauls*, who were fine figures of men. The origins of these names are clear. The former were Cruthin and the latter Fine-Gall ('family [of] strangers'). That is, the 'low' *Greenies* were native Britons and the 'high' *Fingauls* conquering Galwegians. The Goths of the Crimea are another example, remnants of the once-powerful people, fragments of whose language in the 16th Century were noted by a passing diplomat from the Netherlands.

78 The Celtic Place-names of Scotland [W. Watson], pp. 178-9.

Scattered Peoples

Big peoples cluster inside their territories, but some little peoples either actively wander in amongst settled peoples or themselves settle in scattered communities. Historically, the Romany and the Jews are good examples of this category.

Isolated Peoples

Most peoples speak languages that belong to a larger group, a family of languages. Dotted around the world, however, we find languages that are unrelated to any other — the ‘language isolate’. These are not necessarily little peoples. The Sumerians were not, though Sumerian is a language isolate. But they often are. The *Tayap* people of Papua New Guinea number less than a hundred. *Cayubaba* of Bolivia is spoken by less than ten people.

Dialectical Peoples

In defiance of modern state-sponsored Standard languages, even in Europe there are still dialects that can differ significantly to said standard. France, Germany, Spain — these all have their dialects, for example, *Occitan*, *Bairisch* and *Galician*.

Lost Peoples

Modern linguists suggest that certain place or personal names indicate the existence lost languages. Examples are *Old European*, *Prehellenic* and *Pelasgian*. These, to us, can only be ‘little peoples’.

4.2.3 Case Studies

A) Slavs

The ‘Slavic’ expansion is an example of a *successful* expansion. Its origins are unclear. The location of the ‘Slav Homeland’ is controversial, but it was doubtless situated somewhere somewhat to the north of the Black Sea, out of the reach of the Greco-Roman geographers. From this ‘homeland’, at any rate, came the Slavic tribes, and they moved west into Europe, into much of what is familiar in this book as the ‘Old European core area’, but

also into Central Europe. Here we find the Sorbs, the Poles, the Slovenes, the Slovaks and the Czechs. Some Romans resisted them, in and around modern Romania. The Eastern Empire based around Byzantium held its ground. In western Europe the powerful German Emperors not only withstood Slav encroachments, but began to themselves advance eastwards, for example creating an 'East Mark' (*Ostmark* > *Austria*). The only explanation, in a positive⁷⁹ sense, for such a level of language displacement lies in overwhelming numbers. For example, the story of the Frankish merchant Samo⁸⁰, told by the chronicler Fredegar, shows us a Carpathian Basin occupied by Slavic peoples ('Venedi') who are dominated by more recent and more powerful invaders, the *Avars*. Yet it is unlikely the Avar invasion itself would have resulted in language displacement. If we want to summarise the reasons for the Slav expansion, we can specify 1) external aggression in the 'homeland', here from eastern nomadic warriors, 2) systems collapse in the 'target' regions (especially 'Illyricum' and 'Thrace'), and 3) movements of overwhelmingly large numbers of people. This is not a likely pattern for the 'expansion' of *Celtic into the Two Isles.

B) Pama-Nyungan

People arrived into Australia maybe 70,000 years ago. The oldest 'people' in the world are clearly the Aborigines of that continent. Curiously, almost the entire island is taken up with one language family, the Pama-Nyungan. There is a small area in the north centre where a large

79 In a negative sense, the local 'Illyrian' and 'Thracian' peoples, demilitarised under the Roman Empire, were dependant on the imperial legions to defend them.

80 Fredegar relates how Samo unites the Slavic tribes, defeats the Avars and founds the first Slavic kingdom.

number of languages and language families are clustered. Each family is unrelated to the others and there is a significant number of *language* isolates too. The great Pama-Nyungan family, though, does not date back 70,000 years. In fact, it is thought to have developed around the time of the Beaker cult over the other side of the globe, about 2,000 BCE. One theory argues that people from India bearing microliths and dingos arrived at this time. Others believe there were cultural changes that were indigenous to Australia. All, however, seem to think there was a large-scale expansion of a culture from a single source — and an expansion of people? The general conclusion is that this culture — like the Beaker complex — must have had *something* to it to allow it to expand to such an extent. One interesting suggestion is that the new culture involved a different order of family relationships. If we consider *patriline* and *patrilocalism* set against *matriline* and *matrilocalism*, we can conclude that these can alter society in a subtle but sufficiently fundamental way to achieve such a feat. In our own times, we can note how the subtle change from a *male breadwinner* to a *partnership* household as the fundamental model for the nuclear family has transformed western societies in a myriad of ways. This then *is* an interesting point of comparison to our *Celtic expansion.

C) Goths

As a thought experiment, we can imagine a world in which Greco-Roman writings survived only in fragments, as if the entire corpus met the same fate as Sappho's poetry. We can imagine that, amongst the parchment-rubble in Spain, we find obscure references to a people called 'Goths' who seem to have ruled the country. Who were these Goths? At some point a fragment of Claudius Ptolemy's geography is found, focusing on northern

Europe. This fragment mentions a tribe named the *Gotones*. Linking the Goths and Gotones would be highly speculative in this world of fragments. If the names *were* agreed to be linked, enquiring minds would ask — *how did the Gotones arrive in Spain?* Archaeology would be summoned into action and the path of the tribe from the Baltic region through Germany and France into Spain would be traced, perhaps to the satisfaction of some.

But of course, we know what such a world could not know — how the Goths actually did arrive into Spain. How they did is quite beyond archaeology to discover without the world of worlds. We know that, in the first place, the Goths moved from their homeland not into Spain but the Black Sea region and that Gothic, moreover, was spoken⁸¹ in the Crimea until the 16th Century or so (our Gothic ‘little people’ in fact). How could anyone infer that from the world of things? Some Goths moved out this region, however, when the enigmatic and unpleasant phenomenon called the ‘Huns’ made itself manifest. The Visigoths⁸² fled into Eastern Europe, into the Roman Empire, where very reluctantly and under heavy manners (that did for the Emperor Valens, for example), the Goths were allowed to settle. Unfortunately for the Romans, settle they did not, or not for too long. There was now a great movement of Goths from Eastern Europe into Italy itself — that in fact sacked Rome. The invaders were simultaneously bought off and packed off to Aquitania, which became ‘Gothic’ for many centuries. It is from *there*

81 For example, “*Knauen tag erat illi Bonus dies*”, says our witness, the Flemish diolomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq. Incidentally, although *Germanic is a centum Indo-European language, Crimean Gothic proudly identifies with the satem group (*sada* ‘hundred’ being borrowed from a long-lost Scythian language).

82 The Goths were said to be divided into two great halves, the other being called ‘Ostrogoths’.

that the Goths ‘expanded’ into (or ‘swept into’?) the province of Hispania. Various Genseric and Gaiseric ruled the country until Berber/Arab armies, inspired by the new faith of Islam, toppled the Toledo kings.

Anyone who works within the world of things ought to be familiar with this sequence of events in order that they understand that *this* is an ‘expansion’.

4.3. Britain

4.3.1. The Problem of the Beakers

The Beaker cult is a large enough phenomenon to broadly explain the arrival of *Celtic into Britain, a view which is strongly supported by genetics. However, there are two important issues that mitigate against adopting this pleasing simplicity. First, the ‘maritime’ Beakers originate in Iberia, in an area that did not speak an Indo-European language. The ‘hybrid’ ‘corded’ Beakers originated in the IE-speaking Corded Ware region — but did these people speak WIE or CIE?

To try to answer the problem of *Celtic, then, it is necessary to try and seek for smaller events, and broader patterns than just pot-shifts. Within the enigma that is the archaeological record, it is *context* that is often key in learning how to read the record of the world of things.

4.3.2. Phases

For the Beaker period and after, Britain runs through a fairly clear sequence of *phases* in its cultural development. This is true no matter what language(s) its people spoke.

- The Beaker complex crosses over into the late **megalithic** period. The Stonehenge complex sometime after 2,500 BCE is clearly associated

with Beakers. It is possible that the famous trilithons were constructed under a Beaker influence, but the dating of the construction related to that of the arrival of the Beakers in Britain (c. 2,500 BCE also) is not accurate enough to confirm or deny this.

- In the south, megaliths are succeeded by **barrows** — with the so-called Wessex Culture. These are single burials, a break from earlier communal practices. Some of the barrows indicate spectacular wealth and powerful chiefs.
- This period of chiefs is followed by the large-scale **enclosure** of agricultural land. This may well signify a general move away from the community to the individual. The general trend in this phase is towards small but obviously organised communities.
- In the next phase, hierarchy and conflict re-materialises, for now small **forts** become common. This, it would appear, was the time of the small and local chief.
- Following this, there is a phase where the small forts tend to vanish but large and centralising forts are constructed (for example, Maiden Castle in Dorset). In terms of the later local Celtic language, the *dun* was replaced by the *briga*. The fort by the **fortress**.
- In the final phase before the Romans came to visit, we find **coins**. The distribution of these coins from their various mints can be closely matched to the tribes mentioned by Greco-Roman authors, so much so that the coins can be used to map the boundaries of these southern tribes with considerable precision.

With the coins, then, the worlds of things and words at last meet up.

4.3.3. *Celtic

The appearance of Beakers into Britain seems to involve two main groups — a Maritime group in the south on the one hand, and an AOC⁸³/AOO⁸⁴ group to the north. The latter group came from the Corded Ware region and will have spoken an Indo-European dialect. However, this may have been CIE rather than WIE. As for the Maritime group, as this type of Beaker originated in Iberia, where the dialects of the farmers' language will have been spoken, what language can we infer was spoken by this group?

A good deal of complexity about WIE is removed if we follow the Kemi Oba model, for now we can infer from this the Early Bronze Age Rhône culture spoke WIE, which was in turn descended from or related to an early Yamnaya IE dialect. This Rhône culture spread into north eastern France and Switzerland. It had close links to both the Únětice and Straubing cultures and the Rhône bouche was, with Brittany, one of the earliest expansion areas of the Beaker complex. Of key significance is the appearance of *barrows* in both Armorica and Wessex at about the same time. I suggest that whatever exactly the Beakers represented in this region, the barrows indicate the establishment of peoples speaking WIE. However, this period probably represents a *consolidation* of earlier WIE influence during the time of the Beakers, as witnessed by the Amesbury Archer. The Archer was a man buried with an impressive five Beakers (of the Maritime type) and a panoply of other artefacts that

83 All-Over Corded.

84 All-Over Ornamented.

indicate he was a very important person. The tools of modern science have marked and measured his mortal remains and so we know he was born in Central Europe, probably in or around Switzerland. A second Beaker burial nearby was perhaps his son⁸⁵, who was born around the Bristol area and later moved back to be near to his father⁸⁶.

This evidence is important because it definitively links Beakers in the south to likely IE-speaking regions in Europe and it also proves that long-distance travel was involved in the Beaker cult(ure). The archer also suggests very strongly two closely-related phenomena — 1) there was something in the Beaker cult that attracted local people to it, and 2) there was also something that drove members of the cult to travel. This is a good context for a language replacement. The archer is hardly likely to have battled and defeated the entire Salisbury Plain by himself — his high status *must* therefore have been achieved by *influence*, of himself and of his cult. What we see with the change from the megaliths to the barrows is the peculiar Indo-European version of the Beaker cult, that allowed the influential individual to be placed above the community. The culture in this area, of the community of communities (see the Stonehenge complex, the Avebury complex, etc), was transformed into a land of chiefs.

At the time of the Wessex Barrows, then, what is in the end the Beaker phenomenon led to a Britain speaking two Indo-European dialects, a *CIE one in the north and a *WIE one in the south. The latter dialect, clearly, either must have been or quickly became *Celtic.

85 The preferred view. The man was a close relative and an alternative reading of the data is that he was the archer's brother.

86 Or brother.

The model, from this point, must move away from the seemingly alluring *cult* represented by the Beakers and instead stress the much more solid attraction of wealth and the close entanglement of that to power. This shift is in effect from magic to metallurgy and this provides us with a good example of how to read the world of things. For, as we have seen, the Early Bronze Age brought forth a ‘cult’ of metal that covered all Europe and this ‘cult’ certainly transformed Ireland as well as Britain. It is likely this *WIE and probably *Celtic language of Armorica and Wessex was carried over into parts at least of Ireland at this time. That is to say, in this model, *Celtic was carried over into Ireland on waves of metal and not by Beakers. Or to put it another way, the spread of *WIE and *Celtic was announced by the Beaker cult and confirmed by metallurgy.

During the mature Bronze Age, the division of Britain into south and north seems to be confirmed. In the north, we find Food Vessels and Urns (collared, cordoned and encrusted). These pots are also found in Ireland, and the Food Vessel seems to be the local equivalent — or rather, *replacement* — for a Beaker, presumably serving a similar function but adapted to the local belief system. The Urns are perhaps related to the older Irish tradition of cremation. In the south, meanwhile, a cross-Channel culture seems to have evolved all across southern England and northern France and into Belgium and Holland. A recent genetic study confirms a large-scale level of immigration into southern England at this time. Archaeology speaks out very loudly against this being an ‘invasion’. The common culture, it suggests, led to a freedom of movement across the sea. The underlying reason for this can be seen in the preceding period of the Armorican and Wessex barrow cultures. Just as the Northern Bronze Age almost certainly spoke a *Germanic

dialect, this cross-Channel culture complex spoke a *Celtic one. This *Celtic language, moreover, *must* have been an early form of Brittonic and probably Irish, which at this early date are likely to have been mere dialects of each other.

Between about 800-600 BCE, the Bronze Age in this area reaches a high point, but we also notice a division between west and east, and in the west the development of a thriving trade route along the Atlantic coast, at the time when both Punic/Carthaginian and Greek trading colonies were being established. In both Brittany and north-west Spain, the local peoples were Celtic-speaking. In Central Europe, on the other hand, this is the time of the rise of the Hallstatt chieftains of the Alpine region (Heuneberg, Mont Lassois, Hohenasperg, etc). So, we can see a two-way split of trade routes — west to Iberia and east to the Alps. This eastern region that faced the Marne-Moselle area was one of the early centres of La Tène and of the Gauls — or the *Galli* or *Galatai*.

It is now we are at the threshold of history.

4.4. Ireland

The first native writing in Ireland comes to us via the enigmatic stones inscribed with the ogham alphabet and clustered in the south of the island and which date from a guesstimated 300 CE. The earliest writings in manuscript form indicate a written tradition beginning in the early post-Roman period c. 450 CE, but the earliest texts themselves date c. 700 CE. These texts and inscriptions are written in *Irish, the ogham language being considered an early form of the much-mutated Goidelic, or Gaelic, language of the manuscripts. From this evidence, the language of Ireland was Irish, and there was only one language spoken in the island.

How this came to be is difficult, perhaps impossible, to ascertain via the archaeological record. Even the Beaker complex, which is attested in Ireland, offers no conclusive evidence for an island-wide language replacement. The Beakers in Ireland appear to be an alien (or initially alien) artefact that was assimilated into the local culture. Here, it is found in domestic and not burial contexts. Beakers do not appear everywhere in the island. Later archaeological developments are even more disappointing, from this point of view. There is no great sweep of pots or swords that could even remotely suggest, at least convincingly, an invasion of sufficient extent to lead to total language replacement. For example, there are clusters of Hallstatt swords (c. 800 BCE) found along the rivers Shannon and Bann. Even if these are evidence of invading warriors, it is too localised to explain the introduction of Irish to Ireland.

Can we find, then, any useful patterns in the record that go beyond pots and swords?

1. There appears to be a repeated north-south bias in the island. For the Neolithic, early megaliths, wedge tombs aside, are concentrated in the north. For the Bronze Age, Food Vessels and also Urns (Cordoned and Collared) are likewise found mostly in the north. This applies also to the Iron Age La Tène. In the early historical era too, Mumu (that is, Munster) in the south seems a remote and separate place and, when Munster kings began to mount a challenge for the 'High Kingship' of Ireland, an ideology was developed of 'two halves'⁸⁷ of Ireland. This division, if such it was, may be due to geography — the mere proximity of the north east to Britain and equally the remoteness of

⁸⁷ Leth Conn and Leth Mug Nuadat.

Munster.

2. An extension of point 1) is the cultural links between the north east and the British mainland. In the Neolithic, the Clyde-Carlingford culture is part of a complex extending into Ireland. Both the Food Vessels and Urns are part of a culture complex extending into Britain. In the historical era we not only have the Gaelic peoples of north west Scotland, absorbed by Bede's time into the Dal Riata (a north east Irish tribe), but also the enigmatic Cruthin who — whoever exactly they were — were associated in some way with Scotland⁸⁸.
3. There was also a detectable western bias, found with both wedge tombs and stone circles. The stone circles, though, provide a link to Britain.
4. Between the Hallstatt C and La Tène there is a cultural break — there is little or no trace of any Hallstatt D influence in Ireland.

We can also note that, in the later Bronze Age and early Iron Age, we can actually make speculative links between the worlds of things and words.

- Around 800 BCE we find the first iteration of the great Navan Fort. This was redesigned on a grand scale around 150 BCE, but even this more modest but still imposing version is clearly in some sense *Emain Macha*. So around 800 BCE we find a direct link to the historical era.
- In Co. Kerry, on the Dingle Peninsular, we find the immensely imposing Bronze Age forts of

⁸⁸ The name Cruthin is the rough Gaelic equivalent of Prettanói (> Britanni > Britons). However, just as Albu (< Albion [Britain]) means 'Scotland' in Gaelic, so 'Cruthin' probably meant 'northern Briton'.

Caherconree and Benagh/Mount Brandon.

- In the Shannon region, as we have seen, Hallstatt C swords are found in significant numbers. There is also, around 700-600 BCE, a large amount of gold ornaments, particularly the fine *gorgets*. This is also the region of the mighty fort of Dun Aenghus, with its *chevaux de frise* construction that is also found in north west Spain (surely a Hispanoceltic speaking area at this time). It would seem, then that the fort guarded the Shannon trade.
- The south eastern fort of Dún Ailinne dates to the La Tène period. It is the chief centre of the historical Lagen. In fact, c. 150 BCE, the great legendary centres of Ireland — Cruachan, Emain Macha (i.e. Navan Fort), Uisnech, as well as Dún Ailinne — may all have been ‘in place’.

In the model I am adopting here, the northern Beakers represent a non-WIE language. In Britain, the north can broadly be linked to a CIE type of language, and the south with a WIE one, presumably *Celtic. The evidence from Ireland supports a similar interpretation. In the north we find Beakers that seem to be replaced by the indigenous Food Vessels and cremation Urns. For the south, we can posit close relations with Wessex and Brittany. The south, then, would be the core *Irish area, the local reflex of the form of *Celtic that evolved to the south of the Two Isles.

This very broad model can be improved, as we have seen, by a much more refined level of analysis that links archaeology to history from at least around 800 BCE. In the north we have Emain Macha, and in the west a trade centre that can be linked with specific historical peoples. By around 150 BCE the broad shape of the legendary geography of Ireland seems to be in place — the great

royal centres of the coicedes. However, to expand further on this period, we need to enter the world of words, which we will meet in Part Two of this book.

Interlude

1. Farmers and Herders Revisited

So then, Farmers from Greece colonised Europe via the Mediterranean Coast and central Europe, then Indo-European-speaking Herders from the Pontic-Caspian steppe followed them into the continent and that is why Europe in the main speaks Indo-European languages today. There were therefore two *prototype* cultures — that of the Farmers and that of the Herders.

As we have seen, simple models don't quite work. For example, we find the Coastal Farmers arriving at the Rhône and moving up the river and into the Paris Basin. From there, they meet with hunter-gather populations and the mixed culture that results aggressively moves east and puts an end to the Banded Ware (LBK) culture of the central European Farmers. It is this seemingly aggressive culture that colonises the North and Britain. These Farmers keep on moving east until they reach the steppe itself, at which point they adopt its culture — Globular Amphorae — almost entirely blurring the Farmer~Herder categories.

Then again, our story takes us into the Copper and Bronze and Iron Ages and now it is metalworking and not herding that is our key.

The Farmer exists within the Prototype, as does the Herder. The first belongs especially to the Old European core and the second to the Pontic-Caspian steppe. The two cultures may in a sense have merged in the Globular Amphora peoples, but it is unlikely their culture was a proper Herder one. Even it will have had its roots in Old Europe, just as Greece at the centre of Old Europe had *its* roots on the steppe.

The notion of Farmer and Herder is therefore still a powerful abstraction even as we move further away from

the core in both space and time.

2. Towards the World of Words

To begin at a suitable beginning-point, what follows is a timeline that outlines how Indo-European enters into the world of words, with an emphasis on the Celtic-speaking peoples.

[Dates BCE unless otherwise specified.]

c1750. Assyrian texts at Kanesh reveal Hittite names. Shortly thereafter, the Hittite Kingdom (later Empire) is founded, its archives containing many documents written in Hittite and fragments of the related languages Palaic and Luwian.

c1500. Many kings of the Hurrian-speaking kingdom of Mitanni, beginning with Shutarna, bore Indic-derived names. We also have a text concerning a horse-trainer named Kikkuli that contains Indic numerals and the names of Indic gods.

c1400. Linear B tablets in Mycenaean palaces appear. These are written in an early form of Greek.

c1500-1000. The texts of the Rig Veda were written down relatively late, but were recited with extraordinary accuracy for many centuries, preserving a very early form of an Indic dialect (called 'Sanskrit' by the Vedic worshippers).

c1200. Unknown but complex causes led to a 'systems collapse' around this time in the Middle East and environs. There were certainly significant amounts of sweepings-into. Among the aggressors were, according to the unvowelled Egyptian sources, the shrdnwy, the shklsh and the trsh. That is, Sardinians, Sicels and Tyrsennoi (i.e. Etruscans). This is the earliest known mention of the central Mediterranean.

c700. Inscriptions in the region of the Golasecca culture of northern Italy are written in a Celtic language called Lepontic, the earliest known example of a Celtic language. There are legendary, but plausible, Roman traditions of Lepontic tribes such as the

Insubres invading the Po Valley.

c550. Although reported in a late Roman text by the antiquarian Rufius Festus Avienius, it is generally believed he has preserved fragments of the Punic explorer Himilco. Himilco, if so, mentions 'Hibernia' and 'Albion' for the first time.

c450. The Hallstatt forts are destroyed and the La Tène culture appears. This culture is to be associated with both the warrior class called the Galatai and the Gallo-Brittonic language.

390. The Galatai (Roman 'Galli' — Gauls) sack Rome.

c325. The Greek explorer Pytheas, based in Massilia (Marseilles), circumnavigates the 'isle of the Prettanioi'. It is, he states, triangular. The three tips of the triangle are called Bolerion⁸⁹, Cantion (Kent) and, at the top, the Orcades (Orkneys).

c230. The Volcae invade and settle in the south of France, coming to there from Central Europe.

c120-101. Invasions of the Cimbri and Teutones.

58-54. The Gallic Wars.

43 CE. Claudian invasion of Britannia.

150 CE. Map of Claudius Ptolemy, listing the tribes, rivers and towns of Britain and Ireland.

89 Or Belerion.

The World of Words

— Back to Himilco

Peoples, Problems

We are now in the world of words that begins with the Phoenician explorer Himilco who, around 550 BCE, first mentions the islands of the Hibernians and the Albiones. That is, our Two Isles.

Our sources in this world are a motley bunch. Take the Greco-Roman component. Tacitus, for example, had a renowned uncle who for a time governed Britannia and whose biography he composed. It is for this reason that we learn a little about the island in its formative years as a Roman province. Outside of Tacitus, other historians mention certain events relating to it – its annexation, obviously, and some of the later external threats to it were jotted down too. There are itineraries and geographies that name peoples and places, and panegyrics and poems with passing mentions. This motley of information is better than nothing, but it is nevertheless disjointed and it is not altogether coherent. A lot of it is deliberately or ignorantly or subconsciously distorted. We also need to try and fit the evidence from Greece and Rome together with that of indigenous Irish, Welsh and Pictish sources. Finally, there is also the English and medieval European matter to digest.

If we ask, for example, who the *Cauci* of Ireland were, or the *Taizali* (or *Taixali* or *Texali*) of north-east Scotland, we have to say that we do not know. They are tribes mentioned in Greco-Roman writings, but not later native sources. Either may have been significant in their day; to us they are ghost names.

The older populations of Britain and Ireland are entirely nameless. The earliest nameable peoples can be grouped

according to the sort of Celtic they spoke — the *Britons* spoke a P-Celtic language and the *Irish* a Q-Celtic one. The problem of Irish and British origins is generally framed in terms of what I see as a false use of Occam's Razor. At the highest level they are simply 'Celts' and the problem is therefore that of arrival of 'Celts' into Britain. So, origins in the Two Isles is simply a matter of Irish in Ireland and Britons in Britain. This *appears* occamistically simple but it doesn't stand up to scrutiny. The apparent simplicity it offers soon introduces a buzzing swarm of complications.

First, in the context of the Two Isles, Irish and Brittonic are significantly different languages. It is special pleading to say that the earliest-known form of Irish, found in the ogham inscriptions and dating from the 300's on, is close to Brittonic. It is still a Q-Celtic language and Brittonic is P-Celtic. The difference between early Irish and Brittonic may be trivial in terms of modern linguistic analysis, but in the context of everyday communication it is significant⁹⁰. On the continent and in Britain, Celtic-speaking groups in the areas of direct interest to us appear to have spoken Brittonic-like languages in the historical period. Irish is therefore unlikely to have been introduced from these areas *at this time*. Ergo *the origins of the Irish and Brittonic speakers are separate and different problems*.

Second, the written and (to a lesser extent) archaeological record, though it is not conclusive, points to substantial settlement of British tribal groups in Ireland and seeming dominance in many regions. Because 'La Tène'

90 Try out the following tongue-twister — 'Keter Kiker kipped a kepp of kippled kekker (& petera)'. And now exclaim loudly to yourself that, 'The pat sat on the mat'.

has in the past been almost *equated* with ‘the Celts’, a common approach to the ‘Irish problem’ has been to try and explain the arrival of Irish (that is, ‘the Celts’) in Ireland via La Tène. In fact, it seems to be far more reasonable to see La Tène in terms of Brittonic settlement and dominance over a predominantly Irish-speaking population.

What is needed is a closer analysis of just who ‘the Celts’ were, both in the Two Isles and on the Continent, which is the subject of this second section of the book.

Definitions

The basic task of the Prehistorian is to try and reconcile these sources and here in the world of words we shall attempt to work backwards from 1) *Ireland* to 2) *Britain* and finally to 3) *continental Celtic Europe*.

The British and the Irish can both be analysed in terms of *language* and *ethnos*. For example, Gaelic is a language and the Gaels are an Irish-speaking *ethnos*.

The immediately relevant *languages* for us here are —

- Gallo-Brittonic (from which Welsh is descended)
- and Irish⁹¹.

I will refer to Gallo-Brittonic as ***Keltic***, and so we have two language groups — Keltic and Irish.

For *ethnos*,

- in Britain I identify the following groups — *Pretani*,

⁹¹ Gaelic is clearly an *insular* language that developed relatively late, and in Ireland; the Gaels are a late- or post-Roman polity; and therefore ‘*Gaelic*’ would be a deeply confusing term to use. ‘Irish’ is attested much earlier and has a much earlier origin, and is likely to be what TF O’Rahilly would term ‘a good Celtic name’.

Belgae, Combri (that is, Breton, Cornish, Welsh, Combric and the post-Roman Brittonic groups) and *Picts*, and I gather all these under the term *Britons* or *British*;

- on the Continent, the relevant Keltic groups are *Celtae, Belgae, Galatai, Galatians* etc;
- for Ireland, I identify the Erainn, Gael, Ulaid, Lagen and Cruithin.

My ethnic Britons spoke *Keltic*. My ethnic Irish groups included, I will suggest, both Keltic and *Irish speakers.

Other known Celtic-speaking groups spoke *Lepontic, Celtiberian* and *Hispanoceltic* (including *Celtiberian*). *It is important to bear in mind that these were neither Irish nor*⁹² *Keltic*. They have no direct bearing, at least in my narrative, to the settlement of the British Isles.

* * * * *

Working back from the earliest historical period — on the cusp of the Germanic settlement of England — we are now speaking for the mute stones, for it is the world of words that can best breathe life into the world of things.

So, to our narrative of once upon a time in the world of words.

92 Some believe, it should be noted, that Lepontic is simply an early form of Gaulish, but this seems unlikely to me and I treat it as a separate language.

Ireland

The People of Ireland

If we analyse the mass of names from the Irish records, we can isolate the following major population groups — *Gael*, *Erainn*, *Ulaid*, *Lagin* and *Cruthin*. In the early historical period (say c. 700 CE on), Ireland was dominated by the Gael, but there are clear indications that this domination was recent (perhaps c. 350 CE on). Before that, the main power groups can be seen in terms of the *Erainn*, *Ulaid* and *Lagin*. The *Lagin*, I argue, were a Keltic group, and so probably were the *Ulaid*.

In the following sections, then, we will work within the framework of these two periods —

- a *Gaelic* period, and
- a *Keltic* period.

Before the *Lagin* and *Ulaid* arrived, a simple subtraction leaves the *Erainn* as the main representatives of the ‘Irish’. Therefore, preceding the Keltic period, we have —

- an *Erainn* (or ‘Irish’) period.

If we ask who these *Erainn* were, Munster in the south west seems to have been squarely Irish and the Gael seem to have been located originally in the north east. We find *Irish-speakers, then, at an early date in both the north and south of Ireland. However, I believe that this *Erainn* period is beyond the reach of the Irish legends we have. The only firm conclusion that can be drawn is that whatever domination of Ireland was achieved by the Kelts, Ireland was before that basically ‘Irish’ and the invaders no more changed this fact than did the later

Vikings.

Archaeology confirms for us that, by about 1,000 BCE, Ireland had a thoroughly 'Irish' material culture — one of feasts (cauldrons) and warriors (swords). Although the world of things cannot reveal for certain whether or not the people of this culture did speak an *Irish language or not, it seems highly unlikely that *Irish speakers arrived *after* this to impose their language over all the Ireland.

This book argues that the arrival of a Celtic language, that is to say the Irish language, in Ireland occurred within the context of metallurgy, during and after the Beaker period. This context strongly links southern Ireland to Wessex and Brittany and this region I think is the core 'homeland' of the Celtic languages. However, the archaeological record does not make it easy to trace the path from these pioneering metallurgists to the warrior culture of c. 1,000 BCE. There are too few finds and too few dates and no culture big enough — not even the Beakers, in Ireland — to easily explain something as significant as a language replacement.

One pattern does seem reasonably clear. There appears to have been a definite intrusion of Corded Ware people into the north of Britain set apart from the cultures of the Wessex-Brittany complex. Beakers, moreover, seem to be concentrated in the north of Ireland. Then again, 'Food Vessels' are often said to be a 'native' replacement for the Beakers and are also concentrated in the north, but also found in northern Britain. Likewise cinerary urns — whether Collared, Cordoned or Encrusted — these are again concentrated in the north of both Ireland and Britain. This seems to suggest a distinctive culture complex, and perhaps ethnic group, to the north of the Two Isles at this time.

However, other evidence from archaeology reveals quite another pattern in the south. That is, a cross-Channel culture developing that more or less *must* have been a Celtic-language speaking one, which is likely to have developed from the earlier Wessex-Brittany complex.

This indicates that *two different* cultural regions existed in Britain during the post-Beaker period. The northern one was clearly deeply-rooted in native tradition. These people probably spoke an Indo-European language, while the southerners almost certainly spoke an early form of *Celtic.

As we have seen earlier, this book suggests two possible models for the introduction of Indo-European languages into central and western Europe: the WIE model and the CIE model. The former distinguishes between a ‘western’ language group to be associated with immigrants around the Rhône Valley from the Kemi Oba culture (located in the Crimea); the latter sees a central European Corded Ware group expand into the west during the Beaker period.

In the WIE model, then, the Celtic languages are to be associated with the northern coast of France, the southern part of Britain and – it must be assumed – the southern regions at least of Ireland. The northern – Corded Ware – group of immigrants would have spoken a CIE dialect presumably related to *Germanic.

In the CIE model, the Corded Ware group is the parent culture to both *WIE and *Germanic. The latter would therefore be a remote outlier of the ur-language and ‘WIE’ would be the languages that developed in Central Europe (the early archaeological sequence being Únětice > Tumulus > Urnfield) and the Beaker-related languages of western Europe. Here, we can envisage *Ligurian and

*Italic as being Alpine languages and *Lusitanian and *Celtic the southern and northern languages of the west. This would be the best fit geographically, but there is no evidence of *Italic languages in the Alps, a region where *Celtic languages *are* however found. It should also be noted that only Germanic languages are known in the earlier key Corded Ware area, though inferred languages along the Rhine and among the Lugi (in modern Poland) may have existed, as well as the hypothetical ‘Old European’ language.

The CIE model is I think a phenomenon already familiar in this book – something that *seems* simple at first, but soon devolves into a more complicated picture on closer examination. It is easy enough to believe that *Germanic and *WIE are derived from a common ur-language if the former is a conveniently distant outlier. The two groups are, after all, both generally derived from a common *Indo-European. If the language of the Corded Ware people was a mere dialect of this ur-language this all seems reasonable enough.

However, it does not make it easy to explain the linguistic map at the time of the earliest written records. The central Alpine region – home to all the great metal-age archaeological cultures – seems to have been inhabited mainly by⁹³ speakers of Celtic languages, marking a sharp linguistic divide with the Germanic languages immediately to the north. A simple Corded Ware model cannot, I believe, explain this divide very well. There must therefore have been some sequence of complex events occurring in the area that led from the Corded Ware period to the earliest recorded times.

93 With Raetic as an enigmatic outlier and a high probability of unknown and unknowable ‘little peoples’ speaking ‘little languages’.

The WIE and CIE models predict different outcomes for the Beaker and post-Beaker period in Britain and Ireland. Given that *archaeology* suggests two different regions, the WIE model would indicate a WIE (almost certainly *Celtic) language in the south of both Britain and Ireland and a CIE language located to the north of both the Two Isles. The CIE model would indicate a language of CIE origin that, in the south was either *Celtic or *ur-Celtic and in the north was at the least closely related.

Although this north-south model is not contradicted, and even to some extent supported, by evidence from the time of the earliest written record in Britain, that is not the case for Ireland. We do find a clear north-south dividing line – the ‘halves’ of Conn and Mug Nuadat – but it is unclear if this is a genuinely old division or just due to the politics of the early historical period. The prehistory of how Ireland became a ‘place’ – one moreover speaking *Irish – must, I think, remain a mystery for now.

Perhaps, though, the Pama-Ngyuan model from Australia provides the most likely explanation for the spread of *Irish in Ireland. If the model is correct, it shows how a subtle alteration of societal rules and values (for example, substituting patriliney for matriliney) can profoundly alter that society.

If we turn our attention to the start of the world of words, we find a culture that is endlessly replicable: that of the *tuath*, *ri* and *druí*. This culture could expand to encompass a province and from there to the whole island. It is hard to be sure, but there are strong indications that the *tuath* culture could absorb different ethnic groups. The *Partraige*, for example, are a *tuath* unlikely to have been Gaelic.

We cannot say how old the *tuath* culture is, but can infer its ultimate origins are pre-Celtic. The Gaelic *ri* is paralleled by the Latin *rex* and direct cognates of the *tuath* are found in Italy (though not Latium). The *toutos* and *rix* are also found amongst the Celtae of northern France, whose culture seems to have been very similar to the culture of Ireland. Of course, in Gaul we also find in the famous *druoid* an exact parallel to the *druí*.

It is easy to see how such a well-defined culture could have spread throughout the island, merging with and absorbing earlier population groups, one *tuath* branching off into another, rinse and repeat. Moreover, the *druí* seems to have acted as a link – a sort of glue – between individual *tuaths*, supporting the P-N model even further.

It should be noted that this model would apply equally to an early expansion in and amongst Farmer population groups, or (within our WIE model) a later expansion south to north in and amongst CIE population groups. In the CIE model, it may be inferred from the *Germanic evidence that these groups had a looser and more informal social hierarchy in which there was no *tuath*⁹⁴ or *ri* or *druí*.

Although this model does not provide an easy ‘when’ for the expansion of *Irish in Ireland, it does I think offer up a highly plausible ‘how’. Also, given that the island in and around 1,000 BCE seems to have had a recognisably ‘Irish’ culture, perhaps this ‘when’ can fairly confidently be placed before this time but during or immediately after the early Beaker period.

94 *Germanic does have a cognate to *tuath*, represented for example by Old English *ðēod*. But the *þeudu (the proto-Germanic form) was functionally different.

1. Gaelic Ireland

In the world of words, we must start with the Gaels, whom we find in control of all Ireland when at least *roughly* dateable Irish history starts around 425-450 CE. Here we find obscure figures such as Palladius⁹⁵ and Patrick (important to the Church) and Níall Noígíallach (important to the Uí Néill dynasty). Most of Irish history for a few centuries after that remains in a similar obscurity, for though the names and the details do become ever more expansive, so much of the genealogical sequence is faked, interloped and invented that there is a persistent problem of credibility. But it is history of a sort.

Ireland in the early historical period was a patchwork of 150 or so ‘kings’, each of whom ruled over a ‘people’. Some kings ruled over other kings and a few kings claimed to rule over many kings. Below the free tribes were the tribute-payers (*fortuatha* ‘outside peoples’, *aitheachtuatha* – *aitheach* being a rent-payer or ‘churl’, these *aitheach* peoples probably lacking a proper ‘king’ to represent them). One visible sign of a king’s rank was his position in ceremonies such as the *oenach* or *dal* (both tribal assemblies). Just as the champion had his position, the king had his position. Pole position (according at least to the holders of the title, the Uí Néill) was the ‘High King of Ireland’. The Uí Néill — the High Kings — were descended from *Goídelglas*. Therefore, they were *Gaels*⁹⁶, also known as *Feni*. In the south, in Munster, the *Eóganachta* were also privileged to have ‘descended’ (so said the genealogies) from *Goídelglas*. They were Gaels

95 Arrived in Ireland from France in 431 — the first proper date in Irish history.

96 ‘Gael’ < ‘Goidel’.

too. Genealogy and ancestors were vital. The ‘best people’ were the ones who could claim to have ‘best ancestors’⁹⁷. Gaels were descendants of *Erimon* and *Eber*. Ireland, according to one early propaganda ploy of the Gael, was divided into two halves — *Leth Conn* (north) and *Leth Mug Nuadat* (south). However, as time went by, the genealogists admitted more and more tribes into the Goidelic cult, until eventually, to speak Irish was to be a Gael.

Ireland seems to have been a ‘place’ at this time. Its inhabitants had a strong sense both of ‘Ireland’ and a consequent feeling of being ‘Irish’. One of the most confusing aspects of Ireland, however — and this was clearly confusing to people at the time as well — was its division into provinces. A common term for ‘province’ was, as we have seen, ‘fifth’ (*coiced* in Gaelic). But the coicedes probably belong to an earlier, pre-Christian time. In the early historical period, they form a sort of skeleton buried within the island’s soil.

In fact, one useful way of seeing Ireland is to divide it into three — south, centre and north. The south is Munster and the north Ulster and the centre connected with the Lagen, or Fir Domnann. But that too belonged to the same prehistoric and pre-Christian period as the coicedes. However, in early historical times, a new ‘strip’ existed that overrode this former ‘centre’ — this strip belonged to the Uí Néill dynasty. The strip stretched from the north west right down into the midlands. It can be no coincidence that it essentially separates the old centres of Cruachan, Emain and Leinster, all the while controlling

⁹⁷ Leading to the genealogical alchemy by which a person could be born and die with two substantially different sets of ancestors and, even more impressively, have lived without ever having existed.

the still-active ritual centres of Uisnech and Tara. In other words, there was a sense of ‘provinces’ that the political system more or less denied. The *Ulaid* existed, their province of Ulster too, but the reality of their power had vanished along with their ritual centre, Emain Macha. *Connacht* appears to have been a remote region that today is almost without a history, but political control there seems to have resided with powerful tribes (Uí Briúin, Uí Maine etc) rather than Cruachan. *Leinster* kept the character of a province, but this was defined in terms of politics and political power, in the end of the Uí Dúnlainge and Uí Chennselaig around their tribal centres. *Munster* can best be defined as a region that avoided dealings with the Uí Néill, a region outside the struggle for High Kingship. The old fifths seem to have existed, but weakly, and perhaps their existence even was largely due to old sagas set in their flourishing years.

The grouping that affected everyone was the *tuath* with its *ri*. Each *ri* belonged to a *derbfine* (meaning ‘true family’), which was effectively the ruling class of the *tuath*. However, translating *tuath* as either ‘tribe’ or ‘people’ is misleading, for each *tuath* was *a people of a land*. Every *ri* was duly *chief of the land*. A *ri* who was subordinate to a more powerful *ri* (a *ruiri*) was still *ri* of his *tuath*. Likewise, the *ruiri* was also still *ri* of his own *tuath*. This was true for even the *ri* of a province, even for the ‘High King’. Even he was merely a *ri* within his own *tuath*.

The people of Ireland, then, belonged to the island, perhaps to a province, but in the end to their *tuath* — that is, to their tribe *and* to their land. But who then, in this patchwork of *tuaths* and *ris* were the Gaels of early historical Ireland?

1.1. Scotti

The first historical mention of the deeds of any Irish people, beyond their mere existence, is a warlike affair. In 360, 367 and 368 there were reports of raids on Britain by peoples from Ireland called *Scot(t)i*. By this time, Rome was becoming less and less able to protect its provincial citizens, although it was still stronger than its enemies. The Scotti seem to have had various strategic alliances with the Picts and Saxons, with whom some of their raids seem to have been coordinated.

The Scotti, it seems safe to say, spoke an *Irish language, indicating that by that time *Irish was the predominant language in the island. The Scotti not only raided the west coasts of Britain, but settled there — in Dumnonia to the south west, in Demetia (Dyfed) and the Lley Peninsular (named after the province, or people, of Leinster, the Lagen). In the historical period, we also find that Irish-speakers now dominate north-western Scotland — these are in fact the eponymous ‘Scots’. The relationship with these to the more southern groups of ‘Hiberno-Britons’ is unclear. The carefully composed ‘tradition’ of the Dál Riata tribe, located on the north-east tip of Ireland, claimed that Reada (as Bede calls him) settled in Scotland around 450 CE. The ‘Scots’ were, very conveniently for the Dál Riata, members of that tribe and effectively subordinate to it. This tradition seems to have evolved (or more likely *been evolved*) around the time tribes associated with the Ulaid, aware of a lost former glory, looked overseas to regain at least some of it. The Isle of Man was one target. This tradition of Reada and his settlement of Scotland likely belongs more to the period of Dál Riata pretensions to power than the era of actual Scottic raids. Also important is the fact that the Scottic raids targeted Britannia, and the Dál Riata

Scots settled beyond the province and out of any formal Roman jurisdiction (though doubtless not Roman entitlement).

The name 'Scot(t)i is obscure. Like so many of these names ('Saxon', 'Pict', 'Belgae', 'Galli') it is a Roman, but not a Latin-language name. Nor, though, does it seem to be Irish. There is no certain Irish derivation for it and no properly native usage of it. The name does seem to have existed in Gaul and for that reason it can be argued to be of Gaulish origin, albeit no certain Gaulish etymology is forthcoming. The name may have been, then, a Gallo-Brittonic word borrowed by the Romans from a British source. Eventually, it became the Latin word for 'Irishman', so in the early Middle Ages, both the poet and scholar Sedulius and the philosopher John were 'Scots'. I suspect that the Irish of north-west Scotland, they who gave their name to said land, were Scots in this sense and not that of the original meaning of 'Irish raiders'.

The Irish records, dealing with the time of Níall of the Nine Hostages and his 'predecessors' (the chronology of these records is hardly to be trusted, though a vague 'this happened before that' is strongly suggested), suggest a connection of Níall and his 'ancestors' with 'Alba' (=Scotland) —

- Fiacha Finnolaid (or Finnfolaidh) is surely 'Fiacha of Vindolanda'. His 'wife' (the deity Ethne) was 'daughter' of the king of Alba.
- Fiacha is father of the key ancestor of the Gael, Tuathal Techtmar. The latter name is interesting. It is a name (all O'Toole's, for example, have a Tuathal as their common ancestor), but was it originally a title, like 'Vortigern'? That is, 'people-ruler' versus 'preeminent lord'? The name, also, is

a Welsh (and prior to that British?) one — Tudwal. The name ‘Tuathal’ itself could conceivably be British, for his epithet⁹⁸, which is similar to the legendary English poet *Widsith* ‘widely-travelled’, strongly implies mobility. The name is curiously similar to what is a doublet of Tuathal — *Fedlimid Rechtmar*. At least *Tuathal* and *Fedlimid* would make up complementary titles, for the latter indicates a magico-religious figure (the female variant being *Fedelm*) and can also be linked to the Pictish name Uuid/Veda.

- Eochaid Mugmedon, father of Níall noígíallach himself is strongly linked to Alba.

All this indicates that Irish relations to Scotland were far more complex than the *Reada* legend implies and probably date back to the period of Scottic raids. If Fiachu is linked to Vindolanda, this implies some sort of link with Rome. Could Tuathal in fact have been *backed* by Rome? Was he a *Tudwal* who attacked the seat of power — Tara — in the homeland of the Scotti? Could he be the key to connect the *Scotti* to the *Goidel*?

1.2. Fiana

We have seen that the Wessex barrows indicate wealthy chiefs in that area from about 2,200 BCE, but then the chiefs disappear and the new trend appears to be towards land enclosure. The move from chief to enclosure suggests to me a *more*, not less authoritarian society, but it may have been more egalitarian. Perhaps enclosure fits, in Britain at least, with the urnfields of the High Bronze Age (associated, for example, with the Deverel Rimbury

⁹⁸ The epithet may be from Gael. *techt*, implying a root meaning ‘to go’. There is an alternative derivation meaning ‘wealthy’.

culture). These indicate a sense of the collective, but also a collective of individuals, for they are very far from the collective burials of the Neolithic. Anyway, the enclosures are followed by what may be termed *fortified communities*. In this period of enclosure and forts we have something that is very germane to Ireland and its 150 tuaths. This is especially true of the brochs of north-west Scotland, which strongly indicate fortified communities with no overarching central power, whatever subtle hierarchies existed within the region.

But then the forts, as we have seen, are replaced by large fortresses in southern England, for example, the massive Maiden Castle. It can be no coincidence that large — centres is a better word there, rather than fortress — appear in Ireland by about 150 BCE. The story of the earliest historical period in Ireland is clearly one of Irish society in the wake of the collapse of these centres. In part at least, this is surely the story of the *fiana* — the ‘warbands’.

The grand and immensely popular story of the *fiana* is, of course, that of Finn son of Cumail. However, a bit like Arthur over the sea from Ireland, Finn seems to have hoovered up all the other *fianas* about which stories were told. Kuno Meyer lists⁹⁹ a number of other leaders — Macc Cais, Macc Con, Luigne ui Dedad, Aed Dub and so on. Meyer, in fact, prints in his book a tale that closely resembles the Finn tales in outline. It tells of two ‘*fiana* leaders’, Ailill and Fothad. Fothad makes a tryst with an unnamed woman and is killed by Ailill, which is comparable to the well-known tryst of Diarmaid and Grainne and the wrath of Finn (Grainne’s husband). The stories of Finn are obviously infused with older

99 Kuno Meyer, Todd Lecture Series, ‘Fianaigeacht’, Introduction, p. xiii.

mythological material. For example, Diarmaid~Finn and Grainne obviously represent a hieros gamos, as does Ailill~Fothad and 'Woman'. This suggests that the 'fiana-king' may have been involved in rituals similar to that of the *ri* of a *tuath*. Anyway, Finn's is the last fiana standing — perhaps the similarity of the names 'Finn' and 'fiana' helped his success. His relevance here is that he indicates the important effect these warbands had in their heyday.

The fiana are surely to be linked closely to the 'scotti', who may have merely been fiana sent, or perhaps shunted, overseas. An important characteristic of the fiana is that they were in many cases *ecland* ('unclanned', that is outside of the tribal system). The evidence (always scarce, but I think there) indicates that in the centuries before the Historical Era, that is, in the Legendary Era, powerful kings began to use the fiana and, conversely, the fiana to use the powerful kings. In this way, the fiana became an important element in Irish tribal politics, precisely as a warlike element outside the tribal system. So, the king-tales of this period have a consistent background of what look like mercenary forces. We hear of kings who do not fight but who send 'generals' (like the three Collas) to fight for them.

One possibility that would be very significant is a connection between fiana and the name *Féni*. For *Féni* is another name, we are told, for *Goídel*. '*Batar* ¹⁰⁰ *trí prímcheinéla I nHéire .i. Féni ∩ Ulaith ∩ Gáilni .i. Laigin.*' This issue should be approached with a little subtlety. If the word and the name are the same, this is only true etymologically. The fiana and *Féni* were *not* equivalent in the world of words. If they are variants of the same word,

100 'The three main peoples of Ireland are the Feni, Ulaid and Galoin (or Lagin).' Quoted in FJ Byrne *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 106.

or an extremely similar one with the same Celtic root, then the Féni *could* however historically be associated with these warbands. This would provide a context for the origins of the Gael.

The Gael are closely linked to the Uí Néill, and these are in turn closely linked to the north. It is therefore interesting that in the area of the Northern Uí Néill we find in Ptolemy the *Vennicni*¹⁰¹, which is a plausible equivalent of *Féni*. East of these, Ptolemy tells us, dwelt the *Robogdii*, whose name may mean ‘good or preeminent fighters’ (cf *bagaudae* and Gaelic *bagaim*). If this *is* the meaning, it does not at any rate look like a tribal name, rather a fighting sept. It may indicate the status of northern Irish tribes under the political control of the Ulaid.

1.3. Góidels

The Goidels were descended from a Scythian king named Fénius Farsaid of the ‘Ui Japheth’ people. This Fénius was one of the seventy-two chiefs who built the famed Tower of Babel, presumably located in or near Scythia. According to some, he and his group of seventy-two scholars popped over to the plain of Shinar to study the babble of languages caused by the collapse of said Tower. After due contemplation and investigation, Fénius created the finest of languages in the wide world and he called it Goídelc. He had a son call Nel who married Scota, a pharaoh’s¹⁰² daughter. This Nel and this Scota have a son and they name him Goídel Glas. At exactly the same time as the Israelites leave Egypt to a-wander, so

101 The tribal name seems literally to mean ‘sons of the Venn’, which could be linked either to *fiana* or a similar but entirely distinct word *fine* ‘family’.

102 Fénius has obviously now popped over into Egypt.

too do Goídel's people. In fact, they a-wander for exactly 440 years, that is to say eleven times longer than the mere 'Ui Moses'. At the end of the a-wandering, and unfeasibly only at the end, there broke out a War of the Goidelic Succession for the Scythian crown. This was fought between Refloir and Míl, which the latter wins. That results in his exile, so now Míl pops over to Iberia and (of course) conquers it. One member of the 'Ui Goidel', Breogán by name, builded a great city called Brigantia, and it is from here¹⁰³ that the hero Íth sails to Ireland. Arriving at his destination, he finds that Ireland has 'three kings' and is ruled by the people of Danu. Some unspecified soul kills Íth, but the eight¹⁰⁴ sons of his brother Míl Espáine now set out to conquer Ireland. Whereas Íth was met by three 'kings', the sons of Míl are met by their three wives. Here a figure called Amergin emerges as a leader of the Goidels, who now defeat the people of Danu. In a thoroughly fair post-war treaty, the people of Míl are allotted *this* world and those of Danu the *other* world. The this-world bit of Ireland is parcelled out by Amergin to Éremon (the north) and Éber (the south).

This farrago is a variant of the 'synchronising' history associated with Orosius, who tried to link together the writings of Rome, Greece and the Old Testament. The tale of the Ui Goidel merely tries to tie in Irish traditions with earlier synchronicities. 'Fénus' for example, might be linked to Phinehas. Or the Phoenicians. His epithet *farsaid* could be linked to *pharaoh* or *pharisee*, both suitably 'biblical'. 'Scyth' obviously links to 'Scot', and Nel

103 He could see the island from Breogán's great Tower, which must have been even bigger than Fénus' own Babel.

104 Cf the tale of Cunedag and his eight sons setting forth from Manau Gododdin down into Wales, to expel the Irish 'with great slaughter'.

may be a reference to the Nile ('Nilus'). Later in the narrative, Breogán is used to link the Ui Goidel to Spain, as is Éber ('Iberia'). 'Éremon' is presumably taken to mean 'the man of Ériu'. In the final stages of the story, we enter into the realm of Irish myth, what with the people of Danu and whatnot.

If we consider the core of the farrago, we find something of key interest. Removing the synchronicity and the mythologising and the false equations, we surely still have Goídel Glas and Míl Espáine. Even Míl is clearly not a contrived link like Éber (> 'Iberia'). In these two we seem to have the nucleus of a genuine tradition, some remote and confused memory of Goídel and the 'Spanish soldier'. In these traditions, such loose names are generally genealogised in the same way that loose poems are anthologised. But whatever such a tradition was before the synchronisers got a hold of it, Goídel and Míl were unlikely to be kin. They are loose leaves.

The first clue we have in reaching any sort of understanding about all this is that the name 'Goídel' seems to be Welsh (or Brittonic) in origin. It may be significant that the figure of Magnus Maximus was remembered in the Welsh tradition as *Macsen Wledig*. Could Macsen be the 'soldier of Spain'? The possible link between these names is of course of little consequence in itself, but what should be considered is that 1) there *is* a link with an outlier level of plausibility, and 2) the sheer importance of Magnus Maximus for Britain in his time of flourishing. In the continuing chaos of the late Roman Empire, Magnus emerges as a 'rival Emperor' around 383 CE, but not before fighting and defeating the Scotti (and Picts) in 381 CE. His original centre of power was Spain, so it cannot be denied that the name 'Spanish soldier' would be apposite. Moreover, his power as Emperor (real

or proclaimed as the title was) soon extended over all western Europe, including Britannia, which was suffering from external threats and well as those from imperial pretenders. If he was an *wledig* ('leader'), he was just as much a *míl* ('soldier').

We know that, at this stage of the fall of the Empire, local chiefs were often appointed to defend Rome from their own people. This may explain the curious name *Goídel Glas*, which can be compared to *Enechglais*, a name known from the period of earliest Leinster history and also an ogham inscription. I suggest this epithet — which of course is in itself a perfectly transparent Gaelic colour-word (meaning variously 'green' or 'grey' or 'blue') — is to be derived from Latin *classis*, which can mean 'band' or 'levy'. Thus, we have the 'levy of Goídel' and the 'levy of Enech'. It is also interesting that the Enechglais and another early (and powerful) Leinster tribe, the Ui Garrchon (i.e. the 'people of Garrchu'), have ancestors with names bearing a striking resemblance to the very popular Basque names *Eneko* (> Inigo) and *García*. There are historical references to Magnus' establishing kingdoms (such as that of the dynasty of Coel Hen, and the kingdom of which Galloway was a late extension) and of him fighting the Picts and *Scots*. Another early Leinster tribe that was related to the Ui Garrchon was the Ui Loippíni, transparently descended from one *Lupinus*. That a 'Goídel', an Eneko and a García and a Lupinus may have been installed into power by the 'soldier of Spain' is surely conceivable and provides a plausible explanation for the otherwise curious figures of Míl and Goídel — why they are so prominent in the genealogical tradition — and also a context for the origins of the Gael. A British name for an Irish settler in Britain.

The name Goídel seems to have a Brittonic etymology,

from a root that came to mean ‘woodland’ or ‘wild’ in Welsh. According to this theory, the name means the ‘gwydd’ people. However, this involves substantial problems and is an example of linguistics trumping context rather than, as it should, supporting it. The dictionary proclaims that Welsh *gwyddel* (‘wildmen’) is the primal word and that the Irish name *Goídel* a mere loan. This implies that the early Irish based their entire genealogical system around a deeply unflattering Welsh name — and for what reason? For why? Surely, a more likely sequence is this — there was in Ireland a ‘people’, or a group of tribes, for whom ‘Goídelglais’ was of great significance. Although his backstory has not survived, what we do know is that these tribes declared him as their ancestor. As this ‘people’ clearly included the people of Conn and Níall, who came to dominate the island in the early historical period, the name of the ancestor correspondingly ballooned in significance. In fact, the genealogies, once the victory of Goídel was achieved, began to be tweaked so that more and more peoples became Goidelic — that is, Gael. I suggest, then, that a great transformation occurred as the ‘people of Eriu’ (Erainn) became ‘the people of Goídel’ (Gael). The Welsh name *Gwyddel* is therefore a borrowing from Ireland, a borrowing of the new name of the Irish people. The fact that Welsh *gwydd* can mean ‘wild’ simply adds a little colour to the name. Compare the English phrase ‘the Wild Irish’ (which is so well-known a term that it can be capitalised).

So, if we reason thus far, we can now return to the Brittonic etymology, which we can see is very fitting for the period of Scottic raids when it is highly plausible that the raiders were called ‘Wildmen’ by the Britons of the western coast. Goídel would then be a ‘wildman’ (i.e. a Scot) who was ‘planted’ into Ireland by the Romans

(presumably Magnus Maximus, the ‘soldier of Spain’), along with other bands from various parts of western Europe (such as, perhaps, Eneko and García and Lupinus in Leinster). We can also use the technique of ‘clustering’ at this point and bring together sundry related legendary or mythical characters who here are *Tuathal Techtmar*, *Conn Cétchathach*, *Cormac mac Art* and *Níall Nóigíallach*. Now, as Níall can be dated to around 450 CE and Magnus Maximus was active in Britain as a major player in the Roman power struggles after 380 CE, it is clear some members of our ‘cluster’ are likely to date back to the ‘Scottic’ era. Tradition places each figure in a sequence. This sequence might be artificial, but nevertheless Tuathal, Conn and Cormac are clearly ‘older’ than Níall and Tuathal in particular seems a good ‘fit’ for the Scottic Era.

They are therefore likely in part at least to take us back to the time in which ‘Góidel’ flourished, indicating how the Scots, the Fiana and the Goidels are three ways of looking at the same thing, albeit through the same crepuscular gloom.

1.4. Conn and Níall

The rise of the Gael is closely connected to the rise of the Uí Néill dynasty, but also to Conn Cétchathach and ‘Connacht’. By the time a proper linear history is available, between about 600 and 700 CE, the Uí Néill were firmly established. There were two ‘branches’, the Northern and Southern O’Neill. These claimed the exclusive right to the kingship of Tara that, in turn, gave them the exclusive right to the ‘High Kingship’ of Ireland. Well might they lay such a claim, for the Southern Uí Néill held both Brega (in which Tara is situated) and Mide (where the ‘centre’ of Ireland, Uisnech, is located).

The traditional view — the tradition of the Uí Néill — is that the south was the ‘homeland’ of the dynasty and the early High Kings moved north, destroying the great centre of the Ulaid, Emain Macha. In fact, it was (says the tradition) the three Collas who destroyed Emain. For this crime their branch of the dynasty was barred from the High Kingship. The privilege, therefore, was kept for the Uí Néill themselves.

The story of the Collas is not generally accepted today. They are, it is thought, a cipher for the three sons of Níall (*Enda*, *Conall* and *Eógan*). The name Colla is possibly from *Condla, and related to Conn Céthhathach himself (?< *Cond). This would indicate how closely the ‘Connachta’ and ‘Uí Néill’ were related. However, I don’t think the story of the move of the Uí Néill into to north is viable. In fact, if we try and see through the murk, it seems more likely that these legends show a broadly coherent rise of a power opposed to the existing power of both the ‘Dumnonii’ and the Ulaid. This earlier probably Keltic power is the subject of the following chapter, but here it can be said that Cruachan appears to have been controlled by the Fir Domnann who in turn are closely linked to the Lagen. We thus have a dimly-lit picture of an Ireland divided into four provinces — Ulaid, Lagen, Cruachan and Munster — with ritual centres at Tara¹⁰⁵ and Uisnech. If we look at the context of the legendary heroes of the Uí Néill, the fight for control over Tara seems to be a common element in the stories told about them. So, if we take the fact of our later Northern and Southern Uí Néill, we can speculate that their rise to power was connected with destroying the existing power

105 As the centre of the Lagen appears to have been Dún Ailinne, Tara cannot have been, though in the earliest historical era the Uí Neill and Lagen seem to have fought for control over the site.

structure of Cruachan, Emain and the Lagen and establishing control over Tara (and Uisnech). It was the north that was the ‘homeland’ of the Uí Néill and it was into the Midlands they expanded, probably with another local group related to Conn Cétchathach who were then seamlessly absorbed into the Uí Néill ‘family’ by the genealogical wizards.

Did Níall exist? I believe he was a divine ancestor, so therefore ‘no’. However, his legend does seem to have a strong sense of the real about it and I would prefer to think he *represents* history. TF O’Rahilly thought his name was originally *nél* (‘cloud’). The fact that the Goidelic-concocted legend features a character called ‘Nél’ supports this idea. It also suggests he was a character from myth, a personification of the mysterious mist that cloaked the gods who bestowed sovereignty. However, FJ Byrne mentions¹⁰⁶ what seems like a related tradition. The Luigni and Gailenga, says ‘an obscure genealogical tract’, fostered a royal infant named *Nia Noi nGrainne*, known in Latinised form as *Nia Novem Generum*. That is, Nia of 1) nine grains or 2) nine peoples, quite possibly two ways of saying the same thing. This in turn, it occurs to me, might even link back to the tribe mentioned in Ptolemy as the *Nagnatae*¹⁰⁷. If this is analysed as *nagnat-*, it could be explained as an equivalent variant of *novem generum*.

At any rate, this Nia perhaps provides as insight into the origins of Níall — he was a ‘champion’. Or perhaps we can go with O’Rahilly’s insight that an earlier *Nél* could have

¹⁰⁶ Irish Kings and High-Kings, p.68.

¹⁰⁷ This name may have survived in the form *Fir Ol nEcmacht*, said to have controlled all Connacht before the Connachta. The name may disguise an actual *Necmacht-*. However, as that form may in turn be modelled after names such as ‘Connacht’ and ‘Eóganacht’, it might represent a **Necnat-* < **Na-gnat-*.

been changed to *Níall* under the influence of his epithet *gíall*, but add that if he was assimilated to a *Nia* ‘of the nine peoples’, wherein ‘hostages’ was substituted for ‘peoples’, the change would be all the more likely. In his name, then, Níall might stake two claims — 1) his claim over Tara, as the divine mist cloaking the High King, and 2) his claim as a ruler of rulers and the keeper of their hostages.

The kings of the ‘Midland Goidels’, meanwhile, do not descend from Níall but his grandson¹⁰⁸ Diarmait mac Cerbaill. Two of his sons were the ancestors of the SílnÁedo Sláine (in the kingdom of Brega that contained Tara) and the Clann Cholmáin (the ‘Kings of Uisnech’ in Mide). The argument is convincing that Diarmait is an interloper into the Níall dynasty, so much so that I suspect he was not a true member of Uí Néill, but the possession of both Uisnech and Tara was surely a firm basis for an alliance.

I suggest, finally, that the ancestor Conn Cétchathach is in the first place to be associated with Cruachan, that is to say the Goidelic destroyers of the power of the Fir Domnann there. It is interesting to compare his epithet to the statement that the first dateable Pictish king, Drest son of Erp, ‘fought a hundred battles’. This would indicate that there was a symbolic meaning to the term. It is therefore comparable to Níall’s own epithet, which may also have a symbolic meaning. That is, they mean respectively, ‘a chief with many hostages’ and ‘a chief who fought many battles’, which both sum up to, ‘a powerful chief’. Anyway, the *Connachta* may have originally referred to a people in the west midlands area, possibly the people of Diarmait mac Cerbaill, but this people later

108 The details of this are discussed in *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, Chapter 6.

became fused into the Uí Néill. At this stage, the name was transferred from the people to the province, perhaps replacing the long-to-be-forgotten *Noi-gnatha.

1.5. Eógan

One of the great red-herrings of this period is that of the Eóganacht of Munster. In the early semi-legendary period under discussion, Munster seems very remote and it seems to have been just as remote in the preceding pre-Gaelic era of the Coiceda. The Eóganacht are often treated as almost abnormal due to their lack of ‘ambition’. However, as the Uí Néill juggernaut of aggression rolled on, clearly factions in Munster began to resent its notion of High Kingship and these factions clearly saw Munster as a southern counterpart to the Uí Néill’s north. This would make the Eóganacht — rulers of Munster — the southern counterpart of the Uí Néill. There was the Eóganacht and there was the Uí Néill. But this can have only been true in the times of Munstrous ambition.

However, when Munster *was* a place remote from the Uí Néill world of riot, *that* was the true time of the Eóganacht, who clearly indeed had no ambition to rule the world. The Eóganacht, rather, seemed to rule by tradition. There were ‘seven Eóganachts’, and that — like the ‘nine peoples’ of Nia? — seems to be a symbolic number. There were ‘seven sons of Cruth’ and ‘seven Maine’ in Connacht and ‘seven Monaig’ in Ulster and for that matter ‘seven sons of Níall’. The difference between the Eóganacht and the Erainn (to which group most of the non-Eóganacht tribes belonged in Munster) is often blurred in terms of the actual realities of power. We might compare this to Merovingian and Carolingian or early Capetian France, where the King was in fact less powerful than some of his Barons and far less powerful

than the Barons *en masse*. But he was a King and a Baron was not. Both the power of the Barons and of the King were tied to the same realm and that *royaume* decidedly required a *roi*. In light of this, it is easy to see how the Eóganacht could maintain power over ‘non-royal’ tribes without undue violence. They worked, as suggested, within tradition and it seems it was generally held that tradition must be respected for the good of all.

But who then were the Eóganacht? As usual, the genealogists give the answer. They were the descendants of Eógan Mór, also known as Mug Nuadat. The kings of Cashel, the ‘capital’ of Munster, were descendants of Conall Corc¹⁰⁹ who was, of course, himself descended from Eógan. Eógan Mór is a fascinating case study of Irish genealogy, for he is obviously the same¹¹⁰ character as Úgaine Mór. Or, the same but not. The stories about Eógan and Úgaine are entirely dissimilar, the characters likewise and not least the location. But they *are* same character because they *are* the same deity. The Eóganacht are not therefore descended from *the* Eógan, but *an* Eógan and there like magic we see two ‘kings’ who are both entirely the same and entirely different, Eogain Mor and Úgaine Mór. This all may indicate an Eóganacht with origins outside Munster, or one steeped in tradition.

The figure of Conall Corc is therefore significant, he who

109 There are a lot of kings around this time with names based of a root *corb-* (for example the name Corb itself, but also probably Cairbre and Cormac). Could both *corb-* and *corc-* be based on Latin *purpura*, the Imperial colour of Rome? Could this also mark a general trend away from the old ‘varna’ of red to represent kingship?

110 That the *u* in the latter name stands for *eo* ‘yew’ is indicated by the figure of Umor located in Connacht and associated with Cairbre Nia Fer. Even the sceptical TF O’Rahilly is hoodwinked into translating Umor’s name as ‘Big Ears’, rather than ‘great yew’. In fact, the name Umor is more or less a shortened form of Eógan~Úgaine Mór.

‘found’ (not ‘founded’) Cashel. This royal centre has a Latin name — it is the ‘Castle’, or ‘Castellum’ — and this clearly associates Conall Corc with Roman Britain. If we take one etymology of his name, he was *Condollos — ‘the great leader of the royal colour (red or purple)’. It would seem likely Conall came to Munster from Britannia. Was he a ‘returning Viking’? Was he a Roman ‘plant’? Was he a Christian? Unfortunately, though unsurprisingly, the information we have cannot answer questions like these. But Conall does seem to be the name of a man and not a deity (unlike Eógan). At any rate, he may make the political system of early historical Munster a little more understandable. He did not, say the scraps of tradition we have, *found* the Eóganacht. He ‘found’ Cashel, which became the nominal centre of power in the province. This may indicate that he *took over* the Eóganacht. There were seven ‘royal tribes’ scattered all over Munster. Their dominion, as we have seen, seems to have been based more on tradition than violence. Munster itself seems to have retained a traditional geography. It was itself a coiced. It had a north, south, east, west, and a centre. Cashel was new, but it was clearly assimilated into local traditions. If Conall was a ‘returning Viking’, these would be *his* traditions. There is also good reason to believe that the notion of seven tribes (or royal tribes) is also part of tradition. That is, the Eóganacht themselves were rooted in tradition and their ancestor rooted them still further into it.

So that is the red herring — red as Conall The Red himself — of the Eóganacht. By being linked to the Goidel, they are linked with the new, with disruption, with the dynamic and, above all, the new dynastic politics with its conquest and expansion. In fact, the Eóganacht lived in a land where things were the way things were and they apparently wanted to keep things the way they

were. The Eóganacht *were* the ruling tribes of Munster, which was their home, and not like to be kings of all Ireland.

The home of the Gael was the north, not the south.

1.6. Patrick

How, is unclear. But the rise of the Gael meant the rise of Christianity in Ireland. It is a current commonplace amongst scholars of this period, I believe, that the kings were initially hostile to Christianity. However, as a general rule, I suggest that *power is never hostile to what can increase it*. The new religion *must* have complemented the new kings. One of the most important aspects of the old ideology, we know, was the sacred marriage of the King and Sovereignty, presided over by Lug. The new religion would have been a unique weapon with which to destroy the whole basis of this ideology and of course the far more pragmatic power of the kings who relied on its rituals and ceremonies. This must be one of the most important keys to understanding the rise of Christianity in Ireland.

There is very little direct information about the conversion of the Irish. The Church would have liked people to think St Patrick performed miraculous levels of conversions, but the change from the old to the new religion was, in many ways, gradual. Giraldus Cambrensis' infamous description of a Connacht king's inauguration in the Twelfth Century is a case in point. But the Church does seem to have firmly established itself *as an institution* by the early historical period. The *druí* holds a very low rank in early historical times. St. Columba would have been a powerful druid if he had lived two hundred or so years earlier, but instead he indicates how dead the old order was by the 7th century

CE. That order had consisted of king and druid, the new order consisted of king and cleric.

The church and schools had an important unifying influence on Ireland including – the schools wrote the manuscripts – the unity of the official language of literature. The church and schools spread over the island, but a *ri* remained ruler of his tuath. There was certainly regionalism – Armagh, Kildare, etc – but more significantly there was also an interconnected and common culture. It is likely this also characterised the old druidic order and this shared inter-connectedness would explain both the apparently rapid collapse of the old order *and* the gradual evolution of Christianity, as Lug's druids morphed into Jesus' priests.

The collapse of the old religion, however, could only have happened if there was a driving force behind the change, one that made it clear which side to stand on. Energetic missionaries for the new religion there may have been, but if they were influential, it will have been because there was a powerful ruling faction who were hearing what they wanted to hear when the Christians came to preach. We have seen that, in the north at least, there was such a candidate driving force, the one behind the rise of the Gael — the Scotti, the Féni and the Goídel.

But it is the background to this period that is the key to understanding these events. In the model adopted in this book, parts of Ireland — most likely the Leinster and the Midlands and possibly Ulster — was dominated by British warlords at least by around 150 BCE, the time the great centres of the coiced system appear in the archaeological record. However, only a century later Caesar arrived in 'Gaul' and then just under a century after that the invasion and occupation of Britain was undertaken. The British warlords were cut off from

Britain. If they had retained a British identity until that point, it was lost not long after. There is good evidence that significant Scottic activity originated in Leinster and the name of the Lleyn Peninsula ('the P. of the Lagen') confirms this beyond doubt. But the Lagen in their peninsula did not speak a Brittonic language and were not British warlords. They were *Irish*. At the time of the rise of the Scotti, then, we can surmise a certain amount of instability within Ireland and new political realities developing.

This may also be the context for the Gaelic language. It is surely no coincidence that a modern English dialect (Middle English) developed after the Norman settlement of England, after the English nobility and their culture of the written text were marginalised. The language was, as it were, left without a head. Brittonic was likewise without a head after the collapse of the Roman authority and it developed into Welsh. It is possible Irish was left without a head after the settlement of British chiefs, except in a Munster that appears to have retained its independence. Hence, when we see ogham inscriptions begin to appear they are not written in Gaelic, but a more 'classical' form of Irish. Although Gaelic, the language of even the earliest manuscripts, appears a few centuries later than the first 'ogham'¹¹¹ Irish' and it therefore appears the language *developed* later, this need not be the case. Ptolemy for example places a river called *Argita* ('shining' or 'silver' river) to the north east and that is comparable to Gaelic *argat*, not to Gallo-Brittonic or an earlier *Irish *argant*-.

If we therefore begin to see the Gaels as being, in this period, a *peripheral* people to a British core, we have one

111 Often named, for unfathomable reasons, 'Primitive' Irish.

very good reason for this peripheral group to adopt Christianity, which made the entire panoply of the druidic belief system — which seems to have had at its core an almost pharaonic cult of the *ri(x)* — redundant. The gods that upheld the power of the *ri* (and the *druī*) were dethroned and the *ri* and *druī* fell with them. That, though, opened the door for a new kind of *ri*, backed by a new and more powerful god, the One God of the Holy Trinity. We can read Tacitus¹¹² for an account of the power of the belief that Christianity overcame —

[I]gitur Monam insulam, incolis validam et receptaculum perfugarum, adgredi parat . . . Stabat pro litore diversa acies, densa armis virisque, intercurstantibus feminis, [quae] in modum Furiarum veste ferali, crinibus disiectis faces praeferebant; Druidaeque circum, preces diras sublati ad caelum manibus fundentes, novitate adspectus perculere militem, ut quasi haerentibus membris immobile corpus vulneribus praeberent . . . [L]uci saevis superstitionibus sacri — nam cruore captivo adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant.

‘Therefore [Suetonius] prepared to attack the island of Mona whose inhabitants were strongly-built and which was a hiding-place for fugitives . . . The opposing force stood on the shore, armed men arrayed close together, while women raced around in the manner of Furies and waving brands, hair dishevelled. All around, the Druids, hands raised to the heavens and outpouring devilish prayers, put fear into our soldiers unfamiliar with such a sight, and as if their limbs were paralysed, they stood motionless and exposed to wounds . . . [T]heir groves that were devoted to wild superstitions were destroyed — indeed, it was their custom to cover their altars with the blood of captives and consult their gods by means of human entrails.’

112 The Annals [XIV — 29-30].

It is doubtful anything like this happened in Ireland and although there must have been some violence involved, I suggest the conversion of the island was more typically informed by a feeling of following a better bet. Take the fall of Emain Macha. As this is *Isamnion* in Ptolemy, it probably meant something like ‘the Samhain place’ and this confirms its ritual nature. Its fall is, reasonably enough, usually taken to be a *destruction* of the tribal centre by the Uí Néill. But *what*, we may ask, was being destroyed? Yes, the tribal centre of the Ulaid, *but* the centre of power also of the ‘pagan’ — of the drui and of the old gods. Likewise, Dún Ailinne in Leinster, surely. In Munster, a new centre was built, as we have seen, in the name of Conall Corc — but in the name of what religion? The Castellum survived into the Christian era safely enough. As for Tara and Uisnech, these were the centre of the claimed and decidedly *secular* power of the Uí Néill.

But even though the new God triumphed, the spirit of the old gods lived on in tradition, just as the spirit of the gods of the Boyne Valley Neolithic may have survived within the people of Danu. The drui was no more, but his *spirit* endured in that of the priest. Was the drui not, say some, the ‘wood-wise man’? — the keeper of the holy *nemet* in the deeps of the sacred wood? Is his voice not at the core of the beautiful hermit poems so common in Old Irish? Is the great goddess Boi, who narrates perhaps the greatest Old Irish poem of all — she who perhaps even embodies great goddess of Old Europe — is she not merely *the* cailleach, the great goddess in her old age form — but also *a* cailleach, that is to say a nun?



The Storm

The storm approaches the Isle of Glass like a flea who spies a well-fed hound. It approaches steadily though — it doesn't leap. Icily and easily it glides across the sky. They grow concerned, the gods do. It isn't their storm, this storm approaching. They didn't create this storm.

When the storm strikes, when it flows over the Isle of Glass, the gods, aghast, cover their eyes and ears. The storm is very terrible indeed. There is boulders of hail and rivers of rain and blades of razor-sharp lightning.

It has come to this, the gods said. We did not serve them well and this is our deserved reward. They prayed to us, we took from them. Always praying and taking, and it seemed it would last forever. Our greed has made us weak. This new God is jealous, as even He admits. But this new jealous God has made them both fearful and proud. And now He by Himself confronts our once mighty retinue.

What are we to do?

2. Keltic Ireland

One way of looking at pre-Gaelic Ireland is simply to deduct the Gael from it. Munster will have been ruled by the Erainn, Connacht from Cruachan, Leinster by the Lagen and Ulster by the Ulaid. The Lagen (Galioin) have strong links to Connacht as well as Leinster, indicating a horizontal Keltic 'band' across the centre of the island. Of course, the 150 tribes/polities of the early historical period were likely preceded by 150 tribes/polities in this early prehistoric period and that much would have been similar. However, the political system will have been subtly different if many of the dominant tribes were from Britain, with British affiliations. Of course too, we must deduct priests and God and then add druids and the gods of Danu.

Keltic settlement of Ireland must have been strongly influenced in the early years by the local politics within Britain. The settlement may have been a continuous process for a few centuries, but must have ceased when Britain became a Roman province. Ptolemy places the *Brigantes* and *Manapii* on the east coast of Ireland. These were probably recent immigrants from the central part of Britain and perhaps were fleeing from Rome, being the last Keltic groups to settle in Ireland. They likely left a trace in the figure of St. Brigit (< **Brigantia*) and the *Fer Manach* tribe (> *Fermanagh*) and also in the legendary hero (that is, deity) *Forgall Manach*.

Whether Keltic tribes in Ireland were all allies and whether they saw themselves as part of a single unified group is beyond the evidence we have. The later Norse, certainly, were not a unified group. However, both Danes and Norwegians were grouped together by the Irish as *gall* ('foreigners'). The coiced system does indicate there

was an ordered geopolitical system with Ireland in the pre-Gael period. Just as Gaelic Ireland, with its local *ris* and *tuaths*, was unified by priests and scholars, Keltic Ireland was unified by druids. Greco-Roman authors inform us of the 20 years of training that a druid had to undergo, at least on the continent. Pre-Christian Ireland is likely to have had both druids and ‘secular’ scholars of tribal histories who were the justifiers of royal power constructing the genealogies and ensuring that kings were descended from the right ancestors. The centre of Ireland may have been the ritual centre for the learned class.

By around 150 BCE, as we have seen, the ritual centres for each province had been built — Navan Fort, Cruachan and Dún Ailinne. A defensive wall, albeit discontinuous, was constructed in the north — the ‘Black Pig’s Dyke’ or the ‘Worm’s Ditch’ — and may mark the southern boundary of ‘the Ulaid’. Those who study such constructions believe their primary purpose is rarely defensive, but rather intended to effect a demarcation. They are above all built to be *visible*. This applies to Offa’s Dyke and, for that matter, Hadrian’s Wall.

In Keltic Ireland, Keltic groups dominated Leinster and the centre (and perhaps the north), surrounded by Irish-speaking tribes for whom the collective name *Erainn* seems appropriate to use. Druidism was a binding force between local tribes and an island-wide system of provinces possessing a sacred centre both royal (Tara) and ritual (Uisnech). It is likely, then, that underlying any local or ethnic differences there was a strong sense of belonging to the island, of being ‘Irish’ (however that was expressed at that time). In time too, most likely after Rome closed off Gaul and Britannia, the Kelts of Ireland themselves became Irish, just as the French of England

became English and, closer to home, the earliest Norman chiefs became Anglo-Irish and certain Vikings became the Gall-Goidel¹¹³ (the Galwegians of Galloway).

2.1. The non-Invasion of Nemed

Although not much more than a fairy tale in historical terms, the story of Nemed may be briefly told. According to the Book of Leinster, a son of Agnomain¹¹⁴ named Nemed sets out from Greek Scythia and sails across the Caspian Sea to Ireland. With him are four chieftains, Starn¹¹⁵, Iarbonel¹¹⁶ Fáid (or Fátha), Annind and not forgetting Fergus¹¹⁷ Lethderg. The Annals of the Four Masters add that Macha, the wife of Nemed, is accompanying him along with the chieftains' wives¹¹⁸. Basically, the Ui Nemed clear plains and build royal forts but are opposed by the Ui Fomorians. Nemed himself dies of plague but Morc son of Dela and Conand son of Febair of the Ui Fomorians and living in the latter's 'tower' oppress the Ui Nemed each Samhain. The Ui Nemed attack and defeat Conand but are in turn are near-annihilated by Morc. According to the Book of Leinster, Fergus Lethderg escaped to end up ruling all of Britain, as you do, though that is until the arrival of Ingís and Orsa of the Ui Uechtillsians who 'took it from them' (*co ngabsat forru*).

The late and composite nature of the tale is indicated by

113 That is, Viking-Gael. Literally *gall* means 'foreigner', so that the Vikings were called Gall. Danes were 'white foreigners' (Fingall) and Norwegians 'black foreigners' (Dubgall > Dougal).

114 Agamemnon?

115 A doublet of Slaine?

116 This name perhaps containing 'O-Nel' < Ui Neill?

117 The epithet means 'red-side', just as we have a *Medb* Lethderg.

118 Medu, Macha (!), Yba, and Ceara.

its naming of *Artur* as a son of Nemed. However, there are various points of interest in amongst the nonsenses. For example, the coupling¹¹⁹ of *Nemed* and *Macha* is interesting. Etymologically, this pairs *nem* ‘heaven’ with *mag* ‘field’ (i.e. ‘earth’), but we also have the contrast between the sacred (*nemed* ‘holy grove’) and profane (‘fertile? land’). Moreover, the Ui Nemed are said to be responsible for the two royal forts of Rath Cimbaeth and Rath Chind Eich. The fort (*rath*) of Cimbaeth is said to be ‘i Semne’, which is surely to be related to the name Isamnion — our later Emain *Macha*. Again, *Chind Eich* clearly means ‘horse-head’. If the reconstructed Celtic word *ko(a)nkos* ‘horse’ actually existed (which is debated), this might allow an etymology of ‘horse head’ for the famous name of *Conchobar* (< *konko-bar). Chind Eich and Conchobar would therefore be one and the same. Cimbaeth (‘hostage’) is Ailill (‘other’ or ‘surrogate’), the replacement king of the dead season, so in a sense Chind Eich and Cimbaeth are also one and the same. The tale may imply that the king had a summer and winter seat, but that may be a mere metaphor and the one single fort had a summer and winter protocol. This all in turn relates the tale to all the stories of wild and fiery attacks on kings at Samhain, perhaps the time of year when *those* gods (the Fomorians) attacked *these* gods (the people of Danu). We are even told that Fergus Lethderg (‘royal’) *left*, just like Fergus mac *Róich* (‘great horse’ rather than ‘horse head’) left Emain for ‘Connacht’ in the famous Cattle Raid of Cooley. The four sons are also of significance, for these probably indicate the four cardinal points (perhaps with Emain as the centre?).

119 Perhaps compare the allied Celtiberian towns of *Numantia* and *Termantia*. These names can be linked to Gaelic *nem* and *tír* (cognate with Latin *terra* ‘earth’).

One final point of interest is the builders of Rath Chind Eich, which ‘was dug in one day by *Boc*, *Roboc*, *Ruibne*, and *Rotan*, the four sons of Matan Munremar’. First, the name ‘Roboc’ may be a memory of the Robogdi of Ptolemy. Second, the four sons are again likely to represent the four divisions of a kingdom, that is to say, here the kingdom of the Ulaid. Third, the names may represent the aspects of each province — Boc (*bucaill* ‘shepherd?’), Roboc (*ro+bagaim* ‘very good fighter’ as per ‘Robogdi’), Ruibne (? <*ro+binne as Suibne < *su+binne, so ‘very beautiful’), Rotan (?*ro+dan ‘great judge’, so compare names such as *Midir* and *Conn*; ?‘the red one’, red being the king’s *varna* colour?).

The tale of Nemed, then, is not one of a man who once lived, let alone one who invaded Ireland, but a broad outline of the royal ideology of the druids and how it worked, a depiction of the *ri* in his royal seat and the annual cycle of the seasons between wealth and dearth.

2.2. Kelts

Nemed is, in and among the fictions of the early Irish historians, ancestor of the Fir Bolg. When the Ui Nemed were annihilated and its people dispersed, one group popped over to Greece. The Greeks enslaved them and made them carry bags. They were therefore called ‘the men of bags’ (*fir bolg*). As luck would have it, the Ui Bolgs escape Greece (just as the Israelites and, of course, the Ui Nemed, were fleeing Egypt) and then pop off to Iberia. Whether this was before or after the Ui Nemed conquered it I am not sure. After all, as the Ui Bolgs were in fact descendants of Nemed, the overall chronology is open to question. Anyway, five chiefs of the Ui Bolgs now pop off over to Ireland and, as you do, divide it into five provinces and set up a High Kingship at Tara. The famous five are

— Gann, Genann, Sengann, Slaine and Rudraige. They are then challenged by the people of Danu who have now popped over into Ireland under their king Nuadu, the island they apparently rule. The Ui Bolgs' hero Sreng, luckily, just about saves them in single combat with Nuadu (though some say they were, like the Ui Nemed, almost annihilated and forced to flee Ireland).

Eoin MacNeill agreed the *Fir Bolg* were the 'men of bags' but rather than having them enslaved by the 'Greeks', he thought they were an aboriginal group of leathermakers. TF O'Rahilly, on the other hand, believed they were Belgae and therefore Keltic invaders of Ireland. There are also *Fir Galioin* and *Fir Domnann*, sometimes linked to the *Fir Bolg*, and the *Domnann* have an obvious link to the British tribes of the Dumnonii (Cornwall and Devon) and Damnonii (Clyde region). More Keltic invaders? O'Rahilly thought so. Lastly, another Irish people was called the *Cruthin*, whose very name means 'Britons' (via the earlier form Pretani). A third set of invaders?

Is the idea of British invaders — Dumnonii, Belgae and Pretani — any less of a yarn than that of Gann, Genann, Sengann, Slaine and Rudraige? That is the subject of this chapter.

2.2.1. Steppe and Iron

In recent decades, it has become clear that the Scythian steppe had a very significant influence on European culture. Within the Andronovo complex, located between the Urals and the river Yenisei, where Indo-Iranian languages are generally agreed to have been spoken, by about 1,000 BCE the military tactic of what was basically a horse-rider-army had been developed. It is unsurprising, then, that steppe nomads now began to move west from the Andronovo core area. To these

peoples we can apply a general name of 'Scythian', bearing in mind this includes peoples actually called 'Scythian' (or *Saka*, in Persian). The first Scythian group to arrive in the west seems to have been the *Cimmerians* and these settled in eastern Europe by about 800 BCE. Next, a little later, came the eponymous *Scythians* who seem to have driven the Cimmerians from the Pontic region (just as a few centuries later the Scythians were attacked by the *Sarmatians*), but also settled in eastern Europe.

The arrival of Scythian warbands into Europe coincided with the rise of the Hallstatt culture in the Alps. What is becoming clearer and clearer is that Scythian groups greatly influenced the wealthy chiefs of the powerful Hallstatt centres. Although these chiefs were not horse-riding nomads, the chariot and the horse quickly became status symbols for them. Perhaps more important here is that the La Tène warriors who destroyed the Hallstatt chiefdoms also adopted these panoplies of power. Hallstatt also ushers in the Iron Age, iron also being adopted by La Tène. All this is a key to understanding the La Tène phenomenon, that with its steppe elements it represents a new and dynamic culture.

Because we are now entering the world of words via Rome and Greece, we have a direct testimony that the La Tène era was expansive. The 'mechanism' of expansion was the *Galatai*. The name, which literally means 'the valorous ones', probably actually meant 'fighters' or 'warriors'. What is probably a later and equivalent term was *Gaesatae*, which literally means 'spear men'. However, the historian Polybius tells us it actually meant 'warriors' or, rather tellingly, 'mercenaries'¹²⁰.

¹²⁰ Probably by this time some of these mercenaries were not Celtic

The Galatai (*Galli* in Latin > *Gaul*) were not a tribe, but indicate some sort of confederation or alliance. It is likely this confederation shifted over time, all the while retaining a clearly-defined identity. The Gaesatae are mainly associated with aiding the Keltic peoples of the Po Valley, under threat from Rome. This indicates very clear lines of communication between the northern tribes and those in Italy.

It is with the Galatai that the rise of the Kelts — that is, the speakers of Gallo-Brittonic — should be associated. The early centres of the La Tène (Burgundy, Marne-Moselle, Bohemia) are therefore the early core regions of the Kelts. This immediately tells us that ‘Gaul’ itself, for example, is actually a rather peripheral region of our Galatai. ‘Belgica’, on the other hand, is a core area. The Galatai/*Galli* were therefore in some sense ‘*Belgae*’. Another key point is the close links across the channel that are apparent in the archaeological record from the Bronze Age. Clearly, then, this region was *Celtic-speaking and it is absurd to see ‘Celts’ ‘sweeping into’ southern Britain in the La Tène period. There was no doubt immigration and settlement and movements of dynasties and probably even small ‘invasions’, and it is probable that the new ‘Celtic-steppe’ culture did separate peoples across the Channel, at least in the initial La Tène period. But both sides of the Channel were populated by essentially the same ‘people’.

It is in the remoter parts of Britain, and in Ireland, that La Tène perhaps represents an alien presence.

speakers, and were called *Garmani* (‘spear men’ translated into a Germanic language). The Romans, hearing this name, modified it to *Germani*. That is, as if it were from Latin *germanus* ‘brother’.

2.2.2. Invasions and Forts

It is the model in this book that *Celtic speech arrived with metallurgy, in the Beaker or immediate post-Beaker period. When we look at the archaeological record of Ireland, as we now have it, we must recognise just how inadequate it is to answer the question of this arrival, let alone definitively. If we consult the world of things alone, we ought to conclude that the Irish *never* arrived in Ireland. I believe the only available approach to the problem is to seek for a context, rather than pots or swords, and that context is metallurgy and the ensuing trading network across a now clearly mostly Indo-European-speaking Europe. Another point to make is that by about 1,000 BCE, as we have seen, the material witnesses of Ireland clearly indicate a culture that is basically Irish — cauldrons and feasts, swords and fighting. Archaeology, in fact, refutes the coming of Irish-speakers to the island *after* this period. Both Hallstatt and Le Tène artefacts are distributed either in too narrow an area or are concentrated in the north and midlands. This line of reasoning confirms that *Irish was spoken in the Bronze Age and before that, the only valid context for an expansion of it into Ireland is the early period of metallurgy. The conclusion, then, is that any Keltic (Gallo-Brittonic) speakers who ‘swept-into’ the island found it inhabited by *Irish speakers.

If we are looking for Kelts in Ireland, then, we can begin in the Hallstatt C period (c. 800-c. 600 BCE), when metal items concentrated in the Shannon and Ulster Bann regions. In addition, finely-made metal items called gorgets cluster along the Shannon. Then there is the extraordinary fort of Dun Aonghus on the Aran Islands near the Shannon region. What is significant, perhaps, about this fort is its distinctive *cheveaux de frise*

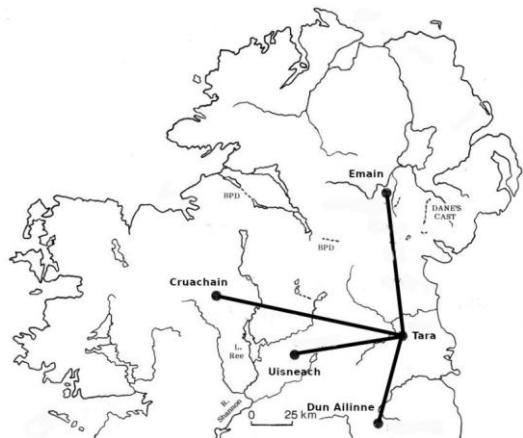
defensive system that has parallels both in north west Iberia and also the Forth region. Now, the function of Dun Aonghus was surely to protect the Shannon region and watch over the trade there.

More useful is a consideration of Irish forts in general. Towards the end of the prehistoric era, by about 150 BCE, the royal sites of legendary history are now ‘activated’.

But in the late Bronze and earlier Iron Ages, the spread of forts does not match the written record at all closely. Dun Aonghus itself, and imposing forts such as Benagh, Caherconree, Freestone Hill and Rathgall are not located in places suitable for provincial capitals. This strongly suggests that the ‘capitals’ evolved later and as part of a deliberative process. They belong, I suggest, to the Keltic era and mark the dominance of Keltic chiefs (and of course druids). We can make some basic statements about these provincial centres —

- Navan Fort dates from the Bronze Age, c. 800 BCE.

Although it was clearly an important place and may have had relations with Spain (if the famous skull of a Barbary ape dates from the Bronze Age), it is the grand reconstruction that began around c. 150 BCE that can be linked to *Emain Macha* and the *Ulaid*. It is this centre that may have been



constructed by a Keltic chief.

- Dún Ailinne, the chief centre of the prehistoric Lagen dates from the La Tène era, r-c dates beginning c. 400 BCE and it may have been in use until around 400 CE. Depending how closely it is to be linked to the Lagen, the earlier r-c dates may indicate the earliest period of Keltic settlement in the region.
- Tara and Cruachan are complexes that do not date to one time. Tara, for example, contains sacred mounds and stones that date back to the Neolithic. It is therefore difficult to place these sites in relation to any sort of Keltic presence.

Whether Keltic or not, these centres of power are curiously located towards the midlands and the sites were deliberately selected in order to be reasonably close to each other. The meaning of the name Tara (*Teamhra*) is precisely 'lookout', for supposedly each Province can be seen from the site. If they were Keltic, then the period c.400-c.150 is I suggest when Keltic chiefs made their presence felt in the island.

2.3. Peoples

A Keltic Timeline

We have enough information during this period to build up a simple timeline for the invasions of the Keltic period, a skeletal list that at least provides a broad time-frame for a range of Keltic population movements in Europe and into parts of Britain [*dates BCE unless stated otherwise*] — 1) c. 450 **Hallstatt destroyed** ; 2) 390 **Rome sacked** ; 3) c. 350 **Parisi** ; 4) c. 325 **Pytheas** — 'Prettanoi' ; 5) 300? **Brochs**, north west Scotland ; 6) 279 **Delphi sacked** ; 7) c. 250 **Volcae**.

By about 150 the geopolitical landscape of the legendary historical

era was perhaps in place. If we take the Black Pig's Dyke et al to indicate a boundary marker, this and the re-foundation of Navan Fort provide convincing evidence for the existence of the Ulster of our sagas — the great province of the north. An incidental conclusion must be that the more southerly provinces also now existed.

So, our 'core date' in Ireland is 150 BCE. In Europe it is 450 BCE, the fall of the Hallstatt chiefs. That date and the date when the Senones sacked Rome — 390 BCE — are clearly linked. The sack of the city was, for everyone but the Romans, a minor event compared to the occupation of the Po Valley by Galatian tribes. The date of the arrival of the Parisi into Britain in c. 350 BCE is likewise linked to the Galatai — we are told by Caesar that the Senones and Parisii of France were closely-related tribes. If the earliest brochs date from c. 300 BCE, can that date *not* be linked to these Galatai? With the brochs, we have close links to Domna and the Dumnonii. Given this more or less sequence of Galatai-related events, the fact that all over the north and midlands of Ireland there are finds of La Tène material becomes more significant.

There is, then, a very respectable level of support for the idea of a Keltic movement into Ireland if we combine the evidence in this way.

If it does support a such a movement though, then who were these Kelts?

2.3.1. Galioin, Domnann, Bolg

The Fir Domnann and the Fir Galoin are often linked¹²¹ together and in turn linked to the Legin, as are the Fir Bolg. From the literary evidence, this seems to be connected to the idea that the Domnann once ruled over

¹²¹ Example — Galion tra ⁊ Domna[i]nd anmand sin do Lagnib. (Book of Leinster.)

Cruachan, that Leinster was linked to them and that these Domnann also once ruled from Dún Ailinne. This indicates that both Cruachan and Leinster were once great centres of power that were not Gael centres of power and that the control of Mide and Brega by the Uí Néill involved a significant political and cultural shift. Likewise, though this is slightly better-documented and we have here a coherent literary tradition, Emain — the great centre of the Ulaid — was destroyed by (or at least to the main benefit of) the Uí Néill in the early or mid-5th century CE. Now, the Ulaid were classed as Erainn, who in turn were linked to the Fir Bolg and *these* can be linked to the Belgae. However, if these peoples *were* (or this people *was*) Keltic, we have seen that by the time of the Scottic era, an Irish language was predominant in Ireland. Within the Irish written records, the Domnann, Galioin and Bolg are more than a name but less than a people.

And yet. Controlling Cruachan and Dún Ailinne and (possibly) Emain, as we are told they did, cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to prehistory, although there is nothing left above ground of Dún Ailinne anymore. The Domnann, Galioin and Bolg are not like the people of Danu. They are clearly not quite a mythical people. As we have seen, there were no less than two peoples named the ‘Fir Domnann’ on the west coast of Britain. There are real connections for this ‘people’ between Britain and Ireland.

One reason there is highly suggestive evidence that can nevertheless easily be ‘refuted’ is that there was clearly a very large gap between the time of Ptolemy and the early historical period. In a nutshell, this is due to the rise of 1) the Gael, and 2) Christianity. The Ulster Cycle of sagas is therefore a precious window not so much perhaps to the Iron Age, as Kenneth Jackson suggested, but onto pre-

Christian Ireland. This Cycle, and the adoption of Patrick, Ireland's national Saint, was the last throw of the dice for the Ulaid and, it turns out, a most successful one in terms of their lasting fame. However, if there was a Keltic Ireland, it was long gone and long forgotten by the historical era. Given the substantial breach of culture *and* the obvious fact that Keltic and Irish are both Celtic-family languages, this should not be surprising. We therefore have a picture of which only the two far ends remain. At the one end we see Keltic groups controlling the great ritual centres of Ireland and at the other scattered aitheachtuatha who lack the right ancestors. If the Kelts controlled the ritual centres and the Gael destroyed them in the name of the new deity, we at least have a plausible context for the way the two ends of our picture look.

2.3.2. Enigmatic Names

If we compare the Domnann, Galioin and Bolg, we see that they are strongly linked as peoples, but the peoples associated with them are scattered throughout Ireland. In fact, we have peoples such as the Gailenga and Gailing whose names seem to link them to the Galioin and who probably are linked to them, but in the record are independent peoples. When they are linked, it is generally in an obscure and enigmatic manner. For example, it is inferred ¹²² the Domnann controlled Cruachan, the 'capital' of pre-Gaelic Connacht. However, we are also told how Cormac mac Art took Connacht from the Gamanrad. In historical times the Fir Domnann and Gamanrad lived in the wilds of Irrus Domnainn in the north west of Connacht. But we can nevertheless

¹²² Tinde mac Conrach, of the Fir Domnann, is said to have been expelled from Cruachan, which he had formerly ruled.

compare the two texts below —

- rothinoilsaid dono teora Condachta, i. Fir Domnann
 ¬ Fir Craibi ¬ Tuatha Taiden (‘then the three
 Connachts gathered - [...])
- Tres praecipiae fuerunt familiae, viz Gamanradii,
 Fir-chraibi & Tuatha-taidhen ‘There were three
 pre-eminent families [...]

Were the Gamanrad and Domnain the same ‘people’, or were the former a Dumnonian tribe? Were they different peoples? There is no way of knowing for sure, but this provides a good example of the nature of Irish tribes and the frustrations of trying to second-guess how they were related. It is always important to remember that ethnicity was determined by genealogy in the Irish tribal system, rather than mere territory. That is where Ptolemy’s fascinating and fairly detailed map of Britain and Ireland falls short, for it merely names tribes and not how their ruling families were related. The Irish political system however in certain ways *worked* through genealogy.

In a sense, the genealogists ruled Ireland. For example, if the rulers of a Leinster tribe descended from Cathair Mor they were ‘free’. This is because the ruling dynasty descended from Cathair Mor. Other tribes were *forthuatha*. ‘Outsiders’. But who was Cathair Mor? Judging from the name, ‘he’ was ‘*the Big City*’. That is to say, some or other large tribal capital¹²³ within Leinster. Of course, ‘he’ was re-imagined as a man, but this shows just how nebulous the genealogies get and illustrates too that the important thing was the *name*, not its verity.

¹²³ The name being comparable to the Raith Mor of the Dal nAraide in north east Ireland.

These names, as we go back into an increasingly imaginary time, begin to be bound up together into a terrific network of apparent meaning that links X or Y tribe either into a part of a hierarchy or an equal kinship. Tribes who lacked or perhaps had lost a king were placed outside the network. They had no genealogy (at least, not one that mattered) and no history. No ancestor city for these tribes!

These enigmatic names live within a world governed by what today is sometimes termed *truthiness*. Truth is what is wanted to be believed and what is agreed to be believed. If people want to believe something and agree it is true, then it is true in a way. So, concerning the current conundrum, our starting point is what appears to be a clear-headed statement that the Domnann, Galioin and Bolg are the same people and they held power over large areas of Ireland, but when we look into the how's and who's, we enter the genealogist's network of truthiness in which what was still water transforms into the chaos of Scylla and Charybdis.

2.3.3. Enigmatic Things

If we leave aside the enigmatic names, we can take a look at the enigmatic things in the archaeological record. Here we move away from imaginary men dressed up as cities towards trying to figure out what this or that sword was thinking when it was set into the ground.

A. Tin Traders of Hallstatt

We can start with the foundation of the Greek settlement of Massilia (c. 600 BCE) and the Punic expansion into southern Iberia (*Tartessos*) perhaps a couple of centuries earlier. We have met with the material witnesses of this period — Hallstatt C swords in the Bann and Shannon, the Shannon estuary forts (Dun Aonghus, Caherconree and Benagh), the Shannon gorgets — these

all indicate a certain amount of trade and a consequent amount of wealth. Hallstatt C may be evidence of incursions of people speaking a language that was perhaps not Celtic, but a related dialect of it (as per Lepontic).

A tribe that may be related to such a movement is Ptolemy's *Auteini*. The purpose of Dun Aonghus, and no doubt also Caherconree and Benagh, was to guard the wealth of the Shannon. There exists an interesting chain of links¹²⁴ between the *Auteini* and the *Uaithni*, and *Fothad* and the *Votadini*, together with the *Vettones* of Spain. It is a long-shot, but I suggest a connection to *Vectis* (that is, the Isle of Wight). The standard explanation for that name is to link it to a root **uekto-* that became Welsh *gwaith* and Gaelic *fecht*. These have a general meaning of 'division' or 'time', but *gwaith* can mean 1) 'fort' and 2) 'works' or 'factory' or 'mine' and 3) 'fortification'. Could the name *Vectis*, then, have meant something like 'trading place', effectively a fortified place that was associated with manufactured goods? Perhaps a **uot* was a northern British Celtic cognate of *gwaith* and this gave a **uotant* (just as *briga-* gave *brigant-*) that developed into a **uotad*. The root word also, I also suggest, would lie behind the name *Auteini* — 'the people of the trading fort'.

B. Charioteers of La Tène

The Atlantic trading network must have been a significant development for the *Dumnonii* of south west Britain, active participants in the tin trade along the Atlantic coast. Archaeology says that there was a trading culture there, exemplified by the *Carp's Tongue* type of sword. Written evidence tells of trading centres, in general seemingly based on islands ('*Cassiterides*'

¹²⁴ The *Auteini* can be linked to the *Uaithni* of the later Gaelic era. The *Uaithni*, in turn, are linked to the enigmatic god~hero *Fothad*, whose name is found in that of the *Votadini* tribe in the Forth region. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that *chevaux de frise* forts are found in the Forth as well as at Dun Aonghus. In fact, a north western tribe in Spain was called the *Vettones*, a name curiously similar to '*Auteini*/'*Uaithni*', and *chevaux de Frise* forts (e.g. *Las Cogotas*) are found in that tribe's territory as well.

[‘*place of tin*’, Channel Islands], Ictis [‘St Michael’s Mount’] and Vectis [Isle of Wight]). The Dumnonii were on one side of the Channel and Armorican tribes (such as the Coriosolites, Unelli, Veneti) on the other. The Armoricans were clearly linked to maritime tribes further east along their side of the Channel and on the Dumnonian side trade could be carried on up to the Solent region. Islands (Cassiterides, Vectis etc) were perhaps a ‘neutral’ place (as were the Aran Islands of Dun Aongus?).

It is this trading network that provides a plausible context for ‘Dumnonii’ in Ireland. For example, economic factors could have led to the founding of Dún Ailinne in order to control ‘Leinster’.

Archaeology does, however, reveal a split in the Channel region around this time, as Hallstatt falls and La Tène rises. Hallstatt D fails to turn up at all in Ireland, leading to a significant cultural break at the point of the early Irish La Tène, which must be related to the destructive end of Hallstatt. This end was likely preceded by a period of tension (i.e. during H-D). If the H-C remains in Ireland do represent an intrusive elite, the break would be easily explained — the beset centre in its Alpine forts was unable to maintain its peripheral contacts. The response in Ireland, archaeology suggests, was to refocus on the Atlantic trade route, where links were already strong. With the early La Tène, we ourselves need to refocus to north eastern France and thus to ‘Belgica’ which, along with Bohemia and Burgundy was the ‘homeland’ of the Galatae.

Before La Tène, there is a clearly-defined ‘coastal culture’ first along the English side of the Channel and thereafter reaching some way up the east coast to the Humber. The culture reveals itself by a common set of artefacts that overlie each local culture along the route — route, because this is a trader’s culture and this was a trader’s route. This trader’s culture connecting disparate communities along the coast may in some sense underlie the Arras culture (from c. 350 BCE). These Keltic settlers who settled in east Yorkshire, an elite group clearly connected to Ptolemy’s Parisi tribe, used the chariot as a symbol of power. We have noted the importance of Scythian influence in eastern Europe that

introduced a cult of horse and chariot to the Hallstatt chieftains and that the early La Tène '*galatai*' adopted these in their turn. The Arras culture seems to be an early example of this, transferred to northern England.

These new status symbols provide the key to the Irish La Tène. The culture was not only expansive and aggressive, it brought a new culture with new symbolism into the island. In Ireland, however, La Tène is very much a northern phenomenon. Swords, scabbards, fibulae, spear trappings — all are concentrated in the north. It is likely that, if the notion of a Domnann, Galioin and Bolg dominance was ever an actuality in Ireland, its formative period lies in the early La Tène.

Because from the material witnesses alone it is difficult or impossible to tell acculturation apart from invasion, it can never be proved from their testament that Keltic speakers intruded themselves into Ireland during the La Tène. Combined with the evidence of words, however, the evidence does become highly suggestive that such intrusions *did* happen. But the archaeological evidence suggests a period of dominance over *parts* of the island — and not at all in the south. It also perhaps suggests a dominance that *overlaid* the native population. In this way, it leaves room for both a Keltic dominance *and* the survival of the Irish language.

In looking for ways to bind words to things, we can begin with the Gamanrad, or more correctly the *Gamanraige*. Perhaps we could translate that as the 'kingdom of Gaman', a name that may be related to *gàmag* 'a stride' and *gámus* 'a proud bearing'. According to Alexander MacBain¹²⁵, the root here might be **gang-*, which would provide a strong link to the *Gangani* tribe who, like the Auteini, lived near the mouth of the Shannon. This also links up with tradition, for we are told that *Genann* and *Rudraige* of the Fir Bolg took over the province of Connacht, and so *Genann* and the *Gangani* would seem to share a name.

125 An Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language, 1911.

Next, we can consider the Erainnic tribe of the *Corcu Duibne*. This tribe, from the region of the Caherconree and Benagh forts, is already mentioned in the period of the ogham stones — *MAQQI IARI (K)[OI] MAQQI MUCCOI DOVINIAS*, says one inscription. This might be translated as ‘Ernian¹²⁶ of the Dovinias (i.e. Duibne) tribe’. What interests us here, though, is the legend of Corc Duibne, as told in the ‘Expulsion of the Déisi’ saga. The legend is, as so often, an outline of pre-Christian ideas about sacred kingship. Corc and Cormac are twins (i.e. *emain*) born via incest (i.e. sacred marriage). At their birth, the land becomes a waste land (i.e. it is winter). Corc (and seemingly Corc alone) is taken by a drui to a sacred island offshore (cf the Aran Islands) in order to remove the curse (i.e. the curse within Corc) from the land. This is Inis Boí — Boí is the drui’s ‘wife’. It is Boí who removes the curse from Corc (it is transferred to a sacred cow with the *varna* colours of white [druí] and red [rí]). This Boí is clearly an important divinity in this region, for she is the narrator of the extraordinary poem called ‘Ebbing’ by James Carney (see, *Medieval Irish Lyrics*). The *cailleach* (‘hag’) of the poem is also called Boi (or Bui) and this name is a match for the famous Boii tribe, found in both Gaul and the Po Valley. These Boii are also closely related to the Senones, whose name is remarkably similar to that of the Shannon¹²⁷. **Senona* would mean ‘the old one’ — a *cailleach*. If that were not enough coincidences, Caesar tells us that the Parisii and Senones of the Seine region are very closely related — which links to the Parisi of east Yorkshire, but also, I suggest, to the *Partraige* of Connacht, who were near-neighbours of the Gamanrad and Fir Domnann.

What is interesting about these relationships is that they seem to make it clear the Pretani (i.e. Parisi) and Bolg and Domnann were closely linked, which is particularly significant in the case of the Pretani and Bolg. The name of the latter is discussed in the next

126 That is, ‘maqqi lari’ ~= ‘Erainn’?

127 *Senos* (recte *Sena*, i.e. female?) in Ptolemy, and *Sinann* in Old Irish. It should be noted that it is not universally agreed that the name should be linked to a root *sen-* ‘old’, even for the Senones tribe.

section.

C. Centres

A very important archaeological date, we have seen, is c. 150 BCE. This, and it is probably a fairly accurate date, is when Navan Fort was rebuilt. The earlier Bronze Age effort was massively expanded into a truly impressive construction and a real and visible symbol of power. Aside from flat-earthers who refuse to believe in anything they can't see, I would say this is almost Ireland's first real date — the date of the founding of the Ulaid and its tribal centre, Isamnion (i.e. Emain Macha). Moreover, the Black Pig's Dyke and Worm's Ditch indicate a massive and extensive boundary 'wall' across northern Ireland — the boundary of the Ulaid.

The great ritual centres of legendary Ireland are all close to each other, towards the centre. Uisnech, after all, *was* the Centre, the *omphalos* of the island. It is therefore likely that this foundation — the establishment of this great symbol of Ulidian power — did not occur in a vacuum and that the Cruachan of 'Connacht' and Dún Ailinne of Leinster and Tara and Uisnech were from around this time at least as it were *activated*. Note that both Emain 1.0 and Dún Ailinne existed before 150 BCE, so we cannot be sure if they were already ritual centres — whether Emain 2.0 was enhancing what was already there. However, the development of these centres is due to Keltic influence.

D. The Deep South

It must be reiterated that La Tène was a northern phenomenon. That means that to the south of what was to be Leinster, there is no sign of La Tène-related domination. This apparent issue vanishes when we consider Ptolemy's ever-important map, for in Leinster he places the *Brigantes* and *Manapi*. These are unquestionably Kelts, but the exact nature of their settlement and their exact provenance are uncertain.

In England, the Brigantes are a sort of British Northumbrian — they appear to have held dominion over nearly all of northern England. The Parisi, it seems, were not a part of 'Brigantia', for

Ptolemy names them as an independent¹²⁸ tribe. The Menapi, on the other hand, are mentioned as a coastal people in what the Romans were to call ‘Belgica’. Literally then, the Brigantes came from ‘Brigantia’ (i.e. northern England) and the Manapi from Belgica. This however, seems highly unlikely. Both tribes were clearly refugees from Rome, but the more likely context that includes *both* tribes is that they were first of all fleeing in the wake of Caesar’s onslaught. That is to say, the Brigantes of Britain were ultimately refugees from Caesar, as were the Manapi. The latter tribe were therefore also part of ‘Brigantia’. When the Romans attacked Britain, people from Brigantia now fled to Ireland — to southern Leinster. We may compare, to take a sadly up-to-date example, the flood of refugees into Syria when America invaded Iraq in 2003. When the Americans and Saudis launched a proxy war in Syria itself, the flood re-refuged in Turkey.

The Brigantes and Manapi, then, account for the Keltic presence in Leinster. They, if nothing else, indicate to unsettling complexity of Irish prehistory. They were Belgae — they were from what Caesar termed ‘Belgica’. But they were doubtfully Fir Bolg.

2.3.3. Domna, Bolg

The word *dumn-* or *dubn-* was obviously considered important in the Keltic- (that is, Gallo-Brittonic) speaking world. It is an enigmatic, but not mysterious word. The meaning is well-known — ‘deep’, ‘tenebrous’ or ‘world’. The figure of Dumnorix (his name probably meaning ‘king of the world’), familiar to all readers of Julius Caesar, illustrates the significance of the word. Xavier Delamarre¹²⁹ gives a list of names that contain

128 That the Brigantes were overlords is strongly suggested by the fact that we know two tribes in their territory not mentioned as tribes — the *Setantii* had a promontory (Morecambe Bay region) and the *Carveti* (Cumbria, far west end of Hadrian’s Wall) appear in a Roman inscription.

129 Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise, p. 150-1.

dumn-/dubn-. There is —

Cogidubnus, Conetodubnus, Conconnetodumnus,
Dagodubnus, Dubnocouiris, Dubnoreix, Dumnocouirus,
Dubnotalus, Dumnomotus, Dumnotalus, Dubnouellaunus,
Dumnogeni, Eridubnos, Oxidubna, Ueldumnianus,
Ueriugodumnus, Uercondaridubnus, Uerodumna.

In Galatia there is —

Δομνέων and Δομνεκλείου.

An inscription, the Larzac curse tablet, from the Aveyron department in southern France, contains the word *antumnos* which probably means ‘the under-world’ and possibly related to a Welsh name for the ‘otherworld’, *Annwfn* (?< **ande-dubnos*). The Welsh name *Dyfnwal* (< **Dumnoualos*, ‘ruler of the world’) is a variant of *Dumnorix*. To end¹³⁰ in farce, *Donald Duck* (or for that matter *Donald Trump*) are latter day members of the team (‘Donald’ < Ir. *Domnall*).

The Fir Domnann, presumably the two British Dumnoniis too, were descended from a female deity called *Domna*. The home of Domna was therefore probably (in British terminology) ‘Andedumnos’, explaining why the isle of Lewis and Harris is called *Dumna* in Ptolemy (*Domon* in Gaelic), for that is an appropriately ‘otherworld’ region. According to¹³¹ JA MacCulloch, Déa Domnu was a Fomorian and had a son named Indech. This name may be related to that of the *Andecavi* of Gaul. Now, in the defixion tablet of Chamelières, we have an

130 Just before the end, it might be worth noting that the Gaelic development of the word is *domun* ‘world’. The British tribal name *Dobunni* (located in the Severn region) is comparable to this form and indicates a non-Keltic dialect. In the immediate pre-Roman period, the tribe seems to have been dominated by the powerful Keltic tribes of the east, in particular the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes.

131 The Religion of the Ancient Celts, [1911], p59.

interesting word¹³² *andedios*. This is analysed as *ande* ('beneath') and a suffix **-dīo-* and explained as 'lower' or 'under'. This interpretation is strengthened by the existence of an antonym — *uxedios* 'upper'. So, we can suggest a deity **Andecavos* > *Indech*, an underworld deity linked to Domna.

This connection of Domna and the otherworld of the Fomorians becomes more interesting when we consider the name *bolg-*. As the names *Fir Bolg* and *Belgae* are clearly connected, we can categorically reject the 'men of bags' interpretation. I think TF O'Rahilly was correct in linking it to an Indo-European root¹³³ **bheleg-* 'shine, flash'. The word, then, implies a fiery sort of power, a powerful magical *force*. This is the force of Cu Chulainn's *gae bolga* 'spear infused with *bolg* power'. It is probably the force behind King Arthur's *Excalibur* (< Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Caliburnus* < W. *Caledvwlch* ~ = Gael. **Calad-bolg*). Fergus mac Roich, another Ulidian hero, also had a sword called *in Caladbolg*. Then, even more significantly, there is *Oengus Bolg* who, like Cu Chulainn, possessed a mortally potent spear that earned him the byname *Gaífhuilech* 'bloody-speared'. Additionally, in and among the 'muster of the Ulaid', appears *Lugaid, king of the Builg*. In the story of the initial Galatian onslaught of eastern Europe and Greece, we hear of two leaders Brennus and *Bolgios*. I suspect that, as with Oengus, that was a byname, but it clearly indicated that *Bolgios* was *powerful*. The name of the *Belgae* too will have had this meaning — they were the

132 Dictionnaire de la Language gauloise, [Xavier Delamarre, 2003], p46.

133 *Early Irish History and Mythology*, p.52. The root also, says O'Rahilly, gives Latin *fulgur* 'lightning' and German *blitzen* (also 'lightning'), not to mention Greek *φλόξ* 'flame', the word behind that later magical fiery force named *phlogiston*.

‘powerful men’, ‘the men possessed of a *belg-like* power’.

The more fundamental root¹³⁴ **bhel-* ‘flash’ is probably found in the name of the Fomorian god *Balar*, he the mortal enemy of the great Lug. Balar was *Goll* or *Coll*, the one-eyed burning sun. The same root is perhaps found in the Keltic god names *Belenus* (linked with wells, healing and associated with Apollo) and *Belisama* (‘the most *bel*’). There is an inference that Belenus and Belisama were a divine couple. Lastly, we find the root in the name of the great Irish fire festival of *Beltaine*, our Mayday — May 1.

All this connects to a burning or shining power. Moreover, the connection with Oengus is a connection to the gods, for this Oengus Bolg is Oengus ind Óg (or mac Óg), that is to say *Maponus* ‘the son’. In Welsh tradition *Mabon* is son of *Mellt* (‘lightning’), perhaps the tutelary deity of the *Meldi* tribe who lived in the Marne region. Mabon’s mother is, well, *Modron* ‘mother’ (*Marne* < *Matrona* ‘the mothers’). This all leads to a simple equation — Mabon is lightning and Lugaid is ‘bolg’ as is Oengus, Cu Chulainn himself is ‘bolg’; his *gai* ‘spear’ is lightning; lightning is ‘bolg’.

The names *domna-* and *bolg-* are thus in the end similar. They express ideas deeply rooted in the religion of Celtic speakers, the tenebrous underworld and the fiery and brilliant power of the sky. This conclusion enables us to observe that the connection between the Fir Bolg and the Belgae is likely to be precisely this — a shared belief system. If we ask who exactly the ‘Belgae’ were, a just conclusion is that, as so often, it is an essentially Roman name driven by Roman requirements and Roman geopolitics. The Romans, basically, needed a name for the

134 *EIHM*, p. 59.

peoples between the Seine and Rhine and this was the name they chose. It is highly unlikely there was a native name for all the peoples in this area, or if they had a common name at all, or indeed if they considered themselves a people. A close reading of Caesar blurs the distinction between the peoples across the Seine (the Celtae) and also those across the Straits of Dover — tribes here seem often to have been (willingly or not) politically involved in dynastic entanglements.

Both the Domnann and Bolg can be linked to the Fomorians (and to the people of Danu, for the Fomorians and Danaans are really characters in the same play). There is no *need*, as per O’Rahilly’s grand model of Irish prehistoric peoples, to equate the Fir Bolg with the Erainn, then with the Belgae. Wouldn’t the learned men who invented the stories of Nemed and the sons of Dela have used the learned term ‘Belgae’? The name ‘Fir Bolg’ is clearly not derived from classical sources. Yet even so, the connection of the names Fir Domnain and Dumnonii, and Fir Bolg and Belgae is remarkable. So, bearing in mind the fact that ‘Belgica’ is in fact a core area of the Galatai — the people who are, for many, *the Gauls* or even *the Celts* themselves — and that the separation between the ‘Gauls’ and the ‘Belgae’, or even the ‘Britanni’ of the south of England, is therefore superficial, ‘Domna’ and ‘*bolg*’ ought to be seen as *ideas*, of underworld and upper-world powers, and that these ideas were believed in by the same people. These were ideas believed in by the Keltic people and these ideas existed in the Irish tradition, leading to the question — *were they carried to Ireland by Keltic-speaking people, or do they represent common-Celtic beliefs?*

That, I think, is the real problem of the Fir Domnann and Fir Bolg.

2.3.4. Ulaid, Cruthin

A. Ineffable Ulster

As we have seen, around 150 BCE the world of the Legendary Era begins to be witnessed by the archaeological record. From this time, the mute stones seem to tell us, the Ulaid began to rule from Isamnion (i.e. Navan Fort). The name 'Ulaid' in fact may mean 'rulers'¹³⁵, and these rulers ruled over a province — for the Ulaid surely ruled over a province — that comprised the entire northern area of the island, indicated by The Black Pig Dyke and Worm's Ditch. The existence of the Ulster province implies the other legendary provinces also existed. Isamnion did not exist in a vacuum, but as part of a belief system that included both Uisnech and Tara, the ritual centres of Ireland, and the other provinces, with their ritual centres. It is also worth reminding ourselves that Ulster, along with the Midlands, was a La Tène region, an archaeological culture that has clear Keltic origins over on the Continent.

There are two different Ulsters, though. First, there is the everyday and mundane Ulster and then the mythical and symbolic Ulster, the one that appears in the great Cycle of legends. The mundane Ulster belongs to the world of things and the Cycle to the world of words. The former is honest and mute while the latter is whispers of tall tales.

There is though something, albeit something ineffably mythical, that can be gleaned from the Ulster Cycle about the political structure of Ireland at this time. But the gleaning is tough work. The Cycle depicts a war between Connacht and the Ulaid, but I doubt this was the original story. For example, the *Scela Muicc Meic Dathó* seems to tell the tale of a battle between Connacht and Ulster warriors for the champion's portion, but it is set in the

¹³⁵ Compare Gael. *flaith* 'rule', 'sovereignty', W. *gwlad* 'the land' and *uletig* 'prince', and the Alpine tribal name *Triullati* 'supreme [or three] rulers'. As the name is neither Irish nor Welsh, if this is its meaning it is a good example of an inactive name that has bypassed the standard 'language laws'.

Otherworld (in Mac Datho's fairy mound ['*bruiden*']) and may in fact represent a feast of dead heroes in their Valhalla. The original setting of the Tain itself may also be the Otherworld. Cuchulainn is – perhaps he is *Maponus* – the defender of the Otherworld in the dead time of Winter, when king Horse Head (*Conchobar*) is sleeping and the surrogate (*Ailill*) is ruling. It is the Surrogate who possesses (is 'married to') Sovereignty (*Medb*). The Tain, then, may be at core a myth overlain with real places and an impressive roster of legendary peoples, just like King Arthur's Court. What the original location of the saga was is unclear — it has been suggested Cruachan has replaced Tara. But if I am correct and the Tain is a myth – moreover, seemingly a core myth of kingship and sovereignty, a tale of 'the Sovereign People' – need it have a location at all? Need the battle have been an earthly one? If 'Tara' represents the seat of the sovereignty of Ireland, perhaps the Tain is reminding us that the King will awaken at the end of Winter. The Surrogate (accompanied by Sovereignty) is proceeding to Tara, the ritual Seat of sovereignty. Perhaps the Surrogate and King fight a ritual duel, but in the end the Surrogate must pass back Sovereignty to the King. The actual form of the saga, the tale of a battle between Connacht and the Ulaid, is likely to be some form of propaganda motif tacked on to the mythic core. When the Cycle was written down, the Ulaid's power was long gone, but the Cycle is there to summon up the ghost of its fallen power.

This passage from the saga *Cath Boinde* ('Battle of the Boyne') illustrates I think what the kernel of the Tain once looked like —

At that time Ailill, the son of Mata, the son of Sraibgend of the Erna, came to Cruachan, and Ailill was then a young child, and the remnant of Sraibgend's children were along with him that they might be reared by Meadb, because of Meadb's relationship to him, i.e. Ele, the daughter of Eochaid Feidleach, was his grandmother. Ailill is reared in Cruachan after that until he was a great spirited warrior in battles and in conflicts, and a battle-sustaining tower against Conchobar, defending the province of Meadb, so that it was he who was chief of Meadb's household afterwards, and

Meadb loved him for his virtues, and he was united to her, and became her lover in place of Eochaid Dala. Eochaid Dala grew jealous because of this, and all the Fir Domnand shared in his jealousy through affection, so that they thought to banish Ailill, and all the Erna who were with him, out of Connacht; but Meadb did not permit the doing of that deed, for she loved Ailill better than Eochaid. When Eochaid saw Meadb's partiality, he challenged Ailill to fight for the kingdom and his wife. They fought a fierce fight, and Eochaid Dala fell in that conflict by Ailill mac Mata through the wiles (?) of Meadb. Ailill assumed the kingship of Connacht thereafter, with the consent of Meadb[.]

[*Is an aimsir sin tanic Ailill, mac Mata mic Sraibgind, do Ernaib, co Cruachan, & ba leanb óc Ailill in tan sin & iarsma cloindi Sraibgind maræn ris dia oileamain oc Meidb tre gæl Medba ris .i. Ele ingen Echach Feidlig a senmathair. Oilter i Cruachan Oilill iar sin cor bo milig mormenmnach he i cathaib & hi comlondaib, & corbo tor chongbala catha re Conconcobar he ic ditean choicid Medba, co rob e ba taisench teglaich ac Meidb na diaid sin, cor gradaig Meadb é ar a shobésaib, cor æntaich ria, cor bo ceili di he tar cend Echaid Dala, cor edaich Eochaid imcheand in sceoil sin & cor edaich Domnandaich uili tre chombaid, cor shamailsead Ailill d'indarba i Condachtaib imach cona roibi do Ernaib mailli fris, conar leic Medb in gnim sin do denum uair robo dili le Ailill na Eochaid. Odchondairc Eochaid leathrom Meadba focrais comroc ar Oilill imcheand na rigi & a mna, cor comraicc doib co h-aindiarraid, co n-dorchair Eochaid Dala sa comrac sin la h-Ailioll mac Mata tre imdill Meadba. Gabais Ailill rigi Connacht do deoin Meadba da eisi sin[.]]*

When we move from this ineffably mythical land of the imagination to the Early Historical Period, what do we find? Well, Ulster is now dominated by the Uí Néill, specifically the northern branches of the Cenél nEógan and Cenél Conaill (>> Tyrone and Tyrconnell) and also the apparently related Airgialla. Cramped into the east are the Cruthin, the Dál Riata and Dál Fiatach. These last are the 'true Ulaid'. Stuck between the Ulaid and Emain (or the remains of Emain) were the Uí Echach Cobo, a Cruthinan tribe. The Ulaid were obviously not what they once were.

But they were still ‘the Ulaid’, a bit like George Best was still ‘George Best’ even towards the end. They were not the Fir Domnann of Irrus Domnann in the wastes and wilds of the remotest area of Connacht. With the Ulster Cycle they still had their legends, and they successfully laid claim to Patrick, he who was to become the patron saint of the entire Island. They still managed to root out a certain degree of kudos. The power — bolgish? — of even the embers of their fame is proved by the frequent attempts of the Uí Néill to dominate Ulster and the fact that the Dál nAraide (the leading Cruthinian tribe) in the end took to calling *themselves* the ‘true Ulaid’. Clearly, then, quite a thing to be, I suppose much like being the ‘true George Best’.



B. Emain, Tain

The legends of the Ulaid — *the* Ulaid, that needed no qualifying ‘true’ adjective — begin with the foundation legend of Emain Macha. Áed Rúad (‘red fire’, i.e. the Dagda, chief of the people of Danu) has two cousins, Díthorba and Cimbáeth. These three rotate the High Kingship and each gets seven years as king. Then Áed Rúad dies and his daughter Macha Mong Ruad (‘red haired’) claims her place as ruler. Díthorba and Cimbáeth refuse this. To win her place, Macha gives battle and Díthorba is killed. His sons seek vengeance and Macha defeats them. Macha marries Cimbáeth and they rule together. Macha pursues the sons of Díthorba and enslaves them, commanding them to build the fort of Emain. Macha then rules at Emain, seven years with Cimbáeth and fourteen alone. Her fate? She is at last killed by Rechtaid Rírgerg (‘red king the judge’) who takes up the High-Kingship.

This is essentially the usual saga of sovereignty. Cimbáeth ‘hostage’ is Ailill ‘surrogate’. Macha is Medb. Díthorba is Conchobar (that is, the true king). Díthorba’s sons perhaps — they represent Youth — map to Cu Chulainn. Díthorba, however, is the starting point of a whole nexus of links to the Keltic world. The name is clearly comparable to that of king *Deiotarbus¹³⁶ of Galatia. This is surely not an Irish name. It seems unambiguously Keltic.

If we strip down the Tain to its most basic form, we have something like the following. The men of Ulster are paralysed. Cu Chulainn of Muirthemne is the sole defender of the King. He is wounded. The boys of Ulster defend the King, headed by the King’s son Follamain (? < Keltic *vellaunus*). After three days, Cu Chulainn is healed. He kills Fer Dia (‘man-god’) in single combat but is wounded. The men of Ulster are roused and defend the King.

Told just so, we can see how ritualistic the tale is. More than anything, it looks like the original Indo-European initiation of boys into men, where the boys ‘turn into’ wolves (or dogs). ‘Cu Chulainn’, then, would be a ritual name (‘cu’ meaning ‘dog’ or perhaps ‘wolf’). For our purposes here, the key is the relationship between Cu Chulainn and Muirthemne.

C. Muirthemne, Conall and Cern-

Cu Chulainn is not from Ulster. His father Súaltam is from Muirtheimne where he had a fort (‘rath’). The boy’s real name is Sétanta¹³⁷. Now, the name of this region has an ending that looks as if it could be related to that of Emain — *Muir-indemne or the like, ‘the sea of Emain’. The name Súaltam can be similarly analysed — Súal-**tam** <> Muir-**theimne**. The first element might therefore be ‘eye’ (Gael. *suil*). This word is related to Latin *sol* ‘sun’ and conceptually in Ireland to the figure of Goll or Coll, the one-eyed

136 The Greek texts have the form Deiotauros.

137 The name might be associated with wealth (‘sét’) or travel (also ‘sét’). If the former, compare the Roman god Mercury (< *merx* ‘wealth’) and if the latter the Santones tribe (Saintonge region) < *santos* ‘path’ W *hynt*.

sun or if you prefer the eye of the sun. So Súaltam may be *Suel-indemna — ‘the eye of Emain’. Sétanta (‘wanderer’?) is therefore a suitable name for the son of the sun.

The name Sétanta is generally linked to a ghost-tribe in Britain, the *Setanti*. This tribe dwelt in the Morecambe Bay region and so this is a reasonably secure connection to Britain. The people of Muirtheimne were the *Conaille Muirtheimne*. The ‘official’ answer as to who this Conall was, was Conall Anglonnach, an Ulidian hero and charioteer. Later traditions related the tribe to Conall Cernach himself, a much more substantial hero. The epithet *cernach* is of great interest here. There were three tribes called Cornov- in Britain — two mentioned in Ptolemy (the Cornovii of Shropshire, Powys and the Wirral; and the Cornavi of Caithness) and the Kernaf or Cornu-wealas (the Cornish of Corn-wall). The word is related to Latin *cornu* ‘horn’ and in fact to the English word. Judging by the Kernaf and Cornavi, it had a meaning of ‘headland’ or ‘peninsular’. Conall’s epithet is the same as the tribal name — he might in fact be called The Cornovian — and I suspect he is linked to these tribes. In itself, this is a weak link, but there is context that greatly strengthens the connection. First, Conall is strongly linked to the Fir Iboth and Tuatha Forc (*recte* Orc) — the Hebrides (*Ebudae* in Ptolemy) and Orkneys (Gael. *Insi Orc*). This provides a direct link to the Cornavi. Second, the Fir Iboth can be linked to the *Ebdani*¹³⁸ of Ptolemy, whose name is surely equivalent — ‘the people from the Ebudae islands’. These Ebdani are located close to Muirtheimne. We have therefore found complex link — Cornavi > Conall *Cernach* > Cornovi and then a chain of linkage to Ebdani <> Muirthemne <> Setanti <> Sétanta.

If the Cornovi of Powys and Shropshire were ‘the peninsula people’, however, where is the peninsula? If we are looking for one, we find it in the Wirral, which happens to be a region of strategic importance in military terms. It became later, for example, a significant Viking base. I suggest it was earlier a Celtic

138 Variant reading — *Eblani*.

base. The Cornovii were Keltic occupiers of the Wirral who moved south from their base to capture Uriconium and establish control of the territory they occupied when the Romans arrived. It is interesting that another strategic area nearby, the Llyn Peninsular, was according to Ptolemy occupied by the Gangani, who are found in the Shannon region and may be linked to Genann (a leader of the Fir Bolg) and also the Gamanrad. Anyway, the Cornovi were centred around Uriconium near to which was *Pennocrucium* ('the chief *cruach*' — there was a Cenn Cruach, or Cromm Cruach, in Ireland). These names link to Cruachan. The later name clearly at least indicates a similar culture — a *cruach* ritual centre. The name *Uriconium* I would link to Fróech. Compare the ogham inscription found at Cruachan itself — VRAICCI MAQI MEDVVI ('Vracc son of Meduos'). But who was Fróech?

D. Fróech

Fróech, said to be of the Fir Domnann, was a Connacht hero closely associated with Cruachan. If we understand his myth, we can better appreciate likelihood of a connection between him and Uriconium. We can use the clustering technique to bring together various characters related to Fróech — Boand, E(l)cmar, Dagda, the *síde* ('people of the shee', or 'fairy mound'), Óengus Mac Óg, Findabair (<> W. Gwenhwyfar > Guinevere), Ailill and Medb and, indeed, Cromm Crúaich.

First, the *síde*. The shee (*sid*, perhaps originally a 'seat') was where the gods called *Fir Síde* dwelt. Fróech's mother was Béinn ('melodious woman', folk etymology), who is in fact Bé Find ('white woman') who is Étaín ('bird'). *Síde* women are, according to¹³⁹ JA MacCulloch, often called Bé Find.

Fróech's aunt, Boand (she is the River Boyne), was married to Ecmar¹⁴⁰ 'great horse'? (also known as Elcmar). He was chief of

¹³⁹ The Religion of the Ancient Celts, p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ So cf Fergus m. *Róich* and note that he is called in the *Dindsenchas* 'lord of horses'. The word 'elcmar' means 'spiteful', so this form of the name is an

the Brú na Bóinne. Boand falls for the Dagda, chief of the gods. The Dagda sends out Ecmarr to the High King Bres on the day of Imbolc and meanwhile Boand and the Dagda have a son, Mac Og. The Dagda makes time stand still for nine months until Boand gives birth, so Ecmarr is swindled into thinking only a day has passed. The child is fostered by Midir ('judge'). On Samhain¹⁴¹, Mac Og challenges Ecmarr for leadership of the Brug. Ecmarr is exiled to another *brug*. Englec (? 'bird-?') and Mac Og (i.e. Oengus) have an 'incestuous' relationship. Englec is abducted by Midir. Ecmarr kills Midir. Mac Og kills Ecmarr. Finis.

As usual, this is a depiction of the pre-Christian ideology of sovereignty. It is basically the tale of the King (in his mature and youthful forms), Sovereignty herself (in her mature and youthful forms) and the Surrogate. So, we have 1) the Dagda (=Eochaid | Conchobar) and Oengus, 2) Boand (=Medb) and Englec, and 3) Bres (=Ailill). In this story, Oengus (i.e. Maponus, 'the son') is born on Imbolc and is fostered by Midir until he returns to the *brug* on Samhain. Presumably, during this time the Father (?Ecmarr <> the Dagda) is in charge.

The finale of the tale seems to be related to the well-known story of *Tochmarc Étaíne* ('The Wooing of É.'). Here, Midir is married to Fúamnach ('noisy one'? < *fúamm*, folk etymology? recte 'amn' < *emain*?) but loves Étaín (=Englec). He 'marries' Étaín with the aid of his foster-son Oengus. Fúamnach causes Étaín's death. Not to be defeated, Étaín is reborn and marries to Eochaid Airem (=Eochaid Ollathair | the Dagda). Midir comes for Étaín and they 'escape' from Eochaid in the form of swans. Eochaid pursues Midir to his shée. Midir 'wins' Étaín. Finis.

The key to understanding all this is that the bird (here Englec and Étaín) is an intermediary between worlds. Midir is father of Ler father of Manannan and this links him to the remote otherworld, the land *fotonn* ('under the waves' i.e. 'sea'). The tale of Étaín may

obvious folk etymology.

141 Presumably the festival that Isamnion is named after.

be compared to that of Persephone and Hades. Most of the details are different but the core is that Eochaid represents *here* and Midir inhabits *there*. So, in the tale of Ecmarr, we can see that Mac Og is born *here* and fostered *there* and as a result has a foot in both worlds. At the story's finale, the scene shifts to *there* — Englec is brought from the realm of Ecmarr (as Étaín leaves Eochaid) to that of Midir. Ecmarr goes after her to *there*, just like Eochaid. Even the dissimilar endings turn out to be comparable. Midir 'wins' Étaín, but Ecmarr kills Midir. However, in the latter version, *then* Mac Og (Midir's foster-son and double) does kill Ecmarr. Therefore, we can see that the Dagda (or Eochaid) and Midir are reflections of each other and then note how Mac Og and Englec are both intermediaries between *here* and *there*. When we are told that Englec is 'abducted', we are to understand that Sovereignty is being transferred from the world of the Dagda to the world of Midir. At length the Dagda challenges Midir, but it is the Youth who brings back Sovereignty and he who defeats Midir.

We can now turn to the saga of Fróech himself. Fróech (like Oengus and Bres and for that matter Cu Chulainn) is beautiful. He loves Findabair (~= Bé Find | Étaín | Englec), 'daughter' of Medb and Ailill. He travels to Cruachan to 'win' Findabair, laden with treasures provided for him by Auntie Boand, but Medb and Ailill frustrate him. He and Findabair swim naked in a river pursued by the spirit¹⁴² of the waters (clearly a ritual). Findabair carries Fróech's sword (token of kingship) but the Surrogate (Ailill) throws his spear (equally a token of kingship) at Findabair (sovereignty). Fróech kills the spirit by beheading, but is wounded. Ailill and Medb take him to what they assume will be his deathbed. There is loud lamentation (cf Adonis etc), but during the night the invalid is taken by mysterious 'women' to the tombs of Cruachan and next morning he presents himself to Ailill and Medb with no trace of blemish (a king must bear no blemish). The saga goes on in telling of the attempt to 'win' Findabair (i.e. the kingship), but

142 As the water is called *Loch Medb* in one version of the story, it follows that the spirit is Medb herself.

we can stop there.

The story is broadly similar, though more limited in scope, to our tales of Midir. In particular, we can compare Mac Og and Englec and at least Étaín in her Tochmarc (Oengus of course features there too). Ailill, by his very name, personifies the Other — *there*. So, just as Englec and Étaín journey *there*, and the Mac Og is fostered *there*, so Fróech presents himself *there*, to ‘win’ kingship. Findabair is, of course, Medb in her Youth form. What his story adds to the pot, though, is an insight into the workings of kingship at Cruachan and it tells us that one name for the king-to-be was Fróech.

Finally, we turn to Cromm Crúaich (or Cenn Crúaich). His place of worship, we are told in the Dindsenchas, was Magh Slécht¹⁴³ (Co. Cavan). Cromm, from the little we know about him, was a god of *there*. He was old (*cromm* ‘crooked’) and hidden in mist. He demanded sacrifices (of the first-born, we are implausibly told) in exchange for a rich harvest. He was worshipped at Samhain. That is when Mac Óg confronts Ecmarr and by inference when Fróech comes for Findabair.

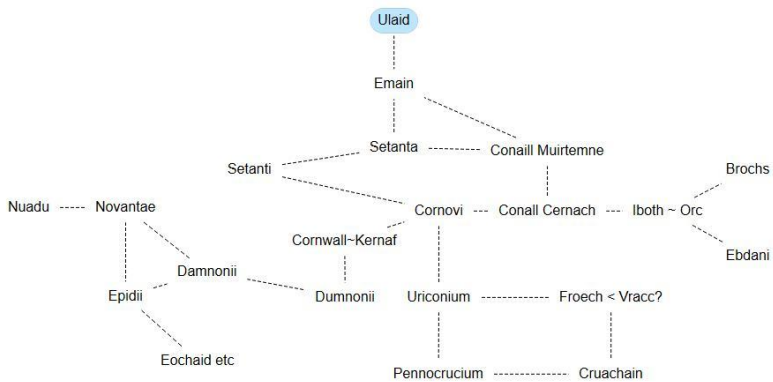
Can it be a coincidence, then, that an *Uriconium* lies so close to a *Pennocrucium*?

143 Formerly Magh Senaig. Sen (or Sin, so ‘storm’?) was the father of Dedad, ancestor of the Clann Dedad.

E. Damnonii

In Irish terms, as we have seen, there were two domn- and no less than three cern- tribes in Britain. The cern- tribes share at least a root with the legendary Conall Cernach, who has suitably legendary links with the north of Scotland. The domn- group has links too, with the island of *Domna*. This is the region of the brochs and it is therefore likely this is where the Fir Iboth and men of Orc lived. But the Damnonii of the Clyde region also provide possible links to Ireland. Just to the south of the Damnonii, as likely closely related to them, we find the Novantae and the Epidii.

The Novantae have a similar name to the powerful Trinovantes of the south east (Camulodunum > Colchester was their capital).



The name is generally accepted to have a root **nouio-* meaning 'new'. Now, a well-known and highly aristocratic Celtic name was *Cingetorix* and another *Cassivellaunus*. But as well as aristocrats, there were *super*-aristocrats. These could call themselves *Vercingetorix* and *Vercassivellaunus*. For 'ver' means 'exceedingly'. This could be an explanation of the name *Trinovantes*, for *tri* is an intensifier similar to *ver*. They would then be the *powerful* Novantae. In any case, we can note that, in Gaelic, the nasal was lost in the ending *-ant*, so *brigant-* > *brigit* and *argant-* > *argat*.

Following the same pattern, we have *novant-* > **nouat-*, comparable to the Irish deity named *Núadu*¹⁴⁴ (cf. O. Ir. *núa* ‘new’, but also ‘fresh’ or ‘vigorous’ or ‘fair’).

The Epidii tribe have a ‘horse name’. This is, for a start, similar to Irish names such as *Eochaid* and *Echdae* (‘horse-god’). In addition, a horse-related name ties into the Scythian steppe-culture we have seen borrowed by the Hallstatt chiefs and then in the core Le Tène regions. They can perhaps be remotely linked with the *Parisi*, with their chariots and perhaps also to the *Cruthinan Dál nAraide* if the ancestor of that people was ‘the Charioteer’ (*arae*, g.s. *araid*).

F. The ‘True’ Ulaid and the Cruthin

‘Ulster’ in the earliest historical period was merely the north east tip of Ireland and the ‘true’ Ulaid were, as we have seen, the *Dál Fiatach* in the south east. In the north east lived the *Dál Riata*, and both the ‘true Ulaid’ and the *Riata* were linked, rather distantly, to the *Erainn*. The remainder of Ulster was populated by *Cruthinan* peoples, mainly the *Dál nAraide* and *Uí Echach Cobu*. There is a general



confusion, unsurprisingly, in trying to understand the origins of the Ulaid — we have the archaeological Ulaid of Navan Fort, the legendary Ulaid of the Ulster Cycle, the ‘real’ Ulaid of history, the *Erainn* and — last but not least — the enigmatic *Cruthin*.

¹⁴⁴ Forms — *Nodonti*, *Nodenti*, *Nuadu*, *Nuado*, *Nuada*, *Nuadha*, *Nuadat*, *Nuadhat*, *Nodtat*, *Núadhat*, *Nuadhait*, *Nuadhat*, *Nuadhat*, *Nuadhaid*, *Nodan*, *Núadha*, *Núadhait*. *eDIL* s.v. *Núadu*.

The Cruthin were, it seems clear, a distinct ethnos, but in a very hard to define way. They were, by name, two things — they were the Pretani and they were the Picts. To take the latter meaning, it was once the default position that the Cruthin were simply a Pictish population in Ireland¹⁴⁵. The serious problems with that idea resulted in an equally firm belief that the Cruthin had *nothing* to do with the Picts. As with all such ‘all or nothing’ credos, neither is very convincing. If we take the first meaning, the name Cruthin is not derived from *Britain* but the archaic form *Prydain*¹⁴⁶. This name in turn likely references the non-Romanised regions of Britain lying north of the Forth. The Picts too were called Cruthin (or ‘sons of Cruth’) and a reasonable conclusion is that the Cruthin of Ireland and Scotland were both considered *Pretani*. This is a more general term than ‘Pict’, which refers to the north-eastern region only — Pictland. In the early-historical period, the west of Scotland was now settled by Irish-speakers, not Pretani. The peoples of the old Roman province, meanwhile, were thought of as living in *Bretain*.

The Pretani, however, were the peoples north of not only the Province itself, but of the sphere of Roman influence to the north of the short-lived Antonine Wall. It is probable the broch-builders were Pretani and that famous tribe of the Highlands, the Caledones¹⁴⁷, were Pretani too. It is in this wider context that the name ‘Cruthin’, and its use for both for Irish tribes and the Picts, makes most sense.

As for the Picts themselves, they have been the subject of innumerable, I think unnecessary, confusions. The first point to note is that the name is Roman. It is a Latin name and means ‘the

145 The Picts were also seen as an ‘aboriginal’ population of Britain.

146 The form *Prettanoi* is attested c.325 BCE in the poorly-preserved writings of Pytheas.

147 Whose heroes were Calgacus and Argentocoxus. Both ‘good Celtic names’.

painted¹⁴⁸ people'. This is confusion number one and this Latin name first attested in 297 CE is said to underlie the far earlier name 'Pretani', which is now also given a meaning of 'painted¹⁴⁹ people'. However, there is almost certainly a native name behind 'Pict' which, although of uncertain meaning, is likely also to be behind the continental name *Pictones*¹⁵⁰. Gaelic *cécht* provides a plausible clue, glossed as meaning 'power'¹⁵¹. Context is provided by the healer god Dian Cécht and also Mac Cécht¹⁵². Perhaps we can see this power as one comparable to that of *bolg-* and the name *Pekti as broadly similar to 'Belgae'. The underlying name *Pekt- is, at any rate, entirely unconnected to that of Pretani.

The later name of the Early Historical Period is the Roman one. That is significant because while the Latin meaning remains transparent, it is (like the Roman 'Belgae') essentially a geopolitical term that doubtless long outlived the native confederate name that once referenced an alliance of warriors. The Picts of history were 'the people living within the polity of the king of Pictland and subject territories'. Which the Irish Cruthin were certainly not.

The name Cruthin disappears after 773 CE. Like the Picts¹⁵³ themselves a little later, they thus appear to *vanish*. In fact, the Irish Cruthin seem, well — *Irish*. The Dál nAraide, we have seen, begin to claim to be the 'true Ulaid', which is of course a claim of Irishness. This is a common enough phenomenon that can be illustrated with a couple of parallels.

148 The Picts tattooed themselves.

149 The British at the least 'painted themselves with woad', and probably also practised tattooing.

150 Located in the Poitiers region, said region being named after the tribe.

151 Gloss — '*cecht . . . nunc significat aratrum, nunc potentiam*', 'sometimes means plough, sometimes power'.

152 He has two brothers, Mac Cuill and Mac Gréine. Both these names relate to the sun — Coll=*Goll* and *grían* 'sun'.

153 With Kenneth MacAlpin (Ciniod in Pictish), the Kingdoms of Dalriata and Pictland were combined and the Picts subsumed into *Alba*.

- It is often said that the *Normans* invaded England in 1066, but unless this refers to the invasion of Harald Hardrada, which it never does, the term is less than correct. While the origins of Normandy are clear in outline — Charles the Simple¹⁵⁴ granted the dukedom in 911 CE to an eager Viking named Rollo/Hrólfr — where the Norman dukes came from is hazy. Deliberately so. The Norman genealogists, irrepressible as their Irish counterparts, leave a void between Rollo and the dukes. Why? Well, the Dukes of Normandy wanted to be seen as *French*. A barbarous marauder from the distant north was not an ideal ancestor, hence the haze from which the perfectly French now Dukes emerge. These Dukes, moreover, made sure to make alliances, political and nuptial, to the local nobility. Who invaded in 1066, then, could just as well be described as French as ‘Norman’. The procession of dynasties from Norman to Blois to Angevin, even down to the Lancaster Dynasty descended from Chaucer’s patron John of Gaunt (Ghent), were proudly French. But then the Hundred and Sixteen Years’ War came and went and being French seemed a less good idea. The French nobility turned English.
- We see something similar in early France. The Germanic peoples, during the later Roman Empire, envisaged two languages. First, there was *their* language, the people’s language or *diutisc* (‘diut’ meaning ‘the people in general’ >> Deutsch and Dutch) and second the language of the Roman people or *romanisc* (> *romance*). In France rather than diutisc, the nobility spoke *frankish* > ‘French’ while the natives spoke their ‘romance’ language. With Charlemagne, a great empire was created encompassing both diutisc and romanisc zones, but not long after his death this split into two and the diutisc region kept up the imperial tradition, except that the Emperor was now head of a loose federation of *German-speaking* regions. The Franks began to speak romanisc and so romanisc became

154 Charles by the way was known for his laudable simplicity of manner, not for being a simpleton.

frankish and French became French.

These analogies are apt for the Cruthin. Indeed, one approach to understanding the name I do not see much followed is to note that Ulster in its rump-form had effectively just two ‘peoples’ — Erainn and Cruthin. I believe that the name ‘Erainn’ means just what it says — ‘the Irish’. Thus, the two peoples of Ulster were ‘the Irish’ and ‘the British’. We might wonder, then, if this is a political as much as an ethnic distinction. The Fiatach were the ‘true’ Ulaid because they were Irish, Erainn. When the Araide dropped the foreign identification of ‘Cruthin’, they too could claim to be the ‘true’ Ulaid.

If the re-founders of Emain in 150 or so BCE were Kelts, then they too were in some sense ‘Cruthin’ — so, *the Ulaid themselves were perhaps in some sense Cruthin*. The name of the Dál Fiatach founder bears a resemblance to the Pictish name Uuid¹⁵⁵ (earlier *Veda*, a name found on a Roman-era inscription from Colchester, which tells us *Veda* was a *Caledu* — presumably, from the Caledones tribe). So *fiat-* ?< **ved*. This idea is strengthened if we compare the other ‘Erainn’ tribe, the Dál Riata, with the *Redones* (who lived at the edge of Armorica around Rennes). This would give us *riat-* < **red*¹⁵⁶-. The accepted derivation of the name is ‘horse riders’, which compares to the Dál nAraide, if they were ‘the charioteers’ (and to the *Epidi*, not to mention the charioteering *Parisi*). These names point to a Celtic origin, the horse-cult and a Pictish-style name (Uuid).

If we compare the might of the old Ulaid and the marginal historical remnant, it is clear that to get from there to here means

155 I wonder if this Pictish name is comparable to the early Irish names *Fedelm* (f.) and *Fedelmid* (m.), which may be based on a Celtic root **wed-* / **wid* ‘to know’. These names may have been a title, but even if not so, they indicate a prophet or seer.

156 List of names containing *redo-* — Anderedus, Curredia, Eporedorix, Uindoridius, Redillus, Eporedia. The word was borrowed into Latin as *reda~raeda* (‘four-wheeled vehicle’). Source — *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise*, Delamarre, p. 255.

profound changes had occasioned themselves in the meanwhile. Given the mischief that genealogists can inflict on the truth, can we trust the genealogies — that is, the ethnic connections — that we have regarding the early Ulster tribes? Were these genealogies truths or claims? Were the Riata and Fiatach really different to the Araide? If the Riata may be compared to the Redones, the Cruthinan *Uí Echach Cobo* can be compared to the Bituriges Cubi, a tribe against whom the allegation was made that they once ruled all of 'Gaul'. The word¹⁵⁷ *cob* or *cuib* means 'victory' or 'victorious'.

So, as stated above, it is worth considering whether the division between the 'Irish' or Erainn and 'British' or Cruthin is more a political than an ethnic one.

2.3.5. Brigantes, Manapi, Lagin?

The Lagin, as we have seen, were closely linked by early writers to the Galioin and Domann. However, there is only a limited amount of evidence for La Tène influence in this region. This would suggest that 'Leinster', like Munster, remained an Irish-speaking area with little Keltic occupation. What follows on from that is that the Keltic influence there came later, evidenced by the presence in Ptolemy of the Brigantes and Manapi. I have argued above, on the basis that the Brigantes were after all an attested British tribe or confederation, that these peoples arrived from northern England. What we know is that the Lagin had Dún Ailinne as their main centre. As this fort was built earlier than the 'Roman' period of both Gaul and Britain, it may be inferred that the later Keltic invaders either took over control there or it and they were accommodated after they were settled. These Keltic

157 There was, variously, a Magh Cobha (literally 'plain of victory' but possibly 'plain of the Cuib'), and a region Cuib. The tribe may have been named from the region or the region from the plain, but an interpretation of the 'Victorious Echach / Bituriges' seems eminently plausible.

groups, in this model, made Leinster far more Keltic than it was before.

The Manapi are memorialised in Forgall Monach, with his fairy mound (*bruiden*) in the parish of Lusk. There were as well two peoples called Monaig¹⁵⁸, one in the land of the Uí Echach Ulad (who seem to be the same as the Uí Echach Cobo) and another Monaig in and around Lough Erne and these became the Fir Manach who gave their name to Fermanagh. O’Rahilly also mentions *Moncha*, wife of the great Eógan Mór, who is in turn to be linked to both *Monapia*, The Isle of Man, and *Manau*, a territory of the Gododdin < Votadini, in the Forth region.

The influence of the Brigantes in the region is proved by the cult of St. Brigit (< Brigantia) at Kildare.

A people called the Uí Bairrche clearly belong to this group, for their name is related to the god dedicated to as M(ARTI) BARREKI at Luguvalium (Carlisle). Barrex is at least ‘the high one’ (Gael. *barr*, W. *bar* ‘peak’), but may also be compared to *Bregans* (m.) and *Brigantia* (f.) — ‘lord’ and ‘lady’ if not ‘king’ and ‘queen’, but literally ‘the high, or mighty, ones’.

I suggest that the links with the Domnann and Galioin and Lagin have more to do with the development of the great ritual centres — in Leinster this would at least be Dún Ailinne — and that these later-arriving Keltic peoples were accommodated to earlier Keltic groups and, in a sense, reinforced them.

In historical times the Lagin were assailed, like the Ulaid, by relentless Uí Neill attacks. In the legendary period, dark tales were told of a terrible defeat to Tuathal Techtmar who imposed an equally terrible tax of the

¹⁵⁸ O’Rahilly [EIHM], pp. 30-33.

province — the *bóruma*. It was Bressal Bélach who hired Finn and his fiana to liberate Leinster. This tax, and this defeat, seem in some way connected to the fact that the Lagen claimed the right (now claimed exclusively by the Uí Neill) to be High-Kings of Ireland (i.e. of Tara). This the Uí Neill had to prevent — not so much the fact, but the *claim* to the right. Perhaps even the hope to claim.

Within Leinster, the ruling tribes were descended from Cathair Mór. Other tribes were mere fortuatha. But there were only two ‘out’ peoples of any significance in that province — the *Fothairt* and the *Loígis* (one of the many peoples of Ireland with seven septs). The Loígis were said to be no less than the defenders of the province. The most-ruling of the Leinster tribes were the Uí Dúnlainge and the Uí Cennselaig, but of these the Dúnlainge won through, dominating the province from 738-1042. They may have gained their ascendance with the help of the Uí Neill of the Midlands region. However, before the rise of these dynasties, we have vague but specific memories of earlier peoples who used to dominate Leinster — the Uí Fhailge and the Uí Garrchon for example. This tells us that Leinster remained Leinster despite whoever the ruling dynasty was. Leinster, that is to say, was a *place* and not a *people*.

A very early figure in Lagen prehistory was Labraid Loingsech, closely related to Loegaire Lorc. Labraid was a key figure to TF O’Rahilly. To him, Labraid seemed to explain the arrival of the Lagen invaders into Ireland. He came from ‘abroad’ and destroyed the King’s Fort (Dind Ríg). However, it seems to me the story of Labraid is in fact the usual depiction of the pre-Christian ideas of sovereignty. Labraid is also ‘Moen’ — they together are the ‘loud’ and the ‘silent’. ‘He’ is *do gairm rig*. If the gods speak, the king may pass. But if they are silent, he is no

king. We can imagine a ritual in which this transmutes into a rigged game. Of course, the gods will not be silent! Anyway, the name Labraid is a commonplace one. There are rivers bearing his name (e.g. the *Laver* near Pateley Bridge in Yorkshire) and somewhere in Gaul once lived a man called *Labrattos* who maybe cried too often as a baby. The name is therefore unlike *bolg*, which implies a mystical power. It is a simple descriptive term. 'He' is the cry that proclaims the king. Otherwise, his story is a variant of the typical royal myth. There is the King, the Surrogate and Sovereignty, and Sovereignty is exchanged between the King and the Surrogate. So, when Labraid marches against Dind Ríg, he represents the candidate or surrogate King, not an invader from Britain.

The generalising character of the name 'Lagin' is revealed in the name of the Lley Peninsular, which means 'the Peninsular of the Lagin'. That these Lagin came from Leinster is beyond dispute, but from whom among the Lagin they were — that is a matter that cannot be resolved if we remember Leinster represents a place and not a people. But *this* 'Lagin' spoke a q-Celtic language. They spoke a form of *Irish*. This confirms what we might have assumed, that the Keltic overlay in Leinster was superficial and that Keltic-speakers were either aggressed into submission after the Romans took over Britain or they were assimilated. We can compare perhaps this process with that of the Cruthin — relationships with oversea had become *anathema*. Being *Irish* is now good and patriotic and being *British* is now bad and foreign. So, although a period of Keltic dominance was very significant, the P-Celtic groups in Ireland must have become absorbed into a pre-Keltic polity, which will have blurred any distinction between Keltic and Irish. Votecorix becomes Voteporix then Votecorix again, that being the metaphor.

2.3.6. Erainn to Gael

The Irish themselves in this pre-Gaelic time were, I believe, the Erainn themselves. The ogham inscriptions (c. 300 CE on) are written in a pre-Gaelic form of Irish, and are generally linked to the Erainn. If we are to consider when the *Gaelic* form of Irish developed, I suggest we first look to the Roman creation of Britannia. This must have meant one for certain thing — when Rome had assumed military and political control of the province, there was to be no more Keltic settlement in Ireland, even from the remote areas at the north of Scotland. If we think in Norse terms, it would be as if — and very suddenly — York and Dublin were permanently separated. How long would Dublin have held out then? Although we cannot know the precise nature of any Keltic political dominance in Ireland, my view is that it is likely to have gone deeper than the Norse influence, because the Keltic and Irish cultures must have had many similarities. There must, for example, have been a good deal of continuity from the tribal system of the pre-Gael period into the early historical period. Any Keltic tribal dominance is likely to have integrated non-Keltic peoples into some form of hierarchy of tribes. If Keltic dominance is likely to have occurred by c150 BCE, the date from which the ritual centres of the Legendary Period can be seen to have flourished, from that point there will have been a cultural symbiosis evolving.

When Britannia was pacified, after 50 CE, this symbiosis will likely have been intensified. In addition, the intrusion of a Keltic elite over whoever constituted the older elites, will have atomised if not destroyed these elites. Therefore, it seems likely to me, two things happened. First, this mixed culture induced language changes in which the older ‘Classical’ Irish mutated into

proto-Gaelic, a ‘plebian’ speech. The speech evolved¹⁵⁹ in areas dominated by this Keltic elite — the Midlands and North, which is in fact where we later find the Uí Néill and the Connachta. Second, the Keltic-speaking elite itself must have been absorbed into this proto-Gael culture. The evidence for this is again negative — there is little, maybe no serious, evidence that any tribe spoke a Keltic language in the Gael period. If the *Partraige* had a name related to ‘Pretani’, their name may indicate they continued to speak a non-Gaelic language. But the Partraige, though they may have shared a name with the great empire builder over the sea, could hardly have been less politically significant in our sources.

159 The river name *Argita* may indicate that proto-Gaelic was already evolving at the time of Ptolemy's sources.

ANNEX A — Irish Names in (and around) Britain?

Here are a few possible examples of Irish in Britain and environs

- The name *Unelli*, in northern Armorica, is a least curiously similar to the name 'Uí Neill'. As an even more outlier idea, and working from the same principle, *Veneti* could be an equivalent of something like *Uí Nét* — Nét is a known warrior god.
- There is a river Iwerne in Dorset that may have the same name as the Erainn (< *luernos) themselves. Ptolemy mentions a Munster river named Iernos (?< *Ivernos) about which dwelt an Iverni tribe.
- One of the earliest places mentioned in Greco-Roman sources is Bolerion (or Belerion), a place at the far south west of the island. This seems to contain the name of *Balar* who seems to be a specifically Irish deity. Balar was from the remote *there* — the otherworld. In Ireland he was associated with the remote Tory Island ('island of the tower'). Bolerion would be a suitable location for him.
- The pre-Roman name of Leicester was *Ratae*, that is the *ráth*. This type of fort is strongly associated with Ireland, but not Britain. Typically, Keltic stronghold were *duns* and the larger *brigas*. It seems to be generally agreed there are two names that also contain the element 'ráth' — the north British female deity *Ratis*, and the Alpine place name *Argentoratum*. The former seems more likely related to Irish *rath* (which among its meanings are 'good luck' and 'fortune', so *Ratis* would be a rough equivalent of the Roman *Fortuna*). The latter can be linked to Welsh *Arianrhod* ('silver wheel', '?moon'). It may also be worth noting that the earliest English form for Leicester is *Ligoreceastre*. I suggest that the name *Ler* ('sea') is cognate to Latin *liquor* (and the continental river name *Liger*) and trace it

back via something like — **liyer* < **liger* < **liker* < **liquer*. This English name may, then, preserve an archaic Celtic, but not Brittonic, word.

- The north British name *Cataractum* (Catterick) might be a disguised Q-Celtic name (*catar* four + *-acht* as per Connor Eógan-acht — hence perhaps ‘the tetrarchy’, or less dramatically ‘the crossroads’).

ANNEX B

TABLE 1.

'RAIGE' NAMES	
Artraige	<i>art</i> 'god'
Osraige	Esus
Greccraige <=>? Creccraige	Cruach
Dartraige	Durotriges < *Durotrix / Darotrix
Cerdraige	Cf Cruthin / Pretani- / Parisi / Part(raige)
Breccrige	brig-
Cattraige	Caturiges
Cechtrige	Pekti
Bocccraige	bocc 'goat' < thunder god? cf Gabranto-vices
Medraige	Medbh < Medua
Semonraige	Samonriges (Gaul. month <i>Samon</i>) < *Samonrix
Partraige	Paritriges (cf Parisi, Pretani) < Paritrix

Keltic Names in Ireland?

TABLE 2.

DÁL FIATACH	
Dál Fiatach	Veda
Dál Riata	Redones

Forgg Macc Dalláin	Urguist
Oengus Ibdach	
Fergnae	Urbigen~Urien
Muiredach	Moritasgus (Gaulish gloss — ‘sailor’)
Eochaid	Epidii
Dubsloit (of Cruthin)	Dumno-x?

TABLE 3.

LEINSTER	
Uí Bairrche	Barrex
Uí Muiredaig	Moritasgus
Uí Faelan	-wallon~-vellaunus
Síl mBran	Bran
Uí Dúnlán	Dumnovellaunus > *Dunlan

TABLE 4.

TRIBES	
(Uí Echach) Cobo	(Bituriges) Cubi (?cob- ‘victorious’)
Galion	Caledones > Shie(Ro)-hallion ~ Mor-gallion
Fir Domnann	Dumnonii
Monach	Manapi
Brigit	Brigantes
Corcu Duibne (<	Dobunni < <i>dubno</i> / <i>dumno</i> >

DOVINAS)	Devon
Fir Iboth	Ebdani < Ebudae
Conall Cernach	Corna(o)vi
Smertach	Smertae < Smertos
Fothad (?Uaithni)	Votadini (?Auteini)

TABLE 5.

DEITIES	
Mac Con ~ Conmaicne	Maponus
Nuadu== Nodens ~ Nudd	Novantae >? *Noad-
Brigit	Brigantia
Ui Bairrche	BARREX or *Barreka
Oengus	Unuist
Froech / VRACC	Uric-(on)
Cruachan ~ Cenn Cruach	(Penno)-cruc-

TABLE 6.

PERSONS	
Dúnlang	Dubnovellaunus
Dúngal	Dumn ualos
Illan	-vellaunus
Faelan	-wallon ~ -vellaunus
Dithorb	*Deiotarbos (=Deiotauros)
Catluan	Cadwallon < Cassivellaunus
Fergus	Urguist

Oengus	Unuist
Eó-gan	U-gaine
Tuathal	Tudwal < Teuto-ualos
Congal	Cuno-ualos
Domnall	Dumn-ualos
Cathal	OW Catgual < *Catu-ualos
Cinaid	Ciniod
Erc	Erp
Tadg	Tasc-? cf Texali? [?< *Taxo-ualos]
Lu-laig < Ligmui (Westmeath)	<i>Lu</i> -trin < *Lugu-trenos
Imcath	Ambicatus

TABLE 7.

PICTISH
Ulaid
Umor
Ugaine

3. The Old Religion

3.1. Fifth

Let us take a look at the ‘coiced’ system. There are far-flung parallels to it in other Celtic-speaking groups. There is the ‘tetrarchy’ of Galatia that met at Drunemeton. Cantion had four kings. The Celtae themselves, of course, met at a place ‘in the centre of Gaul’. Strabo said that the Celtiberians had *four or five* divisions. All of these prove that some sort of a provincial system was a common Celtic idea. But what we also may gather from this evidence is that the system *worked within whatever was the local polity*. That is, Galatia, Celtiberia and Cantion were all *polities*, as were Ireland and Gaul. I think this is a useful concept. We have seen that the island of Ireland as a whole was a polity in Gaelic times — and the four cardinal points at that time were *Connacht, Leinster, Ulster* and *Munster* (‘Mumu’). These seem to be the remnants of the four great provinces of the Legendary Period.

We can isolate four components that are required by a genuine coiced ideology — 1) *a global polity*; 2) *an agreed centre, presumably a ‘neutral’ area*; 3) provincial identities and optionally regional centres; 4) each province shares the global ideology.

The core of a coiced ideology is *the centre (omphalus)*, and only as a secondary notion do the cardinal points radiate around it. If we look closely at what Caesar says of the Celtae, it is merely that they meet *in the centre* of the polity. The system as so described therefore *requires* only the first two components — a global polity and an agreed centre. However, there is evidence to suggest that a core Celtic belief *was* that ‘the land’ was naturally divided into

four regions. In the island of Ireland, the four regions are more or less fixed to something like our familiar four provinces.

In the Gaelic era though, only fragments of anything that can be termed an *ideology* remain, albeit there are many of them. But the old ideas were obviously still powerful, for the early Uí Néill/Connachta territories, in particular the vertical corridor along the centre of Ireland, is more or less on the *periphery* of the old provinces, yet at the same time its power seems to be derived from the destruction of the old provinces whilst occupying the old 'national' ritual centres in Mide (i.e. the 'centre') and Brega (i.e. Tara). In the earliest period of the rise of the 'Uí Néill', the ritual centres of the Keltic groups were smashed, the druids converted themselves to Christianity, causing the Keltic coiced ideology to collapse whilst nevertheless the ghost of its spirit lived on.

In the era of the grand ritual centres, we see suitably grand expressions of sovereignty. Here 'ritual' means 'rituals of Sovereignty'. But was the *meaning* of the coiced? I think the meaning was in many ways symbolic and that the High King of Ireland was not a military or religious power but a magico-religious one. It worked *because* the High King was not a military threat, for he was a sacred figure who oversaw the Rituals. In fact, as this was tightly bound up with religion, perhaps the keepers of all knowledge (the druids) were as powerful as the High King. The King is associated with Tara — were the druids equally associated with the omphalos of Ireland, Uisnech? This was *an ideological framework within which the king was required to function*. It was a world of *ri and drui*. The idea, for example, of one coiced invading another coiced was, within the ideology, an

absurdity. Each province *was* the land. The NE *is* the NE and the NW the NW. How can one cardinal point invade another? Of course, the *men of* X can attack the *men of* Y, but this is a subtly different idea. The men of X are by definition not ‘of’ Y. A cardinally-based coiced system does require some form of polity within each ‘province’, and the idea that each province – and the centre – had a specific character within the ideology is a plausible one. The symbolism of power and ritual was the domain of the drui in which the ri *upholds* the ideology the drui has *created*.

Is it possible to discern any traces of the symbolism of this ideology? There are four ways of looking at a coiced —

1. The coiced is its *centre*.
2. The coiced is its four encompassing *regions*.
3. The coiced is its *north and south*.
4. The coiced is its *east and west*.

A coiced can therefore have one, four or two parts, depending on the view you prefer. For example, although the Leth Conn and Leth Mug Nuadat is clearly a late and artificial construction, it may have been based on an old concept of a symbolic north and south of Ireland. It is probable that 3) and 4) are mutually intertwined concepts. That is to say, rather than think in terms in ‘north east’, we should envisage it as ‘north *plus* east’ — it possesses the combined characteristics of north and east. Sometimes we can think of east alone, sometimes north alone, but sometimes also north and east combined. For example, *north* may have meant ‘kingship’ in general. ‘West’ was *that* world (where the sun goes to set) and east *this* world (where the sun comes out from). So ‘north plus east’ represents the ‘sovereign judge’ and ‘north plus east’

means ‘the sovereign king’. That is, *Conn* (or Midir) and *Ulaid* (or Conchobar). The centre represents the cosmos, and that is overseen by Lug. In the Tain we perhaps have Ailill (west plus north), Conchobar (east plus north) and Cu Chulainn the representative of Lug (cosmos).

A Coiced Family?

To try and understand what a ‘coiced ideology’ may have looked like, let us examine the possibility that one thing the coiced may have represented is a family grouping — that is to say, the *sovereign family*. First, an obvious guess at the mysterious meaning of *Mumu* is ‘mother’ (cf English *momma* and *mummy* and *mum*; Britt. *mamma*, W. *mam*). So, is Mumu (SW) ‘Mother’ (‘Modron’ or ‘Danu’ or ‘Medb’)? From that starting point, we can then map out how the provinces might have represented the sovereign family —

	Province	Family Member		Title
NW	Connacht	Son	<i>Maponus</i>	Oengus
NE	Ulster	Father	[Oll] <i>athair</i>	Art
SE	Leinster	Daughter	<i>Dechtire</i>	Brigit
SW	Munster	Mother	<i>Modron</i>	Medb
Centre	Mide	Ecland	Lug	Esus

If this is true, then clearly ‘north’ (i.e. Connacht and Ulster) represented ‘male’ and ‘south’ (i.e. Munster and Leinster) ‘female’).

However, in this book we have seen that Medb is in fact closely associated with Connacht. In the great Tain saga, she is ‘married’ to Ailill king of that province. Dechtire is ‘daughter’ of Conchobar king of Ulster. Brigit is probably to be closely related to the intrusive Brigantes tribe. However, if we consider that Irish polity was founded on the tuath and that there was a basic progression of tuath > province > ‘nation’, it is likely this ‘geography’ — that of the druid — was one and the same for tuath, province and ‘nation’, just as each parson preached from the same Bible in each

parish church. That is, each *ri* in each little *tuath* ‘married’ Sovereignty. Each *tuath* had its own *Medb* / *Dechtire* and *Eochaid Ollathair* / *Maponus*, however they were named by that tribe. Of course, in the mundane world of bickering and ambition and brawls, this reconstructed abstraction is unlikely to have been upheld in its pure form much of the time. There will have been plenty of *tuath* politics just as there was plenty of parish politics. Politics or not, though, the parson preached his Sunday sermon and his parishioners at least attended it, even if they did not listen to it. Likewise, perhaps, with the religion of the *drui*. It was followed to a greater or lesser extent, but in either case it was equally *there*.

If we do consider this idea, even if we reject it, it is useful in that it confronts us with just how inadequate our evidence is to evaluate how the druidic religion worked in detail. The most we can achieve is an overall picture of its beliefs and this abstraction says little about how it worked at a particular scale of polity or in a specific locale. We know Tara was important because of the battles for ‘High Kingship’ and the Ulster Cycle tells us about Connacht and Ulster. But Munster and Leinster barely figure in all this. Yet they were provinces. They were part of the ‘system’. Leinster had traditions of Leinster High Kings, but the nature of the old High-Kingship has been more or less obliterated by the *Uí Néill*. So, while Munster is closely associated with female deities and Leinster with St. Brigit (< *Brigantia*), there is no direct evidence that these provinces once represented ‘Mother’ and ‘Daughter’ within the ‘national’ geography of provinces, or that the ‘south’ represented ‘female’.

Nevertheless, given the clear importance of King / Queen and Age / Youth in the ‘pure’ abstraction we can reconstruct of the pre-Christian religion, it is difficult to see how this fundamental aspect of the system was not part of the coiced ideology.

If we are looking for further symbolism in the ideology, we can suggest that the very names of the coiced may bear symbolic meanings — *conn-* is ‘judgement’, *laig-* is

‘warrior’ and *ulaid-* is ‘kingship’. Then there are the colours, the Irish varna system. Perhaps each coiced had a colour. The most secure of these are *red* (later usurped a little by purple), which represented kingship, and *white*, which was the drui’s colour. But black may have been another ‘varna’ colour. White was perhaps the colour of *this* world and black the colour of *that* world. Perhaps black was west and white east. Seasons, too. Four seasons, four provinces. Two solstices for the centre.

The most arguable example, I think, is that Ulster was symbolised by Father, Sovereignty and Red.

The immediate practical – ritual – purpose of the coiced was perhaps a circuit through the year, in which Sovereignty processed around the provinces with all the ritual theatre each major festival entailed. The cardinal points were kingly and represented aspects of sovereignty; the centre was priestly and represented the cosmos.

However much its nature must remain hidden, the coiced ideology must have been a powerful unifying force within Ireland. It was clearly a powerful set of ideas concerning the nature of ‘the land’. It required an internalised conceptual layout that was possessed of both a powerful simplicity and a profound sophistication. As the High King undertook his circuit, as his predecessors had done from time immemorial, the divine household accompanied him in its movable Asgard.

3.2. Sovereignty

In the old religion there was, it seems, the King and then there was Sovereignty. She was called Macha or Ethniu or Étaín or Findabair or Medbh or Mongfhind and so forth. She was probably mother of the Young God —

Matrona or *Modron* to *Maponus* or *Mabon*. An example of one of her functions is perhaps illustrated in the Tain, where we learn that *Dechtire* ('daughter') is the charioteer of Conchobar. This raises a key point that much scholarship of the past was created in a world that had very fixed views about women and therefore about female deities. These were 'virgins', 'mothers', fixed to the earth as Mother Earth. 'They' were not charioteers. Woman is ever-gentle and nurturing (*Étaín*), even though she can suddenly turn cruel and spiteful (*Nemain*) or morph into a loathsome Crone (the *Cailleach*). These fixed ideas are incredibly misleading if we want to understand the nature of the Irish gods, as misleading as they are in Old Europe. The Irish belief system seems very clearly to have been cyclical. The cycle of Age was a recognised component of its meaning, as youth passes to age and summer to winter. Findabair, then, *will become Medb*. The daughter *is* the mother. The son *is* the father. That world *is* This world. Medb is a mother, but she is not the Mother Goddess. Even less is she Mother Earth. She is not even, really, Queen. Rather, she is Sovereignty. A *power*. The power of sovereignty. In a sense, its permission. A *ri* can only be *ri* if he is so permitted. He must be accepted and it is Sovereignty who must accept him. Once accepted, he is bound to her as a husband. Perhaps the wife, or chief wife, of the *ri* personified Medb. The *ri* again *became* Medb. A role such as this does not fit with notions of virgins and mothers, even Earth Mothers.

Who was Medb (earlier *Medua*)? I greatly doubt her name originally meant 'the drunk one', but ought rather to be compared to Indo-European royal names like *Medea* and *Midas(h)*, which seem to have meant 'queen/king'. Latin *medicus* 'doctor' is a related word, as is *meddix* 'ruler', the Samnite equivalent of *rex*. The root meaning of these implies *judgement* and *wisdom*. Of course, inaugurations

and sundry other festivals meant intoxication, probably ritual intoxication. The name Medb may have been understood as ‘the drunk one’ in Christian times. But it is hardly a dignified name for such an important figure. Medb, moreover, is a mature woman. A Mother versus a Youth. This is the context in which Medb may have been viewed by her actual worshippers (as opposed to clerical chauvinists adapting pre-Christian sagas). We might think of sober Hera in Greece, a close ‘cognate’ of Medb. Could Hera ever be ‘the drunk one’?

Macha seems to represent the earth, if her name means ‘a plain’. We have seen the Indo-European basic myth of Father Sky and Mother Earth and their Twins (Asvins, Dioskouroi) and Daughter (the Dawn). We have also seen the Neolithic myth of the ‘coupling’ of Heaven and Earth. Sure enough, the King and Macha mate and twins (‘emain’) are born, which is close to the Indo-European myth, but I see a strong element of Old European ‘coupling’ too.

Étaín and *Ethniu* I believe are both ‘birds’. They are intermediaries between Here and There. Their names gel with that of the function of *Dechtire* the charioteer who draws the Sun (Eochaid, the Horse). The Sun is said to be drawn by birds. These are often swans, which we can compare to the coupling of Leda with Zeus in swan form.

Findabair, the ‘daughter’ of Ailill and Medb, is clearly ‘sovereignty’ for in the Tain she is repeatedly ‘offered’ to heroes to tempt them to fight Cu Chulainn, such as the seven kings of Munster. To be married to Findabair is to be ri. Arthur himself, over the Irish Sea, is married to Gwenhwyfar, which is merely the Welsh version of Findabair. Arthur, making such a marriage, is *permitted* to be king. The name *Findabair* is effectively the same as that of *Mongfhind*, ‘wife’ to Níall of the nine hostages.

What does that name mean? Well, *finn* (or *find*) can mean 'fair' or 'true' or 'just', but it can also mean 'white' or 'silver'. The most natural meaning for Mongfhind is 'white' — she is the 'white-haired'. A Cailleach, a *hag*. This also seems a plausible explanation for the name of *Findabair* — the 'white-headed'. Here we can see the damage that the old fixed ideas of Woman could wreak on our understanding Irish mythology. In our texts Findabair, and her Arthurian counterpart Guinevere, are exemplars of Woman, of the Eternal Feminine. They are not merely beautiful, but Beauty itself. They are the yin to the yang of the Hag. But, I suggest, they *are* the hag. For in the cycle, Age and Youth are one and the same — age > youth > age > &c. In ritual, this is represented by a masked or veiled Youth, masked as a Hag. The king-to-be approaches the 'hag' and dares her challenge to couple with her. The 'hag' removes the veil and reveals her true form. Her renewed form. Her eld is now youth. Findabair, then, is the masked or veiled Youth. Perhaps, unmasked, she *becomes* Medb or Medb becomes Findabair.

We have discussed what I suppose is the warrior power of *bolg*. This power of *sovereignty* is a comparable power. For what is a *ri* without Sovereignty? The question is absurd. A man is no *ri* without Sovereignty. A man with no Medb or Macha or [substitute name] is no *ri*. A *ri* *is* Sovereignty. Just as, according to Boethius, Philosophy is a 'lady', so is Sovereignty. Thus, Woman is, as so often happens in an androcentric culture, a symbol of what is denied to actual women.

3.3. Emain

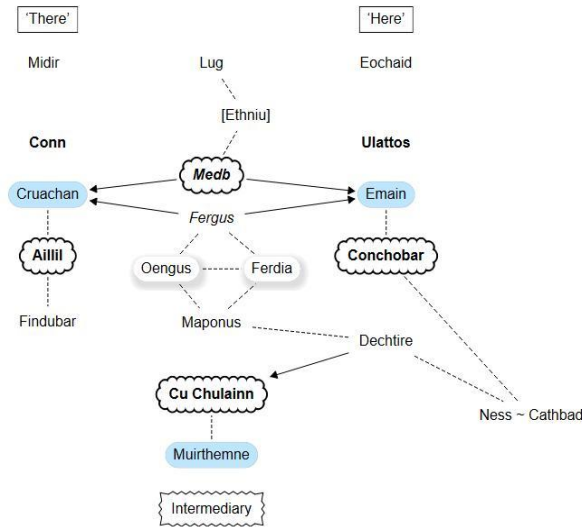
There is enough of a similarity for the comparison to be worth making — Emain was sort of like a medieval Cathedral. These were religious centres, ritual centres in

fact, but they were also much more. They were designed for grandness and therefore had great wealth, and wealth's great corollary, huge expenses. They were maintained by a large staff, with all the hierarchies that implies. A cathedral was a hub of politicking, ambitions, connivance, vainglory and ruthlessness, for any centre of wealth and power is like that. Yet of course they were holy too. A cathedral was meant to inspire awe. It did. It was a sort of gigantic cave that made insects out of the men and women who stepped into it. A Cathedral housed mundane bickering and divine awe, for any religion is like that. Emain, too. Even the fragments we have left of the druidic tradition leaves the impression it was a powerful belief system and Emain was — as a medieval Cathedral was — designed for grandness and so to grandify the belief that it represented. These fragments have more to do with the system and its symbols and narratives than they do to the mundane. They are more awe than bickering. It is easy, then, to analyse these abstractions as *the* reality of Emain, whereas the actual reality will have had far more to do with the spirit that motivated the mundane. St Paul's Cathedral represents the most abstruse theories of the nature of the Trinity, but people also once sold books there in its churchyard. We cannot visit the fairs that were held at Emain, or watch the range of human behaviours on display there. All we have left are the scattered remains of a tradition, gathered mostly up in the Tain.

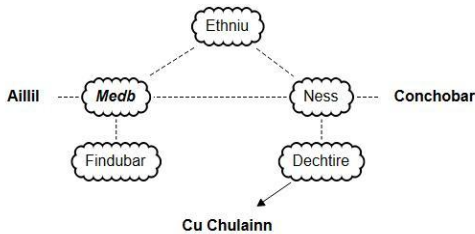
The saga, then, takes place in a mythical land reified by Connacht and Ulster. But even these two places may have a symbolic meaning — Connacht is the land of the Judge (*conn* 'judgement') and Ulster (the Ulaid) is the land of the King (Gael. *flaith* 'sovereignty', here > *ulaid*). They are separated by an 'inbetweenland', here reified by Muirthemne. The nub of the tale is the transference of

Sovereignty between Here (with Conchobar) and There (with Ailill). Cu Chulainn is the Protector of Here while Sovereignty is There (from Samhain [November 1] through to Imbolc [March 1]).

The following diagram illustrates the ‘symbolic geography’ of the Tain —



and the diagram below outlines how Sovereignty is manifested in the saga —



An examination of the character of Ness, the mother of Conchobar, makes it clear that she is Sovereignty. She is associated with a druid (and/or fian leader) called

Cathbad¹⁶⁰. Ness herself is closely linked with water, as is Medb, as we have seen¹⁶¹. It is tempting to connect her with the great Loch of the Highlands and this may provide a clue not only to her ultimate origins but also that of the Tain itself. However, there is no hint of any direct link to the Loch that has come down to us.

One story clearly describes a ritual (and also illustrates the unpleasant, and common, practise of converting pre-Christian ‘couplings’ into rapes). Ness daughter of Eochaid Ollathair¹⁶², we are told, is sent away to be fostered. However, a warrior-druid called Cathbad destroys the house of her fosterers. Ness seeks revenge, but one day while she is ‘bathing’ Cathbad approaches her and demands to ‘marry’ her (cf Findabair and Fróech bathing). Ness conceives a son, Conchobar. The father is either Cathbad or Fachtna Fáthach. As the latter’s epithet means ‘the wise’, he can be likened to Midir¹⁶³ and seen to represent *conn* ‘wisdom’. Ness’s daughter, sister of Conchobar, is Dechtire (?= ‘daughter’). The name Fachtna seems to be suspiciously similar to that of Cathbad (*facht* or *fecht* [based around a meaning of ‘fight’] vs *cath* [‘battle’]). Just as Étaín is an intermediary between Eochaid and Midir, the same may be said for Ness. Her fosterer¹⁶⁴, then, would be Fachtna and it would be he whom Cathbad attacks.

When Conchobar reaches the age of seven, the Ulidian

160 Catubodua is an attested Gaulish name.

161 See the saga of Froech.

162 Called Sálbuide here (‘yellow-heeled’).

163 In one variant, Ness is made pregnant after swallowing worms, a motif closely resembling the one in the Tochmarc Étaíne, in which Eochaid and Midir represent Here and There. Here we seem to have an identical match in *Eochaid Sálbuide* and *Fachtna Fáthach*.

164 Actually plural in our tale, where she has twelve foster-fathers.

king Fergus mac Róich ‘falls in love’ with Ness and then ‘marries’ her. There is a catch, and this is that Fergus must abdicate for a year. He agrees, but when the year is up the Ulaid will not have him back and so Conchobar remains King. Fergus therefore hies himself to Ailill and Medb in Cruachan. In other words, Fergus *becomes* Ailill. The names Oengus and Fergus, moreover, are so similar that I think they must be related — Oengus is Youth and Fergus his mature form. Just as Medb is ‘married’ to Ailill in Cruachan, she is also said to have been married to Conchobar in Emain. The inference here is that *Medb as well as Fergus* has moved to Cruachan.

There is a confusion therefore between Medb and Ness. When we consider that Ness is *wife* of Cathbad and Fachtna and Fergus, we might suspect she ought to be wife to Conchobar as well. Given the cyclical nature of this belief system, just as Oengus *is* Fergus in the form of Youth, here we may have Dechtire as Ness in the form of Youth. Ness and Dechtire are therefore the Here reflections of Medb and Findubair over There. That would clear up our problem, for now we can say *Sovereignty as well as Fergus* moved to Cruachan. Ness, therefore, is of Ulster and Medb of Connacht. We can also make a further supposition. If the name Fergus is not a folk etymology of Keltic *ver-* (‘very’ > Gael. *for* [there was a name *Forgus*]), it seems inappropriate for a god. Could Oengus and Fergus therefore be titles for the King himself, who therefore reifies the god? That is, Eochaid is the god and Fergus the man. Fergus son of Róich ‘great horse’, is he ‘son’ of Eochaid? That is, incarnates Eochaid? Midir, is he the god who fosters Oengus the boy? Is Medb (‘wisdom’) she who gives Midir the ‘sense’ (*conn*) for his judgements?

The Tain is a tale whose setting is everywhere and

nowhere. It is the tale of Sovereignty and no doubt every *ri* (and *druí*) of all the 150 or so *tuaths* of Ireland had their little version of it, and so something like it was repeated in every locality throughout the island. On the other hand, it is also a myth and, in this sense, it is located in the abstract world of symbolism. But the *Tain* itself can be understood as the grand — cathedral-like — version told in Tara, the ritual that belonged to the High King. In this context Connacht and the land of the Ulaid may have been symbolic places. They perhaps had specific roles in the ritual, in the mirror-land of these beliefs. The King, the Judge, the Surrogate, the Fosterer, the Youth, the Son, the Father, the Daughter, the Mother, Sovereignty — Imbolc, Beltaine, Samhain.

Of course, this is not the everyday world of bickering but the spiritual world of awe. Not the spiteful tract against Pelagius but the contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity. Nevertheless, this is the foundation of the tale of the *Tain* that, once its meaning was lost within the Christian world, became a tale of plunder and heroism and chariots and swords and, above all, an imagined revival of the former power of the Ulaid of Emain Macha.

3.4. Tara

A way to approach understanding Tara is to consider its name. We can make two points of comparison. First, to *Condercum* (Benwell, a Roman fort in Northumberland), whose name is based on a root **derc-*, ‘to see or look’, with a prefix **com* (=L. *cum* ‘with’). It probably means something like ‘lookout place’. This is the probable meaning of *Teamhair* (> Eng. Tara), or at least what it was taken to mean, for it was said you could see all four Provinces from the site. The second name is *Tanatis* (> Thanet). This name is probably based on a root **tanet-*

that means ‘fiery’ or ‘shining’, referring to beacons lit on the island that was, according to this theory, a signalling station. There are various Tara’s in Ireland and they were probable simply *lookout places*. This humble explanation of the name is a good beginning-point because it indicates that the site was not a fort or a place of military domination. It was a sacred site with a long history of sacredness that dates all the way back to the time of New Grange and Knowth. So, the idea that from Tara you could see each of the provinces indicates that what you ‘looked out’ at was the ‘cosmos’, for Tara was the omphalos, the centre of it all. It did not belong to any Province but in a sense each Province belonged to it.

And it belonged to the High King.

Tara may represent the fusion of the Irish (or Keltic) coiced system with an earlier post-Neolithic system. The Boyne Valley culture did not survive in its original form into the Bronze Age, but it may have adapted and survived in some manner. Therefore, the valley retained its sacred character. Perhaps, after the active use of the Boyne Valley tombs was discontinued, the area retained a sense of mystery and awe as a place where the gods were known to live — perhaps they became *more* mysterious as they lived on in their impressive palaces built by unknown and maybe magical hands. The Anglo-Saxons called this sort of thing *enta-geweorc* (*giantwork*). In the Gaelic era, for example, the Boyne retained an obviously sacred name (‘white cow?’, ‘long-lived one?’), and the river was ‘married to’ Nuadu Necht. As Nuadu was king of the gods, that was a quite impressive marriage.

3.5. Celta and Celtos?

Now let us consider the name *Celtae*. A suggestion

accepted by many is that the name means ‘hidden ones’. This suggestion seems a fruitful one. The name of the Germanic deity Hel is, for example, the same (i.e. ‘the concealed one’). This might indicate the ethnic name in fact implies descent (?) from an Otherworld deity *Celta or *Celtos, which might in turn link back to Caesar’s cryptic comment that the Gauls are ‘descended from Dis Pater’. There is Irish evidence, to be found in the Finn tales, in which Oisín and Cailte are the two survivors of the ‘apocalypse’ of Gabhra. The name Oisín (‘little deer’) is I suspect a folk etymology for Esus and is related to Uisnech (which following this logic would be ‘Oisín’s Place’, or ‘Esus’s Place’). As Esus and Lug are, I think, equivalent and as Uisnech was likely dedicated to Lug, it being named after Esus seems reasonable. The two survivors of the last battle, then, are Esus and Celtus (‘the hidden or veiled one’). A related figure to Celtus is the *cailleach* (‘the hag, the veiled one, Sovereignty grown old’). This word *cailleach* is a mere variant of ‘celt-’. In the poem of the ‘Old Woman Of Beare’, the *cailleach* names herself as Bui or Boi. This looks like the tribal name *Boii*. And of course, Bu(o)i is the *sentainne* (‘old one’) which is simply an Irish reflex of **Senona*. Boii and Senones are tribal names known both in Gaul and the Po Valley. The name Shannon ‘*Sionnan*’ may be an Irish reflex. We have seen that the name *Persephone* may be the *masked one*, equivalent to the ‘veiled or hidden one’ — in other words *Hel* or **Celta*.

Here are two case studies of ‘the hidden one’.

- *Cailte*. Supporting the importance of Esus (<> Lug) here, Cailte is said to be son of Oisgen. This is surely *Esugenus* (‘born of Esus’), a name attested

in Gaul¹⁶⁵. His ‘father’ may also have been Rónáin, which can be linked to *rún* (‘a secret’, ‘mystery’). Caílte’s own name, which can be linked to *cáil* ‘spear’ — a weapon closely associated with Lug and so presumably Esus — could also have originally been derived from the root **kel-* ‘hidden’. Moreover, he loved *Scathniamh*, the first element of whose name points to *scáth*¹⁶⁶ (key meanings here — ‘shade’, ‘covering’). The lovers, alas, were separated and never met again until Caílte was *old and withered*.

- *Hel*. If Rónáin is ‘he of the runes’ he might have got on well with the female priests called variously *haliurunnae*, *hellerune*, *hellirûna* in the Germanic-speaking world. These women knew the ‘secrets of Hel (> Hell)’. Hel was where the dead lived, presumably where *Scathniamh* lived. But *Hel* means ‘concealed’, so what specifically they knew about was *concealed* secrets, the mystery of the mysteries. What is really significant is that this Norse belief bears a strong resemblance to that found in Ireland and may help explain it. There was a trio of female deities for the Norse — Freyja, *Ipunn* and *Hel*. *Ipunn* is Étainn and she is Ethniu¹⁶⁷. She is the Intermediary, the bird. But *Freyja* too (like her brother Freyr) can assume the shape of a falcon. This suggests that Freyja in bird form is *Ipunn*. *Hel* is, following our model, the

165 ESGĒN, Vieil-Évreux.

166 I have seen the name translated as ‘flower of brightness’ and ‘lustrous blossom’! If I am correct, these are some way off the mark. It is tempting to connect the second element of her name to the Indo-European root **nébʰos* ‘cloudy’ > German *Nebel* ‘mist’.

167 And also, I suspect, the River Ituna (> Eden) of Cumbria.

equivalent of Medb. She is of *there*.

All this suggests a Mystery, that of Sovereignty. Power is always aided by some form of bamboozlement. Transubstantiation or Creationism are attractive *because* they cannot be explained rationally. When it comes to bamboozlement, consider the mighty edifice of the Pharaonic cult, or in fact lesser cults ranging from Mithraism to the Masons through to Jim Jones in his very own pharaonic (lowercase) city of Jonestown.

But 'bamboozlement' is an unkind word, for the great myths and mysteries of world religion are often more beautiful and more satisfying than the new myths of hard science. One gives you Gnosis, the key to the secret knowledge of the Cosmos and of how to become one with it, the other tells you that you are a dot on an Earth that is part of a chain of dots, of a Solar System in a Galaxy in a Visible Universe that is a dot in an approximately infinite Everything. Alpha and Omega, or Iota?

I suggest the following Beautiful Myth for the Celtae. It is a ritual in which the young queen holds a hideous mask over her face, or she is veiled. She is the *cailleach*, just as Medea and Medusa are masked *gorgons*. The king removes the mask (or veil) and Youth becomes restored. The *cailleach*, or *senona*, or *celta*, thus becomes *bui/boand* ('forever young').

A beautiful myth. Beautiful, surely, as the myth of the Trinity. It was perhaps this myth of the Celta or Celtos that lay at the core of the beliefs of the Celtae — perhaps the same beautiful myth that belonged to Tara.

3.6. Whispers of Old Europe?

The Irish belief system — I say Irish because that is where most of our evidence comes from, but of course

Irish culture and *Celtic culture, even if not the same, must be closely-related — is that of a people speaking an Indo-European language. Comparative studies such as those of the Reece¹⁶⁸ Brothers, or Bernard Sergent¹⁶⁹, focus of the Indo-European links of Celtic. This is also the focus of the dumézilians. But was the Irish religion really ‘Indo-European’? We can ask this in the same way we can wonder if Greek religion was really Indo-European and there, we can see that although it has deep Indo-European roots, the Olympian belief system was a highly-evolved one that had developed out of many source cultures, including the Old European one. Aphrodite was an Olympian god, but not an Indo-European one. Even at the top, Zeus and Hera were not the old Father Sky and Mother Earth of the old Indo-European times. Likewise in Ireland. Medb, as we have seen, is a Mother (the equivalent of Welsh *Modron*), but she is not Mother Earth. It is hard, too, to see the Dagda or Nuadu or Eochaid Ollathair as being much of an equivalent to Zeus. Bernard Sergent amasses a large amount of data to link Lug to Apollo. But although his data carries a great deal of conviction, is either Lug or Apollo an *Indo-European* god?

One thing we can infer about the Irish belief system is that it was upheld by the druids, which is a good reason to believe the system was not particular to Ireland. The druids of the Irish and those of the Celtae and of the British are likely to have shared similar beliefs. The phrase, often used in early Ireland, ‘I swear by the gods of my people’ suggests that, as in the early days of Yahweh, each tuath had its own gods. But just as tuaths were enrolled into the Irish political system, their gods

168 *Celtic Heritage*, Alwin and Brinley Reece [1961].

169 *Le livre des dieux — Celtes et Grecs* [2004].

were likewise part of the religious system. The gods of Tara were, presumably, gods of all Ireland. We can compare the Olympian gods with the multitude of local gods. Local Zeuses and Heras lived happily side by side with the Olympian pair. The story of the Battle of the Boyne ['Cath Boinde'] seems to provide an example of a local cult. Set in Cruachan, Ailill is pitched against Eochaid (here the epithet is 'Dala') for the attention of Medb, but the saga, when the action of resolved, pretends to be a prelude to the larger story of the Tain. It claims to be the story of how Ailill came to be king of Cruachan, whereas it is really a local variant. The Tain itself is merely an expanded version of the Caith Boinde.

Here are some motifs in the Irish belief system that I think have at least some roots in the traditions of Old Europe.

- *Here vs. There.* The Otherworld is a central plank of the Irish religion, but it is hard to understand what exactly it is. It is the *Mag Mell*¹⁷⁰ in the sea, or under the waves ('fotonn') or it is a cave (for example the 'Cave of the Cat', near Cruachan) or it is a sid or a bruiden (i.e. an earthen mound) or it lies on a remote island. These all seem to be *there*. But is implied repeatedly in our various sources that there are two sets of gods, the people of Danu and the Fomorians. In *that* model, it is clear the latter clearly represent *there* and the former *here*. The Fomorians (in whatever form) *come to* Danu's people, often to impose some sort of tax or tribute. We have seen that Old Europe thought in terms of a cosmos of Upper, Middle and Lower and that within this system there was a dyad of this-world

170 'Sweet Plain' or 'Plain of Revelry'.

and under-world. We have also seen that the earliest Neolithic in Britain at least — the pioneer phase — took the colonists to what seemed like the end of the earth and that the Orkneys may have been a cultic centre. Could these early Old European beliefs survive in the enigmatic nature of the Irish Otherworld? It is probable that Indo-European beliefs had a strong dualistic (probably *light vs dark*) element to them, greatly strengthened in the Indo-Iranian religions (asura vs deva [Vedic], daeva vs ahura [Avestan]). These Irish ‘god peoples’, the Dananians and Fomorians, may be a reflex of this dualism. However, in Ireland they seem less to be ‘light and dark’ as *here* and *there*. They appear to *mirror* each other and, to an extent, *swap places* with each other and in fact *annihilate* each other in a final apocalyptic battle, almost as if they were made out of matter and anti-matter. Are they therefore Old European gods beyond the end of the world confounded with the Indo-European forces of light and dark?

- *Coupling*. It is not that the idea of a King married to Sovereignty is not found in other Indo-European contexts. It is found, in India for example. But at least in the sagas, especially in the Tain, there appears to be a remarkable emphasis on this figure of Sovereignty. Medb, for example, is personified as an actual person and it is really she who rules. She is a stronger character, at least in terms of bluster, than Ailill. She is also possessed of three forms — Youth, Mother and Hag (the Old European Grandmother). One of the triadic Old European deity’s most important functions was to couple with the sky, or heaven. This is the most clear-cut of possible Old European influences.

Medb is the old triadic deity who couples with her consort to fertilise the earth. This ritual was converted into one that consecrated the King — the old deity of the Cosmos now granted the kingship to the man led to her by Lug. But we can see the original concept here and there. For example, Macha couples with Díthorb and the Dagda with the Boyne. Put these together and the Divine Bull couples¹⁷¹ with the White Cow. The names are Celtic, but the ideas belong to the Neolithic.

- *Inanna Redux*. Inanna represents the Descent into the Underworld, but also *Here* as opposed to the *There* of Ereshkigal. Such a dyad, such a descent, seems to be at the core of the Old European religion. One of the most famous variants of it, as we have seen, is that of Demeter and Persephone. In the Norse religion we noted Freyja and Hel and the important intermediary the Bird (Ípunn). This seems to map closely to the Irish belief in Here (e.g. Emain) and There (e.g. Cruachan) with a similar avian intermediary (e.g. Étaín). This looks like another Old European influence.
- *Age Cycle*. One of the most prominent characteristics of the Old European triadic deity was her age-cycle — she was young, mature and old. Such a belief is observable in Greece, but very prominent in Ireland, where it has been applied to the Consort as well, where Maponus > Eochaid and Oengus perhaps > Fergus.
- *Protector of the Home*. We have seen that Demeter and Athena, very dissimilar deities in classical Greece, may have had a common origin, that of the

171 *Deiotarbo and *Bouinda.

Protector of the Home. This is a plausible etymology of *Demeter* ('Lady [lit. 'mother'] of the house') and may have been the original function of Athena (who was the protector of the *polis* 'city'). We can perhaps see this function in the deity of Sovereignty, as a protector of the tuath and the ritual centre of the tuath. So, for example, Macha is not just she who grants Kingship, perhaps she personifies the building that is at the centre of the Kingship.

Britain

By the La Tène period south-eastern Britain must have been speaking a P-Celtic language similar to our attested Brittonic.

One popular belief today is that the Celtic languages can be divided into ‘Continental’ and ‘Insular’ groups (the latter being the languages of the Two Isles). An older and I think preferable view is that ‘Gallo-Brittonic’ was essentially a single language. This is important here because, as we have seen, in the ‘Wessex’ and ‘post-Wessex’ periods, peoples both sides of the Channel had a common culture. We have also seen the close connection of south-eastern Britain to the Continent during the early Hallstatt period. So, we can expand on the statement above and state that the language of the south was *Gallo-Brittonic*. That is to say ‘Keltic’, in the terminology of this book. There was, in other words, no distinct *insular* language.

I have suggested that the north was once inhabited by a different and Central-Indo-European-speaking people descended from AOC/AOO Beaker immigrants. It is interesting then that the archaeological record of the ‘migration era’ seems to strongly suggest Keltic folk movements into this very area during the La Tène period. These folk movements, I believe, left Britain divided up into various ‘regions’.

Britannia

The south-east, the region most connected to the other side of the Channel, can be labelled ‘*Britannia*’. There were no significant folk-movements here until ‘Belgic’

groups (*Regni*, *Atrebates* and, of course, the *Belgae* themselves) moved to the Solent region around the time of the Caesar/Claudian invasions of Gaul and Britain.

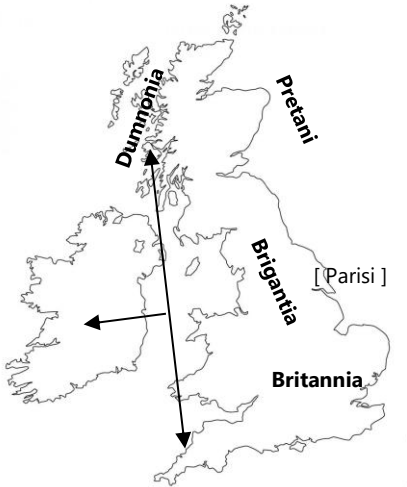
Pretani

The most obvious example of a La Tène folk movement is manifested in the Arras Culture of East Yorkshire, dated around 350 BCE. This is marked by chariot burials. These are also found in north-eastern France, for example in the Burgundy region. East Yorkshire was home to a historically-attested tribe called the *Parisi*. The French capital is named after a tribe with the same name (*Parisi*). The name of the tribe may imply a belief in descent from the Trojan hero Paris. Trojan descent is a common enough trope among many peoples, not least the Romans. However, it is probably derived ultimately from a root **parit-*, which is also the likely root of the name *Prettanoi*, the earlier name of the ‘Brettanoi’ > ‘Britanni’. The *Parisi*, then, have a name closely related to the ‘people’ after whom the island itself is named.

Another folk movement — quite possibly a part of the same one — is evidenced in north-east Scotland, where the worlds of things and words again collide and complement each other. Around Aberdeen, we have the Brittonic river names *Deva* (Dee) and *Devona* (Don). If the tribe controlling this area was the *Texali* (not *Taexali* and especially not *Taezali*) it could have a Brittonic¹⁷² name. North of there, at the far east corner of Scotland, we find a patchwork of little tribes — *Decantae* (‘people of the hundreds’), *Lugi* (most likely ‘people devoted to Lug’),

¹⁷² To be compared to the various ‘tasc-’ names (e.g. *Tasciovanus*, a king of the Catuvellauni), with a possible variant of ‘tax-’ or ‘tex-’. I prefer the old derivation of ‘yew’ (cf Latin *taxus* ‘yew’) to the modern one of ‘badger’. A *Texali* who were ‘people of the yew’ would therefore be linked to the Gael deity-name *Tadg*, a duplicate of *Lug*.

Smertae ('devotees of Smertos') and *Cornavi* (probably 'peninsular people'). These peoples can be thought of as the '*Pretani*'. Unlike the mostly native Britanni of the south east, they were immigrants from the Continent, although originating from the same basic culture and speaking the same basic language as the south-eastern people. The island may in fact have been named by or for these people (cf *Parisi* <> *Pretani*), the variant *Britanni* being a later adaptation of the south eastern peoples. This implies a change of meaning from 'making' and 'manufactory' to a more flattering 'judgement' and perhaps 'wisdom' or 'intelligence' — *Connachta*, in Irish terminology.



Dumnonia

Archaeology, on the other hand, in the north-west of Scotland mainly, points to the construction of stone tower called *brochs*, the earliest dating from around 300 BCE. These strongly-built stone fortresses indicate small and decentralised groups of people. There is a keynote place name in this region — *Domna* — at the northern end of the Outer Hebrides. This name is to be related to the British Dumnonian tribes of the Clyde region and the s-w peninsula and also the Irish Fir Domnann. This western region can be named '*Dumnonia*'.

Brigantia

The *Brigantes* may have their origins in the later ‘Galatian Period’ when on the one hand the Volcae appear in southern France and on the other a large intrusion occurred into Eastern Europe and Turkey (> Galatia). The north of England can be called ‘*Brigantia*’.

1.1. Brigantia

By *Brigantia* I mean the territory of the Brigantes tribe whose name is no doubt related to the royal couple Brigantia and Bregans (‘queen and king’, or ‘lady and lord’ – possibly originally meaning ‘chief of the briga’). This links neatly to all the Irish legends of the goddess of Sovereignty. Brigantia still lives on in the form of St. Brigid and her name is, doubtless not to her pleasure, preserved today in the Brent Cross Shopping Centre. The southern fort of Brigantia is named *Camulodunum* (the ‘fort of Camulus’, ‘?big step’¹⁷³, who can cover the world in a few strides, like the Mac Roth of the Tain) may indicate a ‘Belgic’ origin for the Brigantes, for the god *Camulus* is particularly linked to the Remi tribe (of the Reims region). The name Brigantes indicates a claim to the sovereignty over the northern part of England. Camulodunum itself indicates that the polity had a focal point at the south, perhaps its initial locus of power. The Brigantes ruled over tribes who must have existed but whose names are mostly unknown (the Setantii and Carvetii are two of the known sub-Brigantian tribes, the Manapi of Ireland probably another). Perhaps the name was a federative one, perhaps Brigantia was a ‘province’ in the Irish sense. Perhaps it had a ritual centre — Camulodunum? — where the King and Queen (Bregans

173 Cf Gael. *céim* ‘step’.

and Brigantia) were inaugurated by Lug¹⁷⁴.

The reports we have of the Brigantian queen *Cartimandua* are interesting and may shed light on the royal cult. She might have been the representation of Brigantia herself and perhaps stood at the head of the cult. Cartimandua appears to have had significant political influence but the evidence of Tacitus indicates this was not as a warrior. The apparently curious detail that she exiled her husband in favour of her armourer indicates she had independent power. She does not come out well in the Roman records, but the gold-standard chauvinism of that culture is likely to have misrepresented her in a particularly cute example of Orwellian propaganda. For Cartimandua the *pro-Roman* is 'bad' (a traitor, a Woman) but her ex-husband Venutius the *anti-Roman* is 'good' (a patriot, a Man)! When the Brigantes had been crushed, the Romans were free to concoct a tale of cowardly Woman versus heroic Man without any harm to the Empire. As a result of this, if we ignore the misogyny, we are left with an interesting example of an independent female tribal ruler and how can we not conclude that the tradition underlying her power — the tradition that urged men (sic) to listen to a woman — was that of Sovereignty? Cartimandua was not so much a woman but a power who must to be listened to. Perhaps the analogy we need is that of Elizabeth I, another woman (most successfully) bound up with Sovereignty.

The power of Cartimandua was in essence the power of the Brigantes themselves. Geographically, Brigantia resembles the English Northumbria (literally 'the land

174 ?=Camulos or perhaps he was simply a prop to the ceremony, like Labraid and the Divine Mist.

north of the River Humber'). It extends over a large area. If the Brigantes were the people of Bregans and Brigantia, the divine couple represented the power of the confederation. All is explained if we understand that the Brigantes were originally from the lands of what Caesar called the 'Belgae', and that the Brigantes were the men (and, given what we know of Cartimandua) the women of *bolg*.

1.2. Dumnonia, Pretani

As we have seen, at the north of the Hebrides we find *Domna*, around the Clyde the Damnonii tribe and the south west peninsular of England the Dumnonii. Was this in some sense a 'place' — a region? We have also seen the spread — a not dissimilar spread — of the Cornovi and Cornavi. Not only that but there are many plausible links to Ireland — 1) the Gangani of Lleyln and the Shannon area (>? Genann and Gamanrad); 2) the Setantii and Sétanta; 3) the Epidii and Eochaid~Echdae~&c; 4) the Novantae and Nuadu; 5) Uriconium~Pennocrucium <> Fróech~Cenn Cruach; 6) Oengus~Fergus <> Pictish Unuist~Urguist; 7) Ebdani~Fir Iboth <> Ebudae (Hebrides); 8) the 'men' of Orc; 9) Conall Cernach (<> literally Cornovian); 10) ?Conchobar mac Nessa ?< R, Ness; 11) Ituna > River Eden <> Étaín.

Even in Wales the *Ordovices*, the most obviously Keltic people, were probably not a tribe but a fighting clan. The name means 'hammer fighters', the hammer being their symbol or emblem. It is comparable to names such as *Gabrantovices* ('goat' < symbol of Thunder deity), *Brannovices* ('crow' or 'raven', and linking to Welsh Brân or Lug himself) or *Eburovices* ('yew', linking to such figures as Eógan or Lug [with his yew-spear]). These

names are comparable in Ireland to those *-raige* names connected with colour or animal elements, though note how the Keltic symbols are all unambiguously religious. This suggests to me a connected culture complex along the west coast of Britain and extending into (or intruding into) Ireland and it is this region we can call 'Dumnonia'.

Did this axis proceed south to north or north to south? If the Ordovices' warrior sept, were connected to a Keltic control of Mona (the Isle of Anglesey), this might point to a settlement from the north, as would the Cornovi if we connect them to the Wirral peninsular. The island of Domna together with the Cornavi of Caithness, not to mention the men of Iboth and Orc, all provide a strong connection to the brochs, so we can take the Viking settlements as a model and again this indicates a north > south movement. This would also neatly fit a pattern of settlement into the north and midlands of Ireland.

This *Dumnonia* cannot be separated from what can be thought of as a *Pretania* along the east coast of Britain. We have seen a cluster of Keltic tribal names in east Scotland, especially the far north east — Lugi, Smertae, Decantae and perhaps Texali, together with the Keltic river names Deva¹⁷⁵ and Devona (>> Dee and Don). I would link these tribes to the era of the Galatai and Volcae of Gallia Narbonensis. Some possible links to southern France are listed below —

- *Orgon*. 'Ouebroumaros | dede Taranoou | bratu dekanter'. Contains the phrase *dede bratou dekanter*. Note that *Taran* was a Pictish deity.
- *Uzès*. 'ekulio | sriou | mane | osan | dooun | nabod | edebrato | u[de]kan | tena'. Contains the

¹⁷⁵ Note the Deva (> Dee) of the Cornovi.

phrase *dede bratou [de]kantena*.

- *Nimes*. ‘kassi | talos | ouersi | knosd | edebr | atoud | **ekant** | **enala** | mieino | uii’. Contains the phrase *dede bratou [de]kantena*. Dedication of a Cassitalos son of Versegos. Note the Pictish name Talorc, with a plausible etymology of ‘bright-browed’, is similar to the name Cassi-talos (vs. Talorc).
- *ditto*. ‘britou[]’. Compare *Brit-annia*? Whatmough however thought it a mis-spelling of ‘bratou’.
- *ditto*. ‘kato | ualos’. W. Cadfal, Gael. Cathal.
- *ditto*. ‘[oi]ioureoue[] | []ouab[o]dedele[] | brat[ou]de**dekanten**[]’. Contains the phrase *bratou [de]kantena*.
- *Montelaurès*. ‘pricatio’; ‘pricantio’. Brigantio. Compare of course *Brigantes*.
- *Cavaillon*. ‘kabiros ui | ndilikos’. *Translation* — ‘Warrior of the Vindelici’¹⁷⁶.
- *Belgentier*. ‘ouenikoimedou’. Compare *Vennicni* tribe. ‘Fian leader’? Compare also Eochaid Mugmedón, Medua~Medb.
- *Deity name* — Vroicis. Fróech, Uriconium.

Politically, north of Brigantia the Roman border was settled on the line delimited by Hadrian's Wall. Briefly, in the time of Antoninus Pius (c. 240-280 CE), the ‘Antonine’ Wall became the northern border. After Antoninus’ death, his successors speedily moved the border back down. The region between the Wall and the Forth posed no immediate military threat to Britannia

176 A Keltic tribe, or kingdom, in the Alps.

and capturing it would provide no military advantage, and apart from that no economic benefit. Beyond Scotland, after all, all there was from Rome's point of view, was sea. The two main tribes in this area, the Damnonii and Votadini, seem to have benefited from dealings with Rome. For example, a large trading centre for the tribe was built at Traprain Law. The Forth-Solway region was probably an effective buffer zone and the adventure of Antoninus extremely counter-productive, as it implies the Damnonii and Votadini in the meanwhile lost their independence. All the province gained was new enemies.

North of the buffer zone, the appearance of the name 'Pict' around 300 CE indicates that the north-eastern tribes had become federated in and around that time. The federation probably had two centres. The northern centre was centred on Moray and the southern one was located at or near Scone. The southern centre, at this time, may be focused on the *Verturiones* (> Fortiu) and *Caledones* of the highlands. It is interesting that, when the Romans built their forts in this area, a line of them seems to be pointing at the Caledonian highland area, fencing in the region between the Tay and Forth estuaries. This begs the question as to whether the Picts were, in fact, an entity designed to *deal with* Rome, not to fight against it, and that the 'Scone' and Moray centres therefore developed under Roman influence. It is clear from the Gaelic name for them, Cruthin, that the Picts were a Pretanic people. The Picts are a link between the north east and north west of Scotland. To the south, the Parisi of east Yorkshire are simply a further link in the chain. It is interesting that the elite Keltic group of the Parisi seem not to have been subdued into the confederation of the fellow-Keltic Brigantes.

As the Roman Empire collapsed in on itself, the Roman authorities seem to have induced northern chiefs from the buffer zone to move into what became Wales. It is these chiefs who founded some of the later dynasties of early Wales. English intrusions began in the post-Roman period (first as mercenary forces, then invaders, then settlers). The English overran the Brittonic south, though the northern and western areas remained independent for a while. The south east heartland of Britain fell and what remained — and that not for so long outside of Wales — was the peripheral regions of Brigantia and Dumnonia. Even the Pretani of Pictland fell to the Gaels. Britannia, Brigantia and Dumnonia became England and the rump of Pretania became Scotland.

1.3. The Others

1.3.1. The North

In the far north, we can note three probable *exonyms*. In the wild areas north of the Brigantes we find the *Selgovae*, or ‘hunters’. At the far north-west mainland of Scotland were the *Carnonacae* (‘highlanders’) and below these the *Caereni* (‘shepherds’). None of these looks anything like a genuine tribal name. They are mere descriptions. They are exonyms. These two north western tribes inhabited brochland, which I have made part of ‘Dumnonia’. Note that these exonyms by definition tell us nothing about who the highlanders or shepherds or hunters *were*. The context of the Carnonacae and Caerini — in the land of the brochs — suggests they were Keltic groups. The Selgovae, judging from the cluster of names below, may indicate non-Keltic peoples who did not belong to any Keltic tribal group.

There is a number of northern names that point to non-

Keltic-speaking groups in the north —

- It is surely significant that two seemingly non-Keltic but Indo-European river names – the rivers *Ness* and *Farrar* (earlier *Varar*) – are in north Scotland. Ptolemy hints at septs named *Virvedra* and *Verubi* right at the north-east of Scotland. The River *Never* (< *Nabaros*) is also a ‘hypothetical’¹⁷⁷. Note that *vedra* is close to Germanic *water* and comparable for example to the Oder (in Sorbian, ‘Odra’). Indo-European (CIE?), not *Celtic.
- The river name *Adder*, in the border regions of the *Selgovae*, is another fairly securely pre-Keltic but Indo-European name.
- The *Cheviot* (earliest form *chiviet*) is generally considered to be non-Keltic (and certainly not English). If the earlier form was **keviot* (before the Englished ‘ch’), the name at least *looks* Indo-European (with a root **káput-* < **kap-* ‘head’). Compare *caput*, *heafod*, *kova*, etc. Note that the form, while clearly not Germanic, does resemble Germanic forms.
- River names in this area – *Wear* (*Vedra* again, ‘the water’), *Tyne* (*Tine*) and *Tees* (*Tes*) – these all look Indo-European but are doubtfully Celtic. ‘Tees’ more or less means ‘the hot one’ in Gallo-Brittonic, but this is semantically puzzling and I would compare it to such names as *Windrush*, *Eoforwic* and *Waterford*, all of which *seem* to make sense, until you for example wonder what a ‘water ford’ actually is or how the River *Suir* could be forded at

¹⁷⁷ Indo-European root **nabh-* ‘cloud’.

that town¹⁷⁸.

- The name *Selgovae* indicates, as stated above, a primitive and acephalous area, which was many centuries later still noted for its wild inhabitants (who, I recall from somewhere, were still thought of as ‘hunters’ even in the heyday of Chevy Chase). It is broadly in this area, during the late Roman period, that the name ‘*Selgovae*’ itself disappears and the *Maeatae* and *Attecotti* suddenly materialise. Much ink has been spilled on these names, but they may fit together. The Gaelic form of the first name is *Miathi*. This, in Gaelic at least, seems to indicate a meaning of ‘the best people’. If the Gaelic name isn’t a folk-etymology, the name would have meant something like ‘aristocrat’. In Gaelic again, *aitheach* means ‘rent-payer, churl’. The name *Attecotti* has often been linked to the *aitheachtuatha* of Irish legend, but there seems no reason to see any direct link. However, a meaning of ‘rent-payers’ seems to be a plausible etymology. Just as *Selgovae* was a descriptive term for an area without a political centre, so perhaps are these names. In the late Roman period peoples in this area started to raid other areas, maybe both the ‘high’ people (*maeatae*) and the ‘low’ (*attecotti*).

1.3.2. Wales

The other obviously non-Keltic region, judging from the names of rivers and tribes in Ptolemy is, perhaps surprisingly, Wales. We are told that the last resistance of the druids took place at Anglesey (*Mona*, a securely Keltic name). *Mona* lies within the region assigned to the

¹⁷⁸ The name is Norse and means ‘stormy fjord’.

Ordovices ('hammer fighters'). And there are towns such as *Moridunum* ('sea fort' > Carmarthen¹⁷⁹) in the south and the river name *Stuctia* (> Ystwyth).

Most tribe names in Wales, though, are obscure — *Demetae* (surviving as Dyfed, and briefly discussed earlier), *Silures* ('silver or wealthy folk?') and *Deceangli* (modern Tegeingl). A good part of the river names of Wales look un-Keltic — *Tis-obis*, *Tuer-obis* and *Ratost-abius*. These are probably all the 'X'-river. The *Sabrina* (Severn), near to the Silures, is also doubtfully Keltic. Looking at much later medieval 'Welsh' sources, the similarity between the names *Gwydion* (a North Wales 'deity') and *Odin* is interesting. But surely *it is the dissimilarities* in the natures of Gwydion and Odin that are significant. Gwydion lacks *all* of the characteristics of sovereignty that Odin has acquired. He is basically a worker of magic. But is that not the core of Odin too? Gwydion looks to be a primitive analogue of the Germanic deity. In the other Celtic myths we have, from Ireland and Wales, there appears to be a remarkable coherence, which is not surprising given the existence of a powerful priesthood. Gwydion does not appear to fit within this framework for he is not part of the cult of Sovereignty.

1.4. Britannia?

Was Keltic Britain a 'place', like Ireland? Was it centralised or at least connected-up? The evidence is so limited the question is likely to remain unresolved. Caesar tells us the druids of Gaul 'originated' in Britain, which is certainly a clear connection but one we have precisely zero information about. We are told of the heroic

¹⁷⁹ 'Carmarthen' actually means 'Merlin's Fort' ('Merlin' < W. Myrddin), the original meaning 'sea-fort' long-forgotten.

last stand of the druids in *Mona Angelsey*, which very strongly indicates a religious centre. *Mona*, though, looks to have been sacred because it was remote, remote islands being gateways to the Otherworld. Perhaps at the time of the Claudian invasion there existed in England a southern 'Britannia' and a northern 'Brigantia', both of which were strongly Keltic. Greco-Roman authors indicate forcefully that there were political links and overlordships both within southern Britain (my 'Britannia') and across the Straits of Dover. Brigantia must have been in some sense a separate polity, for the region did not mint coins while the south did. Dumnonia too made no coins, so there seems to be another cultural boundary between the Dumnonii on the one hand and the Dobunni and Durotriges on the other. The northern frontier of Brigantia seems to have been in the region of the Votadini and the wild lands of the Selgovae. Wales was another 'no coins' place and so another boundary. However, I believe that the peoples of Wales — whoever they *were* — were not Keltic (i.e. the Demetae, Silures and Deceangli).

Southern Britain must have been exceptionally fluid, with significant levels of immigration, producing perhaps a flux of tribal groupings over time. Boudicca's rebellion may hint at the scope of tribal politics in pre-Roman Britain — *Camulodunum*, *Londinium* and *Verulamium*. This indicates a localised world within what seems to have been a 'Belgic' tribal area (the *Catuvellauni* and *Trinovantes*). There was a rapid process of pre-Roman acculturation in this region, represented in particular by coinage. The coin distribution is a good indicator of tribal boundaries and, as stated, there is a clear boundary beyond which coins do not appear — Dumnonia, Wales and Brigantia. The coin area itself illustrates acculturation at work. Though this is a Keltic area, it is

unlikely the southern tribes made up a single polity. The *Atrebates* (or *Regni* or *Belgae*) of the Solent area were surely recent arrivals and therefore a distinct polity to the neighbouring Durotriges over to the west. But both the Atrebates and Durotriges adopted a similar coin culture. Coins indicate a certain centralisation of power, for it is the kings who minted these coins. The coins also provide us with the names of chiefs and kings and incidentally illustrate the evolving polities of the south which now contrast sharply with those of Dumnonia and Brigantia.

Something like this was I believe what the Romans encountered, a somewhat fragmented place that nevertheless can be divided into dimly-discernible regions. In the south, it was a strongly Keltic land, notwithstanding this or that aristocracy from across the Channel. These aristocracies belonged to the same culture. Outside this area were more Keltic areas, but here I believe the Keltic groups were intrusive, the Brigantes and Pretani of the north in particular. In the south west, the land of the Dumnonii had strong links over a long period with Ireland and Armorica. In our period, this region was Keltic. I have defined this term to represent 1) speakers of a Gallo-Brittonic language who 2) evolved into a powerful cultural and military power in the La Tène period after c. 450 BCE. This is when the world of things starts to become the world of words. But before then, what was 'Keltic'? Was the Atlantic region of southern Ireland, Dumnonia and Armorica 'Keltic' then? We can make two points here —

1. The Greek explorer and geographer Pytheas, writing about 325 BCE (during the early La Tène), states that the far point of this area was called *Bolerion* (or *Belerion*), a name transparently

related to *Balar*, an Irish god and a chief of the Fomorians. Balar 'lived' on Tory Island, a remote place just like Bolerion. We have noted that the Fomorians were the gods of 'there', opposed to the Tuatha Dé Danann, who were the gods of 'here'.

2. Over in Brittany, even in Roman times, one of the main tribes was the Osismii. This name is equally transparently a variant of *Uxama* (meaning 'the farthest shore' or 'land's end'). The Osismii were therefore 'the people of Uxama'. The latter name is Keltic, but the former shows a sound change ($k > s$) occurring in both Lepontic and some forms of Hispanoceltic.

When we start to think back that far, it is then we realise that the core areas of the La Tène were further east, and that really when we think of the 'Gauls' it is really to the 'Belgae' we should turn our attention. We can therefore discern two 'edges' to the Roman Gaul — Armorica ($>$ the Atlantic) and Belgica ($>$ central Europe). It may be that it is during the La Tène era Armorica and Dumnonia became Keltic — as did perhaps even the Celtae themselves. The traces of Q-Celtic among the Celtae are slight, but they are generally accepted as being real. The one fairly secure conclusion that can be made is that the La Tène period transformed Britain and perhaps even made it Keltic.

Europe

1. 'Gauls'

The problem of the 'homeland' of the Irish and Britons is often framed, as we have said, in terms of tracing a direct path from central Europe to Britain and Ireland. So Beakerses, and tumuluses, and urnses all wander oversea from the Alps and so as often or oftener do sturdy hallstatters and especially latèniens. But origins in the Two Isles ought really to be discussed in its own terms, in terms of a western and northern homeland. If this was a stable 'Celtic' area over a significant period of time, then the problem of where the Irish 'came from' vanishes. Irish now simply represents the Celtic language of Britain back at some point X in prehistory.

It is important to bear in mind that we only encounter the Celtic peoples fairly late on. As we have seen, the expansion of urbanised Greeks and Phoenicians/Carthaginians clearly caused profound changes over most of Europe, including the known Celtic-speaking areas. We can see from archaeology, and fill in the details via Greco-Roman witnesses, that the Hallstatt culture represents a powerful new trading centre, probably under Etruscan control. The La Tène culture – the great *Keltic* culture – seems to have destroyed the Hallstatt and the early Le Tène centres are all on the periphery of the Hallstatt region. There appears though to be an unshakeable belief in the 'Celticness' of Hallstatt, which at its core was an Alpine culture. This makes little sense, as the 'Celts' of Greco-Roman tradition are connected to the La Tène era only. The East Hallstatt in later times was inhabited by the Raeti and Raetic

inscriptions seem to be written in an Etruscan dialect, perhaps an elite remnant of Etruscan traders. Tribe and place names seem Indo-European and, yes, quite possibly Celtic. But not Keltic.

The first confusion we meet with is one of terminology. Greco-Roman writers use various names – Keltoi [Gk.], Galli [R.], Galatai [Gk.], Celtae and Belgae [both R.]. For many, these are simply ‘the Celts’. Can we though be more specific about what each of these names means?

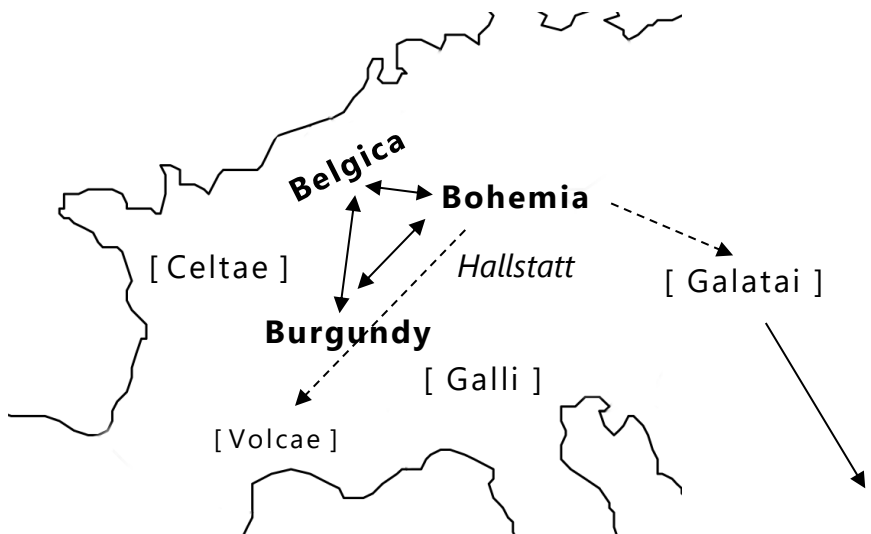
- *Keltoi*. The name ‘Keltoi’ almost certainly originates with the Greek traders of Massilia (> Marseilles). Massilia was founded in the Hallstatt period, before La Tène. The peoples around Massilia seem to have been thought of as ‘Liges’ or ‘Ligurians’. The Keltoi were therefore a people further north. Caesar confirms this when he says the peoples known to the Romans as Gauls ‘call themselves Celtae’. This implies that that *Keltoi* was a native name for the tribes between the Garonne and Seine who took part in the ‘national’ assembly in the land of the Carnutes (thought to be the centre of Gaul).
- *Galli*. The Roman name ‘Galli¹⁸⁰’ presumably came into use in the very early La Tène period, when the Po Valley was attacked by northern warriors, leading to substantial levels of Keltic settlement in northern Italy. During these attacks, in 390 BCE, Rome itself was put to the sword.
- *Galatai*. During the early 3rd Century BCE, the tribes that had attacked Italy moved east along the

¹⁸⁰ The name is similar to Latin *gallus* [‘cock’] and, even better after the cult of Cybele was adopted by Rome, *Gallus* [‘emasculated priest of Cybele and Attis’]. No wonder the name stuck.

Danube. They then followed the river south, reaching as far as Greece and Turkey. Delphi was sacked in 279 BCE. It is here, probably, that the Greek name '*Galatai*' was adopted. It is clearly the same name as 'Galli', but more faithfully rendered.

- *Belgae*. Over across the Seine, Caesar encountered a 'people' he called 'Belgae'. It is possible this was the name for a small federation of tribes, but it is unlikely there was a common identity over the whole region at that time. The extension of the scope of the ethnonym to refer to all the tribes between the Seine and Rhine is likely to be a Roman one, a matter of political and military convenience.

These are the 'peoples' who are closely linked to the La Tène culture of the archaeologists. The map below illustrates the apparent mismatch between the literary and archaeological record —



The bolded text represents the three core La Tène regions in relation to the Celtae, Galli and Galatai. I also include

the *Volcae* who seem to have their origins in a Galatian confederation located in and around Bohemia. It will be noted that 1) the *equation* of the ‘Galli’ and Celtae is questionable and 2) this is equally true of the *distinction* between the Belgae and ‘Galli’. One of the core regions of the Galatai *was* the Roman Belgica. On the other hand, Celtica as a whole is clearly an outlier region of the Galatai.

The map illustrates the absurdity both of thinking in terms of ‘Celts’ and of adopting Greco-Roman terminology without due thought. Take the Volcae, marked on the map. When the Galatai moved into Turkey, among them were groups called by this name. In southern France, around the same time, archaeology shows evidence of destruction and here too we find later mentions of Volcae – the *Arecomici* and *Tectosages*. The region around Bohemia (i.e. the modern Czech Republic) is of great significance for any consideration of the *Galli* (to use the Roman term). That is, the *Gauls*. But there is no literary record of the Volcae in their ‘homeland’, or of their unwelcome arrival into southern France. They are in many ways a prehistoric people. But they indicate the contradictions involved in the Greco-Roman terminology very well. There is no indication this people, coming from Bohemia and living in southern France, were ‘Celtae’. That means that, if we adhere strictly to our Greco-Roman nomenclature, these Gauls were Celts, just as the Celts were Gauls. But the Volcae were not Celtae, and the Celtae were not Galli. Just as the Belgae were not Gauls, even while one of the core groups of Galatai was located in Belgica. Just as – again, the map illustrates this – the chieftains of Hallstatt were Celts who explain the expansion of ‘the Celts’ even while their power was being destroyed by the Galatai.

The phenomenon of the Galatai (or Galli or Gauls) should therefore be seen in its own terms, that of a Gallo-Brittonic-speaking people who, for whatever reason, launched a lengthy series of aggressive folk movements over a wide area of Europe and even into Turkey. The core areas of the Galatai, moreover, are not even in themselves 'homelands'. The peoples of south-east England were the same people as those at least of Belgica. It is possible that the rise of the Galatai – and it was a spectacular rise – may have led to a wider spread of the Gallo-Brittonic language. Did the tribes, or at least some of them, of the Celtae speak a Q-Celtic language at the start of La Tène? We can never know, but it is possible. There are generally-agreed traces of Q-Celtic dotted around Gaul. These are isolated words and names, but they must have been spoken by *someone* and at *some time*.

An interesting case study here is the *Lepontic* tribes of the Alpine region, who are firmly linked to the Bronze Age Golaseccan Culture and the still-earlier Urnfield period. The Leponti spoke a P-Celtic language distinct from Gallo-Brittonic and the Lepontic tribes were therefore *not Kelts*. However, Keltic groups, presumably as they migrated into Italy, came to dominate the Lepontic regions. The earlier Lepontic inscriptions give way to Gaulish ones. 'Lepontica' thus *became* a Keltic area. In how many other places did this happen?

As for Gaul, we have established that it was home – as Caesar says – to the Celtae not the Galli. Who then were these Celts? They lived between the Garonne and Seine and these are likely to have been well-established boundaries. Caesar says the Celtae met yearly in the 'centre' of Celtica 'in the territory of the Carnutes'. If we consider the Irish coiced ideology and its five cardinal

points and we look at the probable boundaries of Celtica, we may wonder if there a similar coiced ideology existed there. From Caesar and in other sources we repeatedly hear of alliances between the south-east tribes — *Arverni*, *Bituriges*, *Aedui* and *Sequani* (the *Helvetii* possibly being an offshoot of these). The Loire-Garonne tribes (*Namnetes*, *Pictones*, *Santones*) could be interpreted as a separate group. Caesar tells us that the ultimate destination of the *Helvetii* is the land of the *Santones* and treaties had been made with some of the south-eastern tribes regarding the passage through their territories. It is unlikely the *Santones* approved of this. That Brittany makes a natural north-west Fifth, to the north of the Loire, should need little argument. If, finally, the south-eastern tribes seem to have formed an allied (and rivalrous) group, by definition that sets them against the north-east tribes up to the Seine. Perhaps the *Parisii* and *Senones* belonged to this group.

Whether the tribes who lived in Celtica at the time of Caesar were old-established groupings, or whether there were large numbers of newer tribes, the polity of Celtica is likely to have been well-established.

The key point is that ‘Celtica’ was a *polity* and that, like Ireland, the polity was *well-established*. The *Celtae*, although they were not exactly *centralised*, were *connected* via their priesthood. Like the Irish. This *connection* was marked by the meeting in Carnutian land (a neutral area? the ‘carn’ of the tribe’s name denoting an elevated, or cairn-like even, sacred area?). If we begin to look at Celtica in this way, we can see a real difference between it and ‘Belgica’ and that Caesar will have been correct in treating the region between the Seine and Rhine as a separate polity.

The coiced ideology in Ireland shows the island was

perceived as a single entity. Without a conception of Ireland as a 'place', there can have been no ideology. Celtica too cannot have existed without a centre and the centre too required a 'place' to be the centre of. This must have been the basis of Celtica and when this perception was first forged, then 'Celtica' was born, though when that was is another story that I doubt can ever be told.

2. Hispanoceltic, Lusitanian

An interesting case study concerning ethnic groupings is that of the Samnites, a people of southern Italy. They were divided (somewhat like the Irish, and no doubt somewhat more like the four kingdoms of Galatia) into four¹⁸¹ 'peoples' — the *Pentri*, *Caraceni*, *Hirpini* and *Caudini*. So, *who were the Samnites?* Their traditions said they came from the north. Now, 'Samnite' is their Roman name. It stands for a native *Safine* and one of the most important mountain peoples to the north was the *Sabines*. The Samnites also had traditions about the previous people who they believed occupied their territory. These were the *Opici* or *Osci*. These Oscans may have spoken a dialect more or less the same as the Samnites. Finally, we know that the Samnites invaded Campania, the lowland country to their west. Campania was effectively a 'Samnite' region in Roman times. Judged by the standards of the celtomaniacs who see 'Celts' everywhere, these were all *Sabine* peoples — the Sabines themselves, the Samnites, the Oscans and the Campanians. They were certainly more Sabine than many Celts were 'Celts' (Celtiberians set against Pretani, for example). But they were *not* 'Samnites'. Even the

181 It is a curious and unexplained fact the the names to two of these can be best-explained using Celtic words — *Pentri* <> *penn* 'head, high land' and *Caraceni* <> Gael. *carraig* 'rock', W. *carreg* 'stone'.

Campanians were not ‘Samnites’, but an entirely different people. The Sabines were even less Samnite, and still less the mostly-forgotten Oscans. The Samnites were the Pentri, Caraceni, Hirpini and Caudini and these alone. These four peoples attended the great central assemblies. They were headed by (but not ruled by) a great meddix¹⁸² of meddixes. A Samnite was a member of one of these four peoples gathered together for the tribal assemblies. This perception of the Samnites/Safines is I suggest most useful when considering the poorly-documented Hispanoceltic-speaking peoples, along with the probably non-Celtic Lusitanians. Whenever there is talk of ‘Celts’ in Iberia, think of the ‘Samnites’.

There are two key points regarding these Iberian peoples:

- 1) linguists are becoming convinced, as more Hispanoceltic inscriptions are coming to light and better textual interpretations made, that this is an *archaic* form of Celtic and represents more than one Celtic language. Hispanoceltic is Q-Celtic, but it is neither Gaelic nor Irish. In fact, perhaps *Hispanoceltic is more likely to be a *sister to rather than a daughter of the northern *Irish and *Keltic languages*;
- 2) it is also becoming clear that Hispanoceltic *shares many characteristics with Italic*, which is especially significant if Lusitanian is non-Celtic¹⁸³, for it *also has significant links to Italic*.

182 The title *meddix* was a broad equivalent of the Latin *rex*, but etymologically close to a *iudex*, where the one *said* [*dicere*] ‘wisdom’ [*med-*] and the other ‘law’ [*ius*].

183 Lusitanian retains the initial Indo-European ‘p’, for example Lus. *PORC-* vs Gael. *orc*.

These languages should, as I have suggested, be seen in a broad WIE context.

As far as the northern Celtic languages go, *Irish can be adequately explained simply as a Q-Celtic outlier of *Keltic. For whatever reason, over a wide area on the Continent and also in Britain, P-Celtic languages evolved. It is likely Irish did not evolve in the same way because of its remoteness. The discovery of Lepontic and Hispanoceltic somewhat complicates this simple relationship. How close is Lepontic, for example, to either *Irish or *Keltic? As I understand things, although Lepontic is a P-Celtic language, that does not make it closer to *Keltic than *Irish. Let us repeat too, *Hispanoceltic also appears to be distinct from *Irish as well as *Keltic. It is perhaps best to think of the P/Q Celtic division as significant but a regional rather than a structural one.

The one undoubted *fact*, then, is that Celtic languages were spoken in Iberia. But how and when did they arrive there? The answer provided by the celtomaniacs is, of course, that these 'Celts' simply came from the northern Celtic Realms. The northern peoples were Celts. The invaders of Ibera were Celts.

I believe celtomania has befogged and belayed the Hispanoceltic issue probably more than any other related area of investigation. To a celtomaniac, 'the Celts' are Caesar's Gauls, the Greco-Romanist's Celts, the philologist's Celts, and the archaeologist's Celts all rolled into one. They are urnfieldians, hallstattians, latèniens, Irish, Britons, Welsh, Bretons. Rolled into etc. Greco-Roman writers talk, from a very early period, of 'Celts' in Spain, and of 'Celtiberians'. That is a red flag to a bull to a celtomaniac. The problem of Hispanoceltic was seen in terms of 'the Celts' (i.e. the latènian Kelts). As I have

argued, it seems sensible to me to define the group classical writers call ‘Celtae’, ‘Galli’ and ‘Galatai’ and other groups we know spoke the same or inherited languages, such as the ‘Belgae’ and ‘Pretani’ and ‘Picts’, under some common rubric — I have used ‘*Keltic*’ for this purpose. If we take this as a starting point, we can see the basic error of the celtomaniacs. Hispanoceltic groups are not Keltic. Hispanoceltic cannot have come from Celtica at least in the Greco-Roman period.

Moreover, the rise to power of Keltic groups is explainable in terms of the cultural, economic and political developments of the Hallstatt and La Tène periods — caused in the first instance by Greek and Phoenician traders and colonists. Why would these developments have any connection with origins of Hispanoceltic? The archaeological evidence in Spain indicates unequivocally that local population groups, as they did in southern France, the central Alps and in northern Italy, adapted to the changing circumstances. There seems to be little need to conjure a mass invasion of ‘Celts’ large enough to displace or absorb much of the population of Iberia at this time.

If we consider the case of Lusitanian, an Iberian language that was Indo-European but probably not Celtic, we see that this was a people who must have been long-established in the region. If we now consider WIE, we can envisage a southern group of WIE languages consisting of *Lusitanian, *Ligurian and *Italic. *Celtic, then, is to be found to the north. I have suggested the language developed in and around the Armorica/Wessex region in the Beaker-post-Beaker period. Lusitanian would have been the WIE language that entered Iberia around the same time. This leads to the conclusion that *Celtic languages did at least enter Iberia at a later date and in

a different context to the first flush of metallurgy that probably caused the spread of WIE itself.

Anyway, if we consider that WIE entered western Europe long before our earliest Greco-Roman sources, there is no need to see ‘Celts’ sweeping into terra incognita and lording it over whatever aboriginals lived there, let alone seeing *Kelts* as these people.

There are two clear Hispanoceltic regions in Iberia —

- In the north-west, there is a large collective of *Celtic tribes. Sometimes — for example, the Callaeci and Astures — these seem to cluster into a ‘people’. There are also enigmatic tribes (or groups) such as the Vettones and Vaccae, a little further inland. The relationships between these groups, or whether they spoke the same language, is not very clear. What is probably true though, is that the tribes in this region were participants in the Atlantic trading route and their entry into Iberia will be related to this fact. This at least provides a plausible context for their arrival in the peninsula.
- The second group is the ‘Celtiberians’ (named after Greco-Roman sources). It is probable that Celtiberian is a different language to that of the north-western peoples. It is better-known, because its speakers adopted writing and left behind some fairly lengthy inscriptions. The Celtiberians may have entered the Ebro region from the north west, but another possible route would have been from the north, across the Pyrenees.

Now to the ‘Celts’. Greco-Roman writers *do* say that ‘Celts’ lived in Spain and also inform us that they believed Celtic tribes attacked and settled in Celtiberia.

But who were these ‘Celts’? As a simple case study, this passage from Pomponius Mela seems unambiguous at first — ‘Totam Celtici colunt, sed a Durio ad flexum Grovi . . . Deinde ad septentriones toto latere terra convertitur a Celtico promunturio ad Pyrenaeum usque . . . In ea primum Artabri sunt etiamnum Celticae gentis, deinde Astyres.’ [*Chorographia*, III.7-9] That is, *All the tribes north of the Douro are Celts, there’s a ‘Celtic Promontory’, the Artabri are Celts, and beyond them the Astyres.* However, note even here that the ‘Astyres’, who are thought to have spoken a Hispanoceltic language, are implied to be *not* Celtic. If the promontory is the one elsewhere named Cape Brigantium, then that name has a clear Keltic provenance. The *Neri* of that region recall the Belgic *Nervii* and it is the Belgae and not the Celtae, as we have seen, who in fact hail from the core La Tène zone.

I suggest that a good explanation for the Greco-Roman ‘Celts’ is that they were in fact Keltic groups. If the same term ‘Celt’ was used for both Hispanoceltic and Keltic speakers, this would be a deeply unusual usage of an ethnic term for a Greco-Roman author. Why would a Greco-Roman link a tribe in Galicia with tribes in northern and central France speaking different languages? What was the link between Galicia and these regions of France? Moreover, the name ‘Iberian’ must originally have simply meant ‘a native of the Ebro’ and Hispanoceltic speakers may therefore have been ‘Iberians’, not ‘Celts’. These would then simply be a case of invaders from the north, a [Keltic] Celtic-speaking people attacking another [Celtiberian] Celtic-speaking people.

We know, for example, that Galatians sacked Rome and Delphi and that these attacks had an enormous

psychological impact at least on elite Romans. Caesar was in part avenging Rome when he attacked Gaul no less than three centuries later. But this means nothing to the archaeologist, for the material witnesses of prehistory are incapable of telling us about the Senones and their tribal movements into Latium. Again, there's little material evidence for Vikings in southern Wales, but the substantial towns of Fishguard and Swansea attest their presence. Even if substantial Keltic attacks on Spain are not readily apparent archaeologically, this barely affects the likelihood that they took place.

I think this is the most plausible explanation for Greco-Roman references to 'Celts' in Spain. However, the possibility that the 'Celts' of Celtiberia were indeed the people who spoke the language of the Botorrita tablets, would lead to the question, where then did they come from? The answer necessarily demands that they came from an area that spoke Celtiberian. One solution to this is that they came from Gaul (i.e. northern France) and that therefore the language of Gaul at that time was Celtiberian. The fragments of a Q-Celtic language in Gaul would therefore be Celtiberian.

Another possibility is owed to TF O'Rahilly in one of his brilliant insights. He interpreted the Alpine tribal name *Quariates* (modern *Queyras*) as being equivalent to Irish *caired* ('(s)he makes'). O'Rahilly, unfortunately, then used his etymology as an abracadabra to summon up a large enough host of Goidels from 'Quariatica' to Gaelicise the whole of Ireland. However, if he was right (in the etymology, that is), this form of Celtic seems very archaic indeed — it retains an initial q^u, as per Lusitanian (?) and the Hispanoceltic tribe names **Querquerni** and **Equaesi**.

The name, then, seems to be a highly convincing example of Q-Celtic in the Alps and it may be this form of Celtic to

which Celtiberian, if not Hispanoceltic, is linked. The Quariates, at any rate, were probably a ‘little people’ that I have suggested any Prehistorian ought to be looking out for.

A recent idea regarding Hispanoceltic, we can add, is that the *-scen* suffix found in what were assumed to be Iberian-speaking groups may be in fact Celtic. This might then link to the infamous *-sc-* toponyms generally associated with the ever-mysterious ‘Ligurians’ — at least to some form of WIE.

Iberia, to close, was host to a number of Celtic-speaking tribes and peoples, but it is likely their history is in many respects separate to that of the Celtic-speakers of the Two Isles, at least in terms of the world of words.

And so. Here we may not only say ‘farewell’ to the world of words but also bid a fond ‘adieu’ to our Two Isles and the problem of their Origins.

Endpiece

I do not think a hypersceptic would like much of what I have written. I can't say I have offered much in the way of 'proof'. These collectives of pots and swords and stones are no Rosetta Stonehenge, nor even are the ghostly words and names and legends that emerge from the earliest writings.

What I have tried to do is to create a consistent and *reasoned* narrative of 'prehistory' and such a narrative must act as its own *constraint*. Constraint lies at the core of Prehistory. The colonist theory of Old Europe is a constraint. The steppe theory of Indo-European is a constraint. Indo-European culture is too – for example that *Indo-European-speakers knew the wheel and wagon and so forth is a constraint.

I have tried to write a constrained prehistory of origins in the Two Isles, working *forwards* from the time of the Farmers and the Herders then *backwards* from the time of the Gael.

Forwards and backwards from the world of things to the world of words, to the place and time where they finally meet up and their echoes clash.

(And Other Stories)

1. 'Rex-Rix'

It seems generally agreed that *Celtic and *Italic are fairly closely linked. Whether or there was ever a unified *Italoceltic 'people', that some form of culture complex once existed is strongly supported by this linguistic evidence.

Within Italy, most if not all polities (Etruscans, Oscans, Sabines, Samnites, Latins) had some form of central meeting place, as per the Gauls and Irish, indicating that a coiced (or similar) system does indicate above all else a polity – a specific and self-conscious political grouping. However, there is little evidence of a supra-tribal priesthood. As regards a mere *priest*, the probable Latin equivalent of a *druid* was a *flamen*, who is closely connected to the *rex* like the druid is connected to the *rix/ri*. The *rex* by name and function is obviously equivalent to the *rix/ri*.

The 'rex' seems to be 'the upholder of the natural order'. In Germanic *Recht* and *riht* meant 'law' (ultimately, 'natural or good order'). The *rex* was the upholder of law. In Roman legendary history there were seven *rexes* ('kings') before the republic was established. However, these are all essentially legendary figures and the earliest kings seem to be (Romulus and Numa certainly are) mythical founding figures. The last king (Tarquinius Superbus) was a 'tyrant', just like his Greek contemporaries. The Roman legends, therefore, may tell us more about Roman quasi-history than the institution of the *rex*, which from its name however we can infer was very old. The Celtic cognate indicates an origin dating to the Italoceltic or even Indo-European period.

It should always be borne in mind, when considering early Rome, that the very fact of the city's existence was

due to the rapid changes to Italic culture due to Greek and Carthaginian colonisation of the Mediterranean. The ultimate cause of the rise of the Celts and the rise of Rome is the same. During this early period, the communities of the 'seven hills' next to the Tiber created the proto-urban settlement that became the city. The peoples within this community, which was on the borders of Latium, Etruria and the Sabine lands, seem to have been a mixture of each of these groups. The settlement, however, belonged to the polity of Latium. Presumably the first creators of the settlement were Latini. The fact that Rome was later led by a 'rex' indicates that the institution existed in the city more or less as soon as Rome became a cohesive community and that this must have happened in the early Latin period. If this is so, we must presume that the *rex* was a Latin institution. The founders of Rome did not invent the 'rex' and it is not Etruscan or Sabine. The word 'rex' was, it is therefore likely, the normal title for a 'chief' in Latium.

What this pre-Roman *rex* did is poorly documented, but the name itself, together with the Roman evidence, indicates very strongly that his basic function was to uphold the law – religious and secular and that he (if the early Roman kings are anything to go by) held the office for life. When the king – a Roman king, anyway – died, there were a series of 'interrexes' (in an *interregnum*) who each held the office briefly over the period of a year, after which a new king was elected.

In Germanic myth, figures such as Hengist and Horsa ('stallion' and 'horse') indicate that a twin pair of horses was adopted as a royal ancestor. Now elsewhere in the mythical storehouse, we have a pair of twins (*Mannus* and *Tuisto* 'twin') linked to Creation itself. *Tuisto* is called *Ymir* 'twin' in Norse mythology, and this name has often been related to the names *Romulus*, *Remus* and to that of

Rome itself. I suggest what happened is that the earliest (unknown to us) kings of Rome, like the Germanic kings in England, claimed descent from these divine kings, the ancestors of life itself. So, the genealogy would have begun perhaps at X (the equivalent of Mannus) whose name was lost and *Romus, or perhaps the *Romae (twins). Just as Hengist and Horsa were thought of as the first kings in the royal tradition (the Roman kingship, if it was elective, was not a dynasty), perhaps so were the *Romae. The city was named after its first founder, the ancestors of the rex. At a much later date, antiquarians needed two names for the twins, so the brothers 'Romulus and Remus' were invented. *The name of Rome is surely connected to the institution of the rex.*

An interesting parallel in Latium may be the famous *rex nemorensis*, who oversaw the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi. Now, the name Diana originally meant 'the goddess' (equivalent to Keltic *Devona*). In Rome, the chief god was of course Jupiter. In Greece, although classical Hellenes knew only Zeus, in Mycenaean times there was a Diwe and Diwia (≈Diana). Diana, after she became Romanised and Hellenised, was linked to Artemis the hunter, which ever after defined her character. However, from her name, she was fairly obviously the partner (whom Juno displaced in the Roman state religion) of 'god'. The fact the lake at Nemi was called 'the mirror of Diana' is probably significant – the mirror is a well-known symbol of the queen of heaven. The 'rex' at Nemi is clearly a sacral role. There is nothing of the judge in it. If Diana was the 'queen of heaven', this rex was in a very general sense comparable to the Irish *ri*, with his marriage to Medb. The rex's role, too, indicates a cycle of youth and age was at its core, wherein the older man will at length be defeated by the younger candidate. This seems above all a ritual combat.

If we believe that the Arician figure really was locally called *rex*, and this was not a Romanisation, what is the connection between the Roman and Arician *rexes*? The Roman title implies a sort of chief, so the obvious explanation of the latter is that – so long as he could defeat his enemies – he was chief of the grove and if Diana was the partner of ‘Dianus’ (that is, Jupiter), perhaps the *rex* represented the god himself. Although the two *rexes* seem very different at first glance, the underlying idea appears to be similar. The *rex* was a formally-instituted leader who represented the gods and acted as an intermediary between earth and heaven. His power was a mix of the sacral and temporal.

So, there is the *rex* of *Rome*, the *rex* of *Nemi*, and the *ri* of *the tuath*. The *rex* is fundamentally *the upholder of a cultural unit*. In Ireland, the law itself was created by the priests but the *ri* *upheld* the law. In Gaelic Ireland at least, the *ri* was a mix of the secular and temporal¹⁸⁴.

Just as the last Roman king was legendarily a tyrant, and may well actually have been so, we see what looks like the start of a republican political structure in Gaul, with the *vergobret*. This name (‘judgement-maker’) seems to be an evolution of the *rix*. The *vergobret* was probably in fact a cut-down *rix*, who for example was forbidden to leave the tribal territory (to make war, say). The *vergobret*, though, seems to have been beholden to his druids, whom he was required to consult. It looks that, prior to the *vergobret*, the *rix* was beginning to outgun the druids and becoming independent of them. Becoming, in fact, a tyrant. It seems, though, that the institution of the *rex*

¹⁸⁴ Though Christianity more or less annihilated the older sacral aspects of kingship, and we can note that in fact Gaelic *ris* were as often the breakers as the upholders of the law. However, as observers of modern politics will be aware, breaking the law in fact is one thing, accountability for the breakage is quite another.

was not conducive to tyranny. The rex belonged to a society that was hierarchical but pre-urban. The rex was not a king *sui generis*, but a very specific kind of king with either or both of specific constraints and a specific role.

I think it is in the rex of Nemi and not the rix of Gaul that we see the institution in its most archaic form. We can imagine a time, and a place located within an *Italoceltic culture complex, when a leader evolved who upheld '*riht*'. This upholder of right became the rex and the rix.

2. The Harpist

Orpheus the harpist, arguably in the first place a Thracian figure and, some would say, a deity, was absorbed into Greek culture and in a sense was Greek. A Greek type of mysticism evolved which mixed and matched with the mysticism of the Pythagoreans. And Orpheus was the focal point of a beautiful story, too; a strange myth in which both bard and moralist could find inspiration.

What interests us here are the ‘Celtic Orpheuses’, Tristan for example. What is the connection between Tristan and Orpheus? Tristan (*triste un*, ‘the tragic one’) was once a king ‘of Orkney’ called Drest(an) who bore a common Pictish royal name. It is unlikely this good king was specifically famed for his lutany (or crowderly maybe) and the later Tristan has clearly been merged with a figure from Celtic mythology. Irish legend provides various cognate characters. These cognates indicate the connection is ancient, and that the origins of Tristan do not lie in the borrowed words of Greek storytellers or moralists. The link between Tristan and Orpheus must be more direct and if Orpheus is Thracian may have reached Celtica from Thrace. But who is Orpheus? A variant of what I call the *missing deity*. He is clearly related to Dionysus; to Anatolian deities (Adonis and Attis); and more remotely to Near Eastern gods. These take us back to the beginning of ‘recorded time’, to Osiris and Dumuzi (Tammuz), but even before these there must have been a much earlier ur-Neolithic Myth. Where Orpheus does *not* lead us back is to the Indo-European Herders, for this is a Neolithic myth, a Farmer’s tale.

This section will discuss a framework within which the missing god can be placed. We will see that while the ‘missing god’ is commonplace, the Harpist seems to be a

distinctive element in the myth. However, extrapolating just who Orpheus was, and what his origins were, is not an easy task. There are so many figures similar to him, and there seem to have been many local variants of the missing deity myth. It always seems to be the same myth in origin, but the exact meaning varies from place to place and time to time. It even survived, in mutated and muted form, as the Jesus myth (born on the winter solstice, died to then be reborn or ‘resurrected’).

Orpheus appears to be in many ways a dionysian figure, but he is not fully dionysian. The rest of this section will there for look at the origins and nature of Dionysus and at the ‘prehistory’ of Dionysus in the Near East. The character of Orpheus can then be examined in this context.

2.1. The Origins Of Dionysus

Greek myth (and especially ‘myth retold in Greek sources’) has many versions of the missing god story. Greek myth is very remote from Sumer. In Greece there is a great collision of traditions, even within the Hellenic polity, and there are very many influences originating outside of it. Many of the great deities of Greece have composite and overlapping characters. For example, are Hera and Demeter, or Zeus and Dionysus and Poseidon separate gods in origin? The answer is both yes and no. All these Olympian gods are constructed on a mass of local forms, which may contradict or complement each other. Was Aphrodite a *goddess*, for example? Yes, in the main, but a male Aphrodite is also attested (just as Near Eastern Ishtar can be female or male).

Within Greece, then, we shall begin with what I take to be an essentially North-West Semitic, or ‘Theban’ version of the myth, or really a series of variants. The conclusion is tentative, but I conclude that this may be the primary

source for the Dionysus in Greece, and that the god came from the Levant, his very name perhaps simply being a corruption of 'Adonis'.

We shall now examine the sequence of Theban variants of the story.

Agenor (a Greek name meaning 'virile') the White Bull, a Levantine 'king' (maybe Bull El) begets Cadmus (West Semitic 'west, old age') and Europa (WS 'east, shining', also called Hellotis, 'shining' in Greek)

As an interlude, in what looks to be a Cretan variant of the myth, Europa begets Minos who weds Pasiphae (Greek, 'shining') who begets Ariadne (not Greek, but glossed as meaning 'very holy'). This myth involves a bull ceremony in the Labyrinth ('palace' — *tlabrys* is the double-axe, a symbol of royal power and the earliest Hittite ruler of the Old Kingdom is Tabarnas or Labarnas whose name I suggest means 'holder of the tlabrys' or 'king'; and the *labyrinth* is therefore the 'place of the tlabrys' or 'palace'). This ceremony involved the mating of Minos (bull) and Pasiphae (cow).

A later author, Firmicus Maternus, may provide more details of the Cretan version. He says that Jupiter, the king of Crete (i.e. Minos), had a son Dionysus, about whom he set the Curetes (surely derived from *kouros* 'youth') to guard him with their war dance. Jupiter then *went missing* leaving his son in charge (with the sceptre, i.e. tlabrys). Unfortunately, Juno's machinations resulted in the surrogate being killed and dismembered by the Titans. Jupiter returned to restore order, and built a temple to contain Dionysus's heart. There is an attested Cretan festival at which Dionysus's heart is carried about *in a chest*.

Back to Thebes, yet another version of the bull myth has Zeus the bull pursuing Europa and Cadmus searching for

her. Apparently giving up his search, he finds good land to settle by following a wandering cow and at this site he founds Thebes. Originally this must have been the marriage of the bull and cow in its localised Theban version. Cadmus then has an adventure with a dragon, which he kills and as a result has to endure a year's servitude (similar to Apollo, so the 'dragon' will have been the Python, and this 'servitude' may indicate priestly service). After that Cadmus 'marries' Harmonia, who is clearly a symbol of Sovereignty. Crete and Thebes, we can note, both had a royal marriage between a bull and cow.

Cadmus has a daughter Semele (probably a WS name) who begets Dionysus. He turns both Cadmus and Harmonia into serpents (that is, Cadmus into a serpent?). This must have some bearing on Cadmus' killing of the Python (that is, himself), which would therefore be an act of renewal and rebirth.

The next dynasty after Cadmus is that of Labdakus whose descendant Antiope begets the twins Zethos (who is warlike) and Amphion (who is a musician, specifically a Harpist). This is I think a local variant of an Indo-European myth (cf Romulus/Remus and Hengist/Horsa).

Further down the family tree line we find Antigone. She is placed in a sepulchre (ark?) by Creon ('king') and hangs herself. Her mother Eurydice ('queen'), hearing the news, also kills herself (i.e. goes 'missing?'). Her lover is Haimon ('blood', perhaps therefore Adonis, see below).

Still later, Alcmeon, in exile after killing his mother, marries Arsinoe and hands her the *harmonia* (that is, Sovereignty). The earth is at once transformed into the Wasteland. Alcmeon therefore goes in search of fertile land and arrives at the river Achelous. He 'marries' Callirhoe, the river's daughter and she manipulates him into giving her the *harmonia* (Sovereignty, again).

Alcmeon is killed by Achelous' sons, but Arsinoe protests. She is put in a chest (ark?) and sold into slavery (that is, loses her sovereignty?). This all seems to describe a ritual procession of the King and Queen to the sacred river.

Ino and Athamas marry. They are then 'driven mad'. Athamas thinks Ino is dead (that is, *goes missing*), but she latter appears. So — resurrection, maenadism, royal marriage.

Finally, King Pentheus is visited by a stranger (Dionysus or his priest). The (androgynous?) stranger is put in a dungeon (ark?) but escapes (is resurrected?). Curious about Dionysus, Pentheus spies on his followers *disguised as a woman*. He is discovered and killed and dismembered.

Taken all in all, this litany of repeating themes seems essentially dionysian. I suggest these Theban tales indicate the initial Greek form of Dionysus, who is therefore an import from the Levant. The name itself may simply be a corruption of 'Adonis' (*Donis-os > *Dionisos, with a folk-etymology relating the name to Zeus). The close relationship between Byblos and Egypt makes a connection between Dionysus and Osiris likely, and of course between Adonis/Tammuz. If we want to understand these archaic variants, we need to look at their Near Eastern originals.

Rex Nemorensis

We have met with the king of the sacred grove at Nemi. It looks like we have interesting analogues to the ritual. In the Oedipus myth (this name seems an obvious folk etymology, but his role is obviously the Son), Oedipus kills Creon ('king', =Jupiter) and marries the Queen (=Diana). The myth looks very similar to the ritual at Nemi. If we look further afield within the Greek mythic traditions, we seem to have a simplified variant of the myth of Cronus (King, the meaning of his name? cf *Creon*?) and Zeus (Son).

This has a probable Hurrian origin, or at least a close Hurrian parallel, and if so would seem to be not *Indo-European in origin.

2.2. The Prehistory Of Dionysus

It is likely that the Osiris and Dumuzi versions are the templates for the myth. Although this agricultural myth must have originated with the Neolithic itself, what characterises Egypt and Sumer is a literate priesthood. We can note that the basic Sumerian cosmology is very logical — there is Anu ‘heaven’, En-lil ‘lord sky’ and En-ki ‘lord earth’. Compare this to Greece with its chaos of gods — for just these three concepts we could mention Hera, Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Dionysus, Demeter and many others. Greek religion had its own internal logic and dynamics, but it shows that in Sumerian religion we have a religion in a near-to-pure form, a religion that has been worked out logically and relatively recently by the Sumerian priesthood.

I believe that both the Sumerian and Egyptian myths evolved from an ur-Neolithic one (which itself evolved from a Palaeolithic seasonal myth of summer and winter). The basic idea seems to be that the Life Spirit *goes missing* into the Underworld during the Dead Season, and the World becomes a Wasteland. In due course, the Life Spirit returns (or is fetched back?) and the Wasteland becomes fertile again. That the resurrected Life Spirit was associated from the first with sexual reproduction seems clear. From the earliest Neolithic, this Life Spirit will have been linked to the agricultural season and the hope of a good harvest in the forthcoming year. One of the core elements of the ur-Neolithic version is likely to have been the mating of a bull or cow, which were linked from the first with the sun

and moon¹⁸⁵.

If I am correct, because the Neolithic colonisation of Europe occurred long before the literate cultures of the Near East developed, the myth of the Missing God will have been a much more primitive version than either the Egyptian or Sumerian one. It was the core belief of the European Neolithic, the belief that drove Avebury, Newgrange and Stonehenge. Another development that is widespread but which must have occurred later will be the linking of the myth to sovereignty, of renewing the youth of the King and Queen — I cannot see how this formed any part of the ur-Myth of the Neolithic, unless some form of monarchy developed at a very early time.

The Sumerian version of the myth — the descent of Inanna — is, like Sumerian cosmology, on the whole strikingly logical. The Sumerian texts seem especially suitable for declaiming, and therefore must be closely linked to actual rituals. One interesting — and highly significant — aspect of the Inanna myth is its logical depiction of the Underworld. This is all too clearly a place of no return. No one here gets out alive, not Enlil, not Enki. This idea is the core of this version of the myth. We seem to start in media res of the myth, with Inanna about to make her descent. Her preparations are described in detail, and we can see how her plan is a display of her awe-inspiring willpower. Inanna is, in the language of modern science, about to try and tear up the fabric of spacetime. The text's powerful incantatory cadences make sure we know the dangerous nature of what she is about to do. The likely reason of Inanna's journey is to conquer her sister Ereshkigal ('under-earth great woman', a sort of anti-Inanna), who is currently mourning the death of her husband the Bull. Inanna

185 With either a bull sun and cow moon, or cow sun and bull moon.

commands her servant to visit the gods should she become trapped in the Underworld and beg them to help her. The servant is told to lacerate herself before she does this.

To get to the Underworld, Inanna must pass through seven gates (the seven planets?). She has put on all her symbols of royalty and power, but she discovers that each of these must be removed, one at each gate. By the time she reaches Ereshkigal she is naked, the emblems of her royalty long gone. Nevertheless, Inanna dares to sit on Ereshkigal's throne and is immediately turned into a corpse by the demons of the Underworld. The corpse is then hung on a hook. The servant of Inanna now visits the chief gods and asks them to help Inanna. Only Enki, who is associated with fertility, is willing to do so. It is by now clear that Inanna must find a substitute to replace her in the Underworld if she wants to get out. The substitute she finds is her lover Dumuzi ('son', the Shepherd, who is very youthful, his byname indicating he is what an Elizabethan poet would call a 'swain'). The narrative now passes to Dumuzi, who tries to escape the Underworld, largely with the help of Utu (the sun) and his own sister ('wine', who laments Dumuzi for three days). The amoral and hence merciless demons of the Underworld though cannot be escaped, and Dumuzi is taken below. Inanna takes pity on him, and the myth concludes with Dumuzi and his sister sharing the burden of Death, each dwelling in the Underworld for half the year.

This version of the myth is close to an original of a Sumerian priestly interpretation on the ur-Neolithic one. It is perhaps in itself an ur-version. Not everything has an obvious meaning in this telling and presumably the Sumerian priesthood had a great deal more to say about Inanna and Dumuzi than this. But the basic sense of the

myth seems clear. We are told too that Sumerian kings began to play the part of Dumuzi in the rituals and so in some sense Dumuzi is the king. The core of this variant of the myth, in fact, appears to be sexuality rather than earthly fertility, or at least on the sexual fertility of the earth. It is Enki who directs agricultural fertility, and although he plays an important role, it is a secondary one. Inanna is 'love' and with her death love dies. To revive Love, her lover the Youth must be sacrificed.

The Sumerian version may also innovate in making Inanna and Ereshkigal the morning and evening star. In the ur-Neolithic myth, these were the sun and moon, but the Sumerians had discovered that Venus is both stars, simply disappearing behind the sun during the day. This informs the basic logic of the Sumerian myth, and Inanna and Ereshkigal appear to be the two aspects of the same deity. This idea was xeroxed by all the derivatives of Inanna. We see this clearly in our Cadmus/Europa variant, and English speakers still call the second planet 'Venus'.

The Sumerian and 'Cretan' variants are remarkably similar in many ways. In fact, we can explain the mysterious labyrinth ('palace', in my view) as the same underworld Inanna has to navigate. Pasiphae ('cow') must enter the labyrinth (Underworld) and find the bull (Minos). We have also seen variants in which we encounter a hanging figure, just as the corpse of Inanna is hung. We can also understand the significance of Harmonia (the necklace of sovereignty) — this must be removed in the Underworld, where earthly sovereignty holds no sway. In Dumuzi, we find a cognate of the kouros (i.e. Youth, that is Dionysus himself). We seem as well to see the wine god (Dumuzi's sister). But we do not seem to find — the ecstatic madness, the dismemberment, the retinue as a core of the myth, or the ark.

For these, we need to turn to the alternative ‘priestly’ version of the myth originating in Egypt. There we find a system fundamentally different to the Sumerian one (and of course the Indo-European tradition), for here Geb is the male earth and Nut is the female sky. The myth of Osiris, Set, Isis and Horus seems to be premised on a male earth. The basics of the Egyptian variant are of course that Osiris and Set are rivals and Set has Osiris killed and dismembered (and shut in a box which is sent up the Nile), usurping his power. After this Isis, Osiris’ sister and wife, rescues Osiris and revives him, albeit into the underworld (where he judges the dead). Before Set had usurped him, Osiris and Isis had a child Horus, and Horus now battles constantly against Set.

There are various descriptions – Greek and Egyptian – of festivals at Abydos. There was a public festival over a period of five days, which depicted the battles of Osiris, his death and his resurrection. A key symbol of Osiris seems to be the seed which is buried (that is, *dies*) and is resurrected. There were also secret priestly festivals at Abydos. Here we see a key missing element, the dismemberment, and we also find the ‘box’ (chest, ark).

Now to Adonis. A Greek version of the myth tells us his father was Cinyras (‘the harpist’). He was a beautiful youth who was loved by Aphrodite. He was shut in chest and given to Persephone, who refused to give him back. Zeus, wise of counsel, was called to judge on the matter, and declared that Adonis should live half the year with Persephone and Aphrodite respectively. At length, he was killed by a boar. The centres of his worship were Paphos and Byblos. At Byblos, Adonis’ death was mourned by wailing and music. The annual sign of his imminent death was when the River Adonis turned blood red. We now have the Harpist as a peripheral element, and also the death by a boar (as per Diarmaid, for

example). The mourning by wailing and music is, moreover, beginning to resemble the wild rites of Dionysos.

In Phrygia we find Attis. Nana conceived Attis using a pomegranate. He was loved by Cybele, who was the mother of the gods. His cult centre was Pessinus, whose name recalls the Thracian tribal name *Bessi*, especially noted for their dionysian ways. His priests were the (male) Gallae. The festival of Attis included a Day of Blood (during which the priests lacerated themselves and initiates castrated themselves) and ended with the *Hilaria*, a day of universal licence (presumably resembling the later *carnival* of medieval Europe). A focal point of the festival was a procession to the River Almo, in which a silver (moon?) image of Cybele was carried in a wagon and then 'washed in water' (i.e. presumably renewed, or resurrected). Here we seem to have, in the day of licence, a sort of maenadism. The castration specifically seems peculiar to the Attis cult. With the Gallae we certainly have a retinue, so important to Dionysus. It is Phrygia that is most likely to provide a cultural bridge to Thrace, the putative home of Orpheus.

What we have discovered so far, though, is purely dionysian. This cult, to summarise, originated in the Levant, perhaps specifically Byblos, and it was a merger of both the Egyptian and Sumerian traditions. These perhaps may be encapsulated as the death of Fertility and of Love respectively. There was a colony at Thebes established from the Levant, and it was there a cult of Dionysus (*Adonis*) was established in Greece. The cults of Adonis and Attis indicate dionysian cults. These cults are all, clearly, related to Orpheus. We have now seen most of the *elements* of the Orpheus variant, including that of the Harpist. But none of these dionysian cults explain Orpheus.

2.3. Orpheus

First, let us consider the myth of Demeter and Persephone. The interest here is that both the Seeker and the Missing Deity are female (mother and daughter). In Mycenaean texts, Demeter and Kore are ‘the two goddesses’. This may be a very early, inherited tradition. Whatever its origins, *Ma* and *Attis* are here replaced by *Demeter* and *Kore*, and this implies that Kore and Demeter (i.e. Youth and Mother) renew and resurrect the earth in and of themselves. ‘Love’ is thereby removed from the myth. This variant of the two goddesses is very undionysian. Perhaps the Eleusinian Mysteries, from which men were excluded, provide the basis of an explanation. In the mysteries, the rebirth is re-enacted by woman and girls alone.

All in all, Orpheus too seems undionysian, with his apollonian harp. He appears around 600 BCE in the Greek tradition and he was adopted by the Greeks to the extent that he effectively became Greek. The Orphic Mysteries, for example, are surely ‘Greek’. Orpheus was closely linked to the Muses and to poetic inspiration, which brings us to the very core of Greek culture. Perhaps this explains why Dionysus was and is often thought of as ‘Thracian’ — for dionysian art and music is not what classical Greece valued any more than Samuel Johnson valued it. Yet it was Orpheus, not Dionysus, who is likely to have originated in Thrace.

A Greek god we have not mentioned – and who is no doubt a composite deity – is Apollo. Apollo with his lyre, his laurel. Apollo, in terms of his Greek origins, can be linked to the *apellai* and the month Apellon, that is the *call* to the tribes for the meeting at the central point. Apollo is god of the *omphalos* (‘navel, centre’). The swan and raven (a black and a white bird) are sacred to him. We can

immediately see links with Lug and with Bran here. Bran whose head, like Orpheus', was cut off. Apollo is related to prophecy, especially at Delos (the omphalos of the Cyclades) and Delphi, a remote and holy place (the sort of place druids are said to prefer). Apollo is also linked to the snake, or perhaps *is* a snake. We have seen, in our sequence of Theban variants, the motif of the snake meshed into the dionysian myth. Some at least of our dionysian characters have this characteristic of Apollo. Apollo too, after all, is the Youth (*kouros*). If Dionysus was an imported god and Apollo (though his composite character includes foreign elements) a native Greek god, it is reasonable to think that aspects of Apollo would be merged with Dionysos at least in some local variants.

Orpheus' own myth, then, seems focused on his lyre (made of pure gold (sun?), the gift of Apollo, so say Greek authors). A woman of the Thracian tribe of the Cicones, Eurydice ('queen'), who like Kore is roaming the fields, is accosted by not Hades but vipers. Like Achilles and Talos, it seems her only vulnerable point is her heel. In the fields, then, she is bitten by the vipers and she dies. Her lover Orpheus is inconsolable and plays his magical music, charming the beasts. He descends to the Underworld and does the same to Hades himself. In what looks like a ritual, he is told by Hades that Eurydice can follow him back to the land of the living but she must not look behind her. Which of course she does. Orpheus subsequently appears to adhere to a homosexual cult, as a result of which a disapproving female priesthood kills him and cuts off his head.

An interesting cognate is the Perseus myth, the foundation myth of Argos, the 'bright land' of lady Hera. Zeus and Danaë beget Perseus (like Persephone, 'the masked one'). Danaë's father Acrisius, king of Argos, was told his daughter's son would kill him, so he imprisoned

her in an open courtyard. Zeus came to her as a shower of gold and Perseus was born. This is clearly a ritual in which a chamber admits a beam of light at a specified time. Perseus and Danaë are cast into the waters in a chest, like Adonis and Osiris. They end up on the island of Serifos. There, after acquiring many magic weapons, Perseus kills Medusa ('queen') and cuts off her head. Medusa is a snake woman (*pythoness*, like the priestesses of Delphi).

This myth perhaps explains certain aspects of the Orpheus myth, to which it is obviously related (due to the beheading component). Why is Eurydice beset by snakes? Because she *is* a snake, a pythoness. The names Eurydice and Medusa are, I believe, equivalent (and equivalent also to their prototype Inanna). This variant also explains Orpheus' fate, but instead of the Youth beheading the pythonesses, in the Orpheus myth *they* behead him. West European myths tell us that the head represents wisdom (as when for example, Odin consults the head of Mimir). The title Medusa itself implies judgement and wisdom. Perhaps the fact that it is Orpheus who is beheaded indicates the interloping of good old patriarchal values. It must be the head Orpheus himself, and never Eurydice, that must represent wisdom.

The myth of Orpheus, then, seems to be a melange of three sources. First, a composite figure, Adonis/Dionysus, evolved from 1) an Egyptian myth in which the fertility of the male earth is restored after his dismemberment; and 2) a Sumerian myth in which sexual fertility is restored by the Queen of Heaven visiting her sister in the Underworld, and the hostage she must leave if she is to escape. The third source is Apollo with his lyre, and in the Orpheus myth the harpist becomes the core of the myth. A fourth element, the beheading of Orpheus, seems local and 'northern' (cf Bran and Mimir).

The Orpheus variant of the myth is close to those known from Celtic sources. The harp and the beheading are the motifs most obviously linked to Celtica. The similarities of this variant between Thrace and Celtica indicates either a direct or indirect contact and moreover at a fairly deep level. Such contacts are supported by the archaeological evidence. The Gundestrup Cauldron is an obvious case in point (made in Thrace, found in the land of the probably Celtic-speaking Cimbri – modern Himmerland) and the Scordisci too can be mentioned, a Keltic tribe for a short while very powerful in the middle of ‘Thracian’ peoples. This is one context for this cultural borrowing.

To conclude, it is amusing to note that a late last gasp of the Orpheus story occurs in the medieval English romance *Sir Orfeo*. In this romance, a clearly Celtic tale has been grafted on to the story of Orpheus, in which Orfeo like Suibhne wanders forlorn and wild in the woods. This is indeed a ‘full circle’.

3. Syncing Babylon

Although it is natural to think of the ‘ancient’ world as Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Middle East and these as part of one place, Egypt and Mesopotamia are in fact very separate. If we had only the Egyptian records, our knowledge of Mesopotamia would be very scanty indeed, perhaps not much more familiar to us than the distant *Meluhha* of Sumerian records. The same is very much true for Mesopotamia. The link between the two regions is the Levant Coast, over which Egypt often claimed control.

Yet there seems to be a remarkable synchronicity between the two regions, the sequence of which is outlined below. This is an interesting case study in how events in one place are often influenced by those in another, a useful principal for the Prehistorian to be aware of.

3.1. The Sargon Era

The early Sumerian era was ended by the great conqueror Sargon of Akkad (the city being one that he had built). Sargon ruled from c. 2334-2279 BCE, but his empire more or less collapsed after him. Its power was renewed by Narâm-Sin (2254-2218 BCE), son of one Sargon’s ineffectual successors. Sargon took Akkadian power to the north west, to the Cedar Land and the Mediterranean coast and Narâm-Sin also campaigned there in order to keep control of these conquests. However, Narâm-Sin’s main battles were fought against a little-known people of the mountains to the west of Iran, the Lullubi, and when he died the Akkadian empire collapsed with no glorious leader to restore it. The immediate victors and successors were not the Lullubi though, but a neighbouring people named the Gutí (or Qutí), who are almost as obscure.

It is more or less around the time of the Gutí that there was a crisis in Egypt which, although now called the First Intermediate Period, was not seen as a break by the Egyptians themselves. However, the central power of the Pharaoh certainly broke down ('seventy kings in seventy days' decried the late chronicler Manetho). The Delta region was overrun by 'Asiatics'.

Here we can note the subtlety of these events. The Gutí attacked Akkad, but is unlikely they were the 'Asiatics' of Egypt. The strong Akkadian rulers had achieved political control (of some sort at least) over the Levant and the fall of Akkad must have left a power vacuum in that region. The Asiatics are likely to have been a group or groups taking advantage of this vacuum.

The chaos had a deep effect of Egypt, for it seems that part of the problem there was the increasing power of the nobility set against that of the Pharaoh. Power was restored by a strong sequence of rulers associated in particular with the name Sesostriś. A new middle-class force arose, of bureaucrats and officials, to offset that of the nobility.

3.2. The Hammurabi Era

A post-Akkadian Semitic power was raised up by a minor prince named Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE), the founder of mighty Babylon. Hammurabi created a centralised power, but it was in many ways a re-run of Akkad. His successors could not hold the fort. His son Samsu-iluna (1749-1712 BCE) had a long reign full of battles but at the end of it only the core area, that of the old Akkad kingdom, remained. In 1595 BCE, Babylon fell to another obscure west-Iranian-mountain people, this one called the Kassites.

In Egypt, the Second Intermediate Period begins around

1785 BCE, after which our lists declare a large number of Pharaohs in a short period, indicating political confusion. Perhaps this had something to do with the rise of Hammurabi, although Egypt seems to have maintained its influence for example in Byblos on the Levant Coast. However, in 1674 BCE, an 'Asiatic' people named the Hyksos (an Egyptian exonym, *heqaou-khasout*, meaning 'foreign chiefs') took over the Delta and even built a capital named Avaris. We can infer that the period of the entry of the Hyksos is significant, for it occurred after Samsu-iluna and before the rise of the Kassites, a time when Babylon still stood, but with little power outside its core area and also at a time when central power was weak in Egypt.

Again, Egypt revived. Once the Hyksos had been driven out another series of strong rulers emerged, the Tuthmosids rapidly followed by the Ramessids.

3.3. The Vacuumed Era

The infamous 'Sea Peoples', many of whom did not come via the sea and are never called by that name except by us here today, are a properly-documented phenomenon. Despite that, the period is not well-understood, although it is probably one of the most significant event-horizons in human history (or prehistory). Basically, *all* the major regional centres of power collapse at the same time — Mycenae (in Greece), Hatti (in Turkey), Mitanni (> Syria), Babylon and Egypt. The wealthy Levantine city Ugarit was destroyed, leaving behind distressed texts warning of imminent dangers. Egyptian texts are more expansive, but with a similar message, that various Peleset and Tursh and Sikelesh and Sardanwy and Ikwosh (perhaps Greeks from Ahhiyawa > Achaia) and Dardanwy and Tjeker and so on, are on the warpath and Egypt is in great danger.

What we seem to have here is not a power vacuum but an invading force from remote areas. It is hard not to believe that these warriors came from Europe, which is probably why we do not understand the Sea Peoples very well. They came from places far beyond the reach of the written records we have. Their effect seems mostly to have been destructive. Probably the Phrygians of later Greek times arrived with these ‘sea’ peoples, and from Eastern Europe. Their lasting effect was 1) the break-up of Canaan and subsequent rise of the Israelites, and 2) the rise of the city-state in Greece around 800 BCE.

3.4. The Falls

Finally, two falls.

The decline of Egyptian power is indicated by the establishment of two foreign dynasties, first a Libyan and then a Nubian one. That, however, was an internal Egyptian affair. Outside Egypt, Mesopotamia was characterised — and terrorised — by the rise of Assyria. One of the main targets of the Assyrian kings was the Levant Coast, an area of Egyptian political interest and control that was now turned over to the brutal and sadistic care of these eastern kings.

It was with Sennacherib that Assyria and Egypt began to clash directly. That king attacked Sidon (a Levantine city), Askalon (a Philistine city) and the kingdom of Judah, where Sennacherib began a siege of Jerusalem. The Pharaoh sent his brother Taharqa with an army, to monitor the Assyrians. The governor of Judah, Ezechias looked to Taharqa for aid but, as the records of Sennacherib says he said to Ezechias —

‘Just what is this confidence in which you place yourself? You imagine airy words to be worthy as good counsel and courage to conduct a war. In what do you place your

confidence in your war against me? See how you put faith in this broken reed — Egypt — which pricks the hand it supports. Such is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to those who put their faith in him.'

Taharqa retreated before Sennacherib's boast could be tested. He himself became Pharaoh a short while later, and in 671 BCE, after yet another Assyrian attack on the Levant, Taharqa marched against the new Assyrian king Esharhaddon and was defeated. The Assyrians now took Memphis, but did not stay in Egypt. The significant point for us is that Egypt now lay in the Assyrian 'sphere of interest' In 664/3, Thebes itself was sacked by the Assyrians, as if — a common feature of history — defence is now revolt. In Psammetichus I, made Pharaoh in 664 BCE, we have a genuine client king, placed in power by the Assyrians and supported by Greek mercenaries. With this military support, like Hamid Karzai more recently in Afghanistan, he declared himself champion of national unity. The Egyptian economy began to be opened up to foreign merchants.

Externally, this is the time of Cimmerian and Scythian incursions into the Middle East. These raided and ransacked, even attacking Babylon. They greatly weakened Assyrian power. Weakened, Assyria's enemies grouped together. A new power lay in northern Iran — the Medes. Between the time of the Lullubi and Gutti and Kassites, people speaking Iranian languages had occupied a large area stretching east to what is now Afghanistan. The Medes were one of these Iranian peoples and they led the final battle against the hated Assyrians, whose capital Nineveh fell in 612 BCE.

But it was not the Medes but a southern people living near the Persian Gulf — the stretch of water still named after them — who won the prize. These Persians, under

the great leader Cyrus, created a vast empire stretching all the way to Greece and even the Danube. Egypt was swallowed up into the new empire. Like someone drowning in a flooding river, the head pushed itself above the waters for the briefest of whiles, but it was no good. Another empire, founded from the west now by a Macedonian prince called Alexander, rolled into Egypt, and that was followed by an even greater and far more stable empire — ‘Empire’ is perhaps better — founded not by a prince but a city not far from the place that the Tursh and Sikelesh and Sardwny called home.

So, Assyria then Egypt fell.

3.5. Syncing, Then

As we can see, what happened in Egypt and what happened in Mesopotamia was very often linked by either external or internal events. In later times, the two regions became increasingly interconnected politically, as Egypt became within a ‘sphere in influence’ of the great Mesopotamian powers. In the early days, however, the regions were quite separate, yet their proximity alone meant they were still closely entwined.

To a prehistorian, then, this is a useful case study — a worked example — of how X-place can be synced to Y-place in the world of words. But it also offers a general principal, for places are just as linked — and synced — in the world of things that the Prehistorian must inhabit. The parallel I would offer up here from pre-literate times is the spread of *metallurgy* in western Europe. For, however we interpret the archaeological record, when we look at Wessex and Armorica and Ireland, when it comes to metallurgy, they were nothing if not *synced*.

Syncing is surely as useful a tool as anything for the Prehistorian.

4. A Rewired Religion?

What is it that makes a religion? I would say, at root, it is both *coherence* and what might be called *countercoherence*. That is, the religion must be recognisable in itself, but also distinguishable from other religions.

What, for example, ‘makes’ Christianity? We can begin confidently by mentioning *churches* and of course the *Bible* – things most people these days would associate with Christianity. But these, in their familiar form, are not fundamental. Even the New Testament is a collection of canonical texts which excludes other texts once equally Christian. Even if we try and reduce Christianity to a fundamental form, we need to be careful — if Christianity is just the religion of a god and his resurrection, so too was the religion of Attis. If we focus on the figure of Christ himself, superficially the undeniable core of the religion that bears his name, we can soon enough become perplexed. We see that Jesus himself was devoutly Jewish and that his *religion* evolved long after his execution. There was, in opposition to Roman rule and the Idumaeon puppet kings¹⁸⁶, an expectation a *messiah* (or *christos*), the Anointed, would come and save Judea. This *christos* was the true successor of David¹⁸⁷, who combined monarchy and priesthood by being anointed at his inauguration ceremony in the manner of a priest. By being anointed (*christos*), the king become a *son of god*, a priestly title. Jesus was claiming, or his followers claimed for him, that he was the legitimate ruler of Jerusalem, so it was with sadistic logic that he was crucified like the

¹⁸⁶ Idumea, or Edom, was not an Israelite tribe.

¹⁸⁷ Who long before had created the Israelite monarchy with upstart Judah at its head.

lowest of low criminals, with the infamous sign that proclaimed him 'Jesus King of Judea' hanging about his neck. His followers however hid his anti-Roman sentiments so well that, only a few centuries later, the Emperor himself became a follower. What would Jesus have thought of that? How closely is Jesus related to 'his' religion?

If defining Christianity is this difficult, how can we begin to define Germanic religion? Do we even know what we are defining? This is a good question, because there is an excellent source in Snorri Sturlusson who gives us a marvellously schematised and coherent account of the Norse gods as he knew them. From the sagas, we can also find many mentions of religious rituals and practices in Norse culture. Finally, poetry often gives us the same information as Snorri but in 'raw' form. But all this means we have a quite detailed amount of information about Germanic religion *only in a specific place and time*. Our knowledge of other Germanic places and times is sketchy.

Let us try and construct a framework for Germanic religion and compare this framework to Celtic religious beliefs. We can start with what may be the core of Indo-European religion — here Sky (Lord Father) couples with Earth who begets Twins. The twins probably represent night and day, as per the Hurrian belief that the sun is drawn by two bulls¹⁸⁸. I suggest this fundamental myth contrasts with the fundamental Neolithic myth of the Missing Deity.

The Germanic creation myth can deepen our understanding of this fundamental myth. Before the creation, there is 'in the beginning' a chaos (the

¹⁸⁸ Huri and Seri, 'night' and 'day' – the bull has of course been replaced with the horse.

Ginnungagap) that exists between Heat and Cold. From this chaos is born *Will* (Man¹⁸⁹) and *Body* (Ymir or Tuisto *twin*). From the body of Twin is created the universe (Asgard, Midgard and the Underworld in the Norse version). Elsewhere in Germanic myth we find ‘man’ being created out of *spirit*, *will* and *hue* (white is the colour of death – which is to say no colour at all). This in turn explains the words *guma* and *man* — for ‘earth’ (*guma*) is infused with ‘will’ (*man*). If the Twins represent Night and Day, Will/Man is likely linked with Night (that is, it is invisible), and Body with Day (that is, it is earthly). Will/Man therefore dwells in the Underworld. The Cretan myths of *Minos* and *Rhadamanthus* may illustrate this belief.

Germanic mythology also has its own variants of the Missing Deity myth. The details are far from clear, but the myth is certainly focussed on Freyr and Freyja (‘lord’ and ‘lady’). Another name for Freyr is Ing (‘son’), and both the Ingaevones of Tacitus (who included the tribes who would later federate into the Saxons) and the Ynglingas of Sweden were followers of Ing. There are also obscure roles in this myth for Hel (‘the hidden or veiled one’, deity of the Underworld) and Ipunn (keeper of the apples of immortality).

Most Germanic deities, however, are in most respects bundles of confusion. Not in terms of the coherence of the religion *in itself*, but in the manner that their current and likely earlier identities conflict. Odin is father of Balder (‘lord’, like Freyr, though Balder is clearly not Freyr). Odin is also, with Earth, father of Thor (who is also son of Fjorgynn *mountain*). The god of ships, Njord (‘strength’), seems to be a doublet of Freyr, and albeit long

189 Confusingly called *Mannus* ‘man’ by Tacitus, but I think ‘will/reason’ is the root sense.

before the Viking era, Tacitus described the cult of a female Nerthus, who has vanished in our Norse sources. Tyr (whose name is equivalent to Zeus and is the old Indo-European *Sky*) is worshipped, but is a minor god. Loki is obscure, Heimdall is obscurer.

Within itself, this system was very cohesive, as we can tell from many incidents in the sagas. Men (the sagas are mostly, of course, about men) could worship Odin or Thor or Freyr as they wished. A warrior would probably worship Odin, a traveller Thor and a farmer Freyr. These gods seem to have formed a sort of triad, a fact that is clearer from sources outside of Snorri. There is good evidence that Freyr presided over a cult of sovereignty, perhaps involving the sacrifice of kings.

What is not clear is out of just what this coherent system evolved. For example, it is easy to see that it should be Tyr (as *Sky*) who is married to Earth (and father of Thor). Also, Zeus *is* the Thunderer. So perhaps Tyr ought to *be* Thor. Surely, also, shouldn't Thor *be* Fjorgynn (like Perkunas or Perun)? Why is Odin the father of Balder? Freyja is mentioned as the deity who weeps for her husband Od (is he a doublet of Odin?). Why does she weep for Od? This connects both Odin and Balder to both Freyr and Freyja, but they seem to be fundamentally different gods. The questions about Loki and Heimdall are too many to ask, but Loki seems to be and yet not to be a doublet of Odin. And just why is Freyr involved in a cult of sovereignty when Odin is the chief god, and in any case shouldn't Tyr be king of the gods just like Jupiter and Zeus? Like Jupiter and Zeus too, surely *he* ought to be 'father'?

I think it is possible to resolve these issues via a two-stop analysis — first, we compare Germanic to other Indo-European religious systems; and second, specifically to

the Celtic system.

What are the cognates of Odin? If we bear in mind that he is also called Irmin, I suggest there are two — Varuna and Hermes. A comparison with Hermes makes sense because Odin is by name *spirit* (like Latin *vates* and Irish *faith*, or further afield *Voodoo* and the *Holy Ghost*). This puts him *in between*, for he is neither heavenly nor earthly. However, Odin shares many characteristics with Varuna. Odin is a powerful god, clearly far more powerful than Hermes. He is, in fact, *Alfathir* (just as Eochaid is *Ollathair* and for that matter just as Sky is father). Odin seems to have absorbed the qualities of the underworld god, the intermediary god and for good measure the Sky Father. This absorption also explains the basic character of Balder. From the enigmatic myths of Balder, we clearly see many of the traits of the Missing Deity. However, I suggest that Balder was himself originally a cognate of Varuna, he of the Underworld. I have argued that this deity originally represented *Man*, or ‘will, mind’, the quality which gives life to ‘earth’ to create sentient life. This idea is close to Varuna, who comprehends *brahma*. Balder, however, has been confused with Freyr, and Odin has taken on his characteristics without specifically becoming a god of the Underworld.

The cognate of Loki (probably ‘light’) is I think *Agni* (‘fire’). Loki is therefore another intermediate god, similar but fundamentally different to Odin. Agni is mischievous and immune to water, so he can exist happily anywhere — sky, sea, earth. Loki, however, does have a curious Underworld component. Like Prometheus, he is bound and captive, but Loki will remain so until the apocalypse, at which point he will be unfettered and will lead the hosts of demons (Vanir?) against the Aesir. This apocalyptic role may indicate simply that, like Odin, Loki has replaced Balder as god of the Underworld.

If we look at Celtic religion, we can see that both these gods are close to Lug, the 'national' Celtic god. Lug is a national god because he is an intermediate god. The origins of Lug are also to be seen in Mercury and Hermes. The reason for the evolution of a god like Lug is clear — as Celtic culture expanded and became more complex and far-reaching, Lug becomes an overarching spirit who facilitates a common ground between different and possibly disparate polities. Hermes, messenger of the gods, was the ideal candidate for this role. Now, both Odin and Loki are adaptations of Lug. The names *Loki* and *Lug* are even near-identical ('shining one'). This therefore indicates a profound influence of Celtic culture on at least the northern Germanic tribes. The rise of these upstart Lug-like gods, I suggest, caused a deep change in the structure of Germanic religion. Obviously, neither Odin nor Loki *are* Lug. But Odin performs a similar supra-tribal, or 'national' role. Tyr was more or less displaced by him, and Odin and perhaps Loki also appropriated characteristics of the Underworld god. The rise of Thor may also have accompanied the fall of Tyr. Thor preserves the nature of a protective spirit but he never acquired the role of sovereignty, or the 'father' role that Tyr once had.

Within this context, the Neolithic myth also looks like a recent introduction, and if so, it was surely imported from Celtica. The Celtic form of the myth was focussed on the renewal of Sovereignty. The rix upheld the *riht* of the land and the renewal of the rix and the land were one and the same. This is the function of Freyr.

The reduced role of Njord (now merely god of ships) and the complete disappearance of Nerthus indicates a shifting of roles. Most of Njord's roles have been taken over by Freyr, and all of Nerthus' by Freyja. It is interesting to note that the meaning of the later gods'

names is broadly equivalent to Bregans and Brigantia, but Njord and Nerthus' are equivalent to *the root meaning* (brig-, nert — strength, power). Whereas Tyr is surely, by origin, the god of sovereignty (we have seen Jupiter and the rex and the oak), it seems Freyr is the god of the Ynglinga kings. In Irish terms, this is correct, as Freyr is the equivalent of the Dagda (i.e. Nuadu the King). In older Germanic cultures, there was no King — the cyning or theoden was (s)elected at times of stress. But it seems that some sort of tradition of kingship was emerging by the time Caesar and Tacitus wrote. Arminius and Ariovistus attest to that. As it did, religion evolved to support and justify it.

Freyr seems to be equivalent to a god called Skjold or Scyld ('shield', but perhaps really 'fate'? ; and perhaps compare the name of the river *Scaldis* > Scheldt?), and to another named Sceaƿ ('sheaf of corn', but perhaps really 'shaper, creator?'). Just as the Ynglingas were the Swedish dynasty and so Ing (Freyr) is a god of sovereignty, so the Skjoldungs were the Danish dynasty. Is this a specifically Germanic adaptation of the Freyr cult, with its 'ship settings'? Skjold, like Balder, is linked with a burial rite involving sailing out to sea (presumably to the other world). Perhaps Balder is 'Ing' (the Son). Njord, though he is not mentioned in connection with these stories, also seems to fit here. Freyr himself is associated with ships, but most of the stories we have of him tie him to the earth, as the god who makes an annual circuit of the earth and who is the resurrected earth. Skjold at least seems to be a specific form of Freyr/Njord. This may explain the mysterious Od (clearly a sort of doublet of Odin), an apparent partner of Freyja. If Sceaƿ and Balder and Ing are equivalent, and Balder and Freyr are certainly equivalent names, then Freyr/Skjold would seem to be the Father. So, as Odin is said to be Balder's

‘father’ in Snorri’s official-looking genealogy, Odin and Freyr would in this context be equivalent. All this confusion fits well with a rapidly evolving religion, where roles and relationship were, at times rapidly, changing.

Hel and Ipunn can be explained by looking at the Neolithic Myth of the Queen of Life (Inanna) visiting (becoming) the Queen of Death (Ereshkigal) and being resurrected. The cognate of Inanna is Freyja, and Ereshkigal is Hel. The name Ipunn (Irish *en* < **etn*, and compare the river *Ituna* or Eden) seems understandable in Celtic terms, and means ‘the Bird’. Freyja is the Lady of Life (but her carriage is drawn by cats, not lions or leopards), Hel is the Lady of Death, and the Bird is the intermediary. It is interesting that both Odin and Loki are bird-like and Loki is often said to stand in for Freyja (‘wearing’ her falcon wings), as if Loki *becomes* Freyja (or, specifically, Ipunn). Perhaps this is a shamanistic detail, and perhaps peripheral. At the core, Freyja-Ipunn-Hel are, or originally were, aspects of each other.

I have not provided a cognate for Heimdall because I do not think there is one. I suspect he is an old Germanic god who, like Njord and Tyr, now has a much reduced role. Probably the major key to his original nature is the name Mardoll. This is said to be one of Freyja’s names, but Hel in the Underworld would be another reference point (Hel being the *anti-Freyja*, ultimately an aspect of her). There is an important distinction between the sea itself (Aegir) and the ‘other world’ under or beyond the sea. The apocalyptic system makes Heimdall an anti-Loki and, as he is declared to be a progenitor of some sort (we are told of the ‘sons of Heimdall’, though not who these are), this may indicate a dualism of the Creator and Destroyer. Loki is certainly associated with the Underworld (the realm of Mardoll perhaps?). We may have a cognate of sorts in the tale of Irish *Balar*. Balar is told by a prophet

he will be killed by his grandson and so he shuts his daughter Ethniu (Ipunn?) in a tower. Cian visits Ethniu and a triadic god is born who is essentially Lug (the *Lugoves?*). Lug does indeed kill Balar, but in the Celtic 'apocalypse'. In this myth, Lug may be a distant cognate of Heimdall, and Balar of Loki (that is, Balder?). So Heimdall would represent *heim* (that is, earth) and Mardoll the *otherworld under the sea* (Loki-as-Balder). Heimdall may be an effective representative of the earth precisely because he was *born of the sea*.

5. Shorts

5.1. Silver

The word ‘silver’ may be important diagnostic for the Prehistorian, for the word is obviously dateable to a specific period when silver was traded in significant amounts along the Atlantic coast. It might have originally been a Semitic word (see Assyrian *sarpu*, Arabic *sarif* and borrowed into Berber *azref*). Whatever its origins, the *attested* vocable seems localisable to Spain (perhaps a word such as *zaraf /*saraf was introduced from the Levant, eventually becoming *salav-ar or the like). It seems likely that from Spain it was carried to the north via maritime trade, resulting in the familiar Germanic word and its *Slavic cognate(**srebrò*). It is possibly to be found in the British tribal name *Silures*, certainly in Basque *zillar* and also Botorritan Celtic *silabar*. The standard *Celtic and *Italic words are of course based on the root *arg- (‘shining’). As the connection is unlikely to have occurred via the Alpine trading route, the un-Celtic word indicates a coastal trading link stretching from Iberia to the Baltic region.

5.2. Apples

A Hispanic Indo-European word is *apl*. This is related to Norse *afl* ‘strength’. Is this the word behind the obscure name ‘apple’? Which would then mean ‘strength, the fruit that gives strength’.

5.3. Hercynian

The name of the Hercynian Forest is often taken to be Celtic and in form very similar to the name of the

Lithuanian deity *Perkunas*¹⁹⁰. The Latin cognate — so often a clue to a Celtic form — is *quercus*. Perkunas means ‘the oak’, so the Hercynian would be the ‘Forest of Oaks’. The match seems an obvious one, for the Celtic loss of an initial ‘p’ would obviously lead to *perkunas > *erkunas. However, isn’t the Latin form a difficulty? If we compare it to *quinque* ‘five’, we see an Indo-European *pénk^{we} with the initial ‘p’ assimilated to the final *k^{we} > -que. The same happened in *Celtic, where we have for example Gael. *coic*. So, wouldn’t we expect a *Celtic **quercus* or suchlike? The probably Lusitanian tribe of the *Querquerni* were presumably the ‘oak people’, like the *Darini* of Ireland. A simple explanation for this would be that the name was originally a CIE one (so Old English *firgen* < *perk-). Speakers of the WIE-language that became *Celtic picked up the name in its original form and so a *Perkun- place became an *Ercun- place. ‘Hercynian’ would thereby become the ‘oldest Celtic word’.

This process may explain the folk-etymologised Irish name Erc, which could therefore be explained as coming from *Perk (‘oak’), with which for context compare the Irish name Dáire.

5.4. Fomorian

In the various sagas and legends and origin myths it is clear that the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians are a sort of mirror image of each other. One way this manifests itself is by the notion that the Fomorians are hideously ugly. Yet Bres, the Fomorian who ruled over the Tuatha, was beautiful. It is interesting then that Cu

¹⁹⁰ The Germanic cognates are the Norse deity *Fjörgyn* (mother of Thor), Gothic *fairguni* and Old English *firgen*, where the form is a close match, but the sense has shifted to ‘mountain’.

Chulainn himself is described as irresistibly beautiful, but in battle he can distort himself into a hideously ugly form. Does this provide an insight into the Fomorian hideousness? Are they purely and simply hideous monsters, or do they *become* hideous?

5.5. Names

1) Is the Tain place name Cuinciu connected to a word for 'five'? Is it 'the Fifths'? This would be interesting, as it would be an example of a pre-Gaelic name (presumably an earlier form of Irish) being preserved.

2) Were the Ciarraige the 'people of the god Cera'? An early form of the name is QERAI (ogham) > Cerrige. Cera is an obscure by-name of the Dagda, and the name may mean 'creator' or 'maker' (Indo-European root **k^wer-*). This links to names such as *Quariates*, *Parisii* and of course *Pretani*. The similarity of a form 'Ciarraide' to 'Quariates' needs I think no pointing out.

3) It is interesting to compare the Keltic name Atepomarius to that of the chieftain of north Wales Voteporix/Votecorix. The interest comes when we analyse the names as at-epo-mar- and vot-epo-rix-. The tail of each then reads 1) Epomarus ('great horseman') and 2) Eporix ('horse-king'). In the first name 'at' < 'ate' means 'very', so **Ate-epo-mar* <> 'superlative horseman'. It is therefore tempting to analyse the first element of the Welsh chief in a similar way, where the obvious comparison point is Gael. *for* (variant *fort*, e.g. *fort athair* 'great father') > **Vorteporix*. Compare *Vortigern* (*vor* + *tigern* 'great lord'). For what it's worth, there was an Eochraide/-raige somewhere in early Ireland, who would be descended from a mere **Ecorix*, without the intensifier.

4) Could the very obscure names of Odysseus and

Oidipous be related and also Indo-European? That is, derived from an unknown Indo-European language spoken in or around Greece? It strikes me as worth mentioning, as there are two good Indo-European roots at hand to explain the names — **weyd-* ‘see’ and **h₁ey-* ‘go’.

5) Athenians sometimes simply called Athena ‘the Goddess’, *hē theós* (ἡ θεός). Could the name Theseus be another old Indo-European name and derive from ‘The + Seos’ (that is, the Zeus/*Dyéws)? The Hittite form of Zeus, intriguingly, was *Siwaz*.

6) Londinium. The old derivation of this was ‘the town of Londinos’, that name being linked to Gael. *lond* ‘wild’ or ‘fierce’. So, ‘town of the wildman’. This is a bad etymology because the name is not a plausible British (or Celtic) name. It has been replaced with a reconstructed root **Plowonidonjon*, perhaps indicating an early Polish settlement in and along the Thames. It seems to me the connection with *lond* is a good one, but to be derived from a place, not a person. That is *Londinium* is the ‘wild place’, the *wilderness*.

7) Finn. His real name is Demne. Is this a corruption of *findemna* ‘the white twins’ [of whom there were three]?

5.6. Macha's Mast

J.A. MacCulloch¹⁹¹ tells us that ‘To Macha were devoted the heads of slain enemies, “Macha’s mast”’. An insight into the working of this gruesome practise is given in the Tain, describing Conchobar’s three houses. The house *Craebderg* is where the ‘severed heads and spoils were kept’.

191 The Religion of the Ancient Celts, p. 71.

5.7. Dumézilianism

George Dumézil’s tripartite theory of functions would have it that Indo-European ideology was based around three powers — 1) sovereignty, 2) physical power, and 3) fertility.

It is interesting to compare the Uppsala triad of Germanic gods — Odin~Thor~Freyr — to the early Rome triad of Jupiter~Quirinus~Mars in Dumézilian terms. This can *almost easily* be interpreted according to the ideology —

Odin	Jupiter	Sovereignty
Thor	Mars	Physical Power
Freyr	{ ? }	Fertility

Quirinus simply does not fit. If anything, he would represent the *kshatriya*, but Mars occupies that spot. If our table is reconstructed in the form below, all I think makes sense —

Odin	Jupiter	King
Thor	Quirinus	People
Freyr	Mars	Fertility

This is surely *not* dumézilian. It indicates the problem in the analyses of the dumézilians, that the ideology they effectively believe in gets imposed on the evidence.

On the other hand, I have great respect for the core idea and believe it is one of the most profound contributions to Indo-European — and for that matter, European — studies. Take this dumézilian analysis, for example. The ‘sovereign’ function is an essentially religious one, but it is sharply divided into a *magical* and *legal* compartment. What could better explain the ‘chief’ and ‘priest’ of the

Latin rex~flamen and the ri~druī?

As for later cultures in Europe, what do we find but the King and the Archbish? It is hard not to see the medieval world of Church and State as somehow dumézilian.

5.8. Druids — A Cultural Warping?

In the model I have followed here, WIE-speaking peoples took over the complex culture complex of the Salisbury Plain. How can this have been nothing? Was it the origin of what we know as druidism? That is, a hybrid cult? It is likely a pre-Celtic *Indo-European people had well-defined leaders who were seen in more of a religious than a specifically *military* context. Hence a hybrid cult? I mean, did the Salisbury Plain complex simply *disappear*? If the Beaker or post-Beaker Indo-European people who settled in southern England and wrapped themselves around the older culture — did they really destroy it or assimilate to it?

5.9. Callings

An Irish ri was made ri by the calling aloud of his name and title. This was *do gairm rig*. The king's cry. We can note that in early Rome we have both the *calends* and *classes*, the latter being originally the well-to-do mustered for battle. Both are based on the word 'to call' *calō* — 1) 'the calling', that is, the 'summons', and 2) 'the called', that is, 'the summoned'. We can also note the Gaulish priest called the *gutuatēr*. This can be analysed as *gut* 'voice' and *ater* 'father' (Gael. >> *guth* | *athair*). It too can perhaps be translated as 'the summoner'. The word 'gut' is certainly related to the Germanic word *god* (German *Gott*, Icelandic *goð*, etc). The original meaning was probably 'the summoned one' or suchlike. The name of the Goths (< *Gotones*) is likely to be related.

Anyway, the king's cry. This announced the new king and affirmed his kingship. But to the luckless candidate there was only silence. This ritual seems to be mirrored in the myth of Labraid Loingsech, in which the character *Moen* also figures. These names mean 'the loud one' and 'the silent one'. Labraid, then, is clearly 'the king's cry' and Moen what awaits the luckless candidate. We can imagine, then, the Gutuater being in some way linked to this ritual and in turn this ritual being linked to many-a ceremony in which the voice of the god is central and for which the god is summoned. In fact, that *is* the 'god' — that which is summoned.

5.10. Not-Mothers

The sizeable confluence of patriarchal traditions that underlies both Greek culture itself and the study of it gives great weight to motherhood. This may be *the* Mother Goddess or otherwise mother goddesses in general. In the misogynistic culture of ancient Greece, a respectable woman without a husband was hard to imagine. A woman *was* a wife and she *was* a mother. This was all to the good for the later cult of motherhood in the Victorian age, for whom the Mother Goddess was a symbol of their Eternal Feminine.

The appearance of not-mothers in Greek religion is therefore interesting. Examples include Hera, Athene, Aphrodite and Artemis. That is *four* out of the five female Olympian gods (Demeter being the other). Moreover, and even more blasphemous, apart from Hera *they are not even wives*. Even Hera's 'marriage' to Zeus is plainly artificial.

I shall not try and analyse these facts here, all that needs to be said is that there cannot be a clearer indication that the core of Greek religion lies with the Farmers and not

the Herders of the steppe.

5.11. An Old European Analogy?

This seems to be a very interesting quote for the understanding of Old Europe and what a matrifocal culture really means —

“The head of every clan was an elder called a *Ligey Shomorokh*. His was the final word in all aspects of life. Hunting leaders were *Khangitche*, and war leaders were *Tonbaia Shomorokh* ("the mighty man"). Women and teenagers had equal voices with men. **The internal life of the community was under the control of the older women. Their decisions in those matters were indisputable.**”

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yukaghir_people

5.12. ‘v’ > ‘f’ / ‘gw’

The sound-change of Keltic and Early Irish ‘w’ (e.g. ‘*viros*’, man > W. *gwyr*; Ir. *fer*) is curious. In Welsh it became ‘gw’ and in Gaelic ‘f’. An odd change, it seems to me. Surely, though, the Irish and Welsh changes are related – different outcomes of a similar influence. Which was what? I suggest it was the heavy aspiration still characteristic of lowland Scotch and other English accents. The sound was written ‘hw’ in Anglo-Saxon and ‘hv’ in Norse. This indicates Gaelic and Welsh developed this sound change in a similar environment, likely located in the north of Britain. It would also indicate this aspiration was typical of northern population groups even in the pre-English period. This may reflect the influence of the early peoples of the north, whose language was typified by the same heavy aspiration as we find in later speech. So, in Gaelic the aspiration softened (hw > f) and it hardened in Welsh (hw > gw).

6. The English Settlements

The closest parallel we have to Celtic invasion(s) of Britain is surely the Germanic invasions. Do these help us to understand the Celtic ones? We shall first look at the Germanic invasions from the viewpoint of firstly the invaders, and secondly the resistance.

6.1 The Invaders

The English and Saxon invasions can be seen in the first place as a continuation of the Keltic ones. That is, the ‘core’ area of urbanisation and trading wealth gradually moved north and, around 350 CE the periphery happened to include the area where the Angles and Saxons lived. The *Anglii* (and the Eudones/Jutes) were a tribe, but the *Saxones* were a confederation. Both formed part of the tribal grouping called by Tacitus the *Ingaevones*, or worshippers of Ing. This name might be significant, as we have noted Ing as the god of dynasties in later Denmark and Sweden, and he is at least the god of kingship (or perhaps lordship). The Saxons (‘dagger men’) suddenly appear in the 4th Century CE and there were serious attacks on Britannia at this time. The defensive measures taken by the Roman leadership is closely related to the rise of both the Welsh kingdoms and to the Uí Néill. The Pictish federation can also be seen as a parallel development – and perhaps even an influence on – to the Saxon one. The two federations were allied and were also allied to the *Scotti* of Ireland.

6.1.1. Níall And The Saxons.

Níall himself may be recorded as having an alliance with the Saxons. Of course, our much later record may simply refer to the Anglo-Saxons. But the Germanic sounding name Sacheillbalb (Sacheil the dumb, but really *balb*

must be *wulf*, and the first element could be a corruption of *Sige*- ‘victorious wolf’ or *Sae*- ‘sea wolf’ or some such Germanic name-element) is remembered in the legend. This doesn’t look like it is a contemporary Anglo-Saxon name.

The main thrust of the invasion happened post-Province. Between c. 400 CE and c. 600 CE (the time of the Tribal Hidage) England became Germanic and the settlement was largely complete. The ‘wealas’ (Welsh) power bases were mostly destroyed in England. One interesting aspect of the settlement is that it seems localised — Jutes in Kent, Saxons in the south, English in the east and north. Admittedly, there is evidence of Jutish settlement outside Kent, but the broad pattern is for distinct areas of settlement. The earliest settlements are represented by -ing(as) place names. The people (*ingas*) of Beorma, for example, claimed possession of the settlement out of which Birmingham developed. One of the basic components of the Ing cult may have been sovereignty or lordship, which would indicate that Beorma, to have had a people, must have been of ‘high’ rank. By the time of the Tribal Hidage, there is a number Germanic of kingdoms throughout England.

Larger kingdoms developed later on, resulting in the ‘Heptarchy’ (or at any rate a small number, seven if you like, of big kingdoms). Various dynasties claimed overlordship of the whole country, and kingdoms dominated other kingdoms, but there seems to have been a relatively stable political system at this time. It may be this period that provides a model for pre-Roman Britain. England was fairly well defined, and the boundaries are fairly clear — the remote areas west and north. In addition, just as we can see a ‘Britannia’ and ‘Brigantia’ in pre-Roman Britain, there is a large cluster of kingdoms in the south and two large English kingdoms in the north

(‘the boundary’ Mercia, and ‘the north of the Humber’ Northumbria). Northumbria seems to have emerged from a solidly British culture, as it is the fusion of a southern and northern pair of kingdoms both of which carry British names (Deira ‘the waters’ and Bernicia (either ‘the mountains’ or ‘Brigantia’).

The Viking attacks began after the Heptarchy was established. Basically, raids were followed by organised attacks which were followed by organised settlement. The Heptarchy fell, and all the English kingdoms apart from the kingdom of Wessex. The north became ‘Danelaw’.

This period is also interesting to us, as it is here that we see the expansion of Germanic settlement to new areas — the Orkneys, the Western Isles, and Man. The north and centre (that is, ‘Brigantia’) were also heavily settled. This area offered a direct connection to Ireland, where the Vikings, unlike the Anglo-Saxons, also settled. A focal point of the Viking settlement in Ireland was Dublin. This is interesting because it is in this area, the central strip of Ireland, we that find a Keltic settlement of Ireland. Another locus of settlement was the far north where here too Vikings (but not Anglo-Saxons) settled. This indicates that the Keltic settlement of Ireland was closely linked to the Keltic settlement of central and northern Britain.

The Germanic invasions suggest that a single invasion which populated the entire island is unlikely. To populate Scotland and Ireland, some prior settlement further south may be a requisite. The southern kingdoms, we can also note, appear to have been a barrier to the Vikings, and in particular Wessex. Perhaps the Vikings would have focussed more on the south if they could have, but the central and northern areas were more vulnerable, even once-powerful Mercia. The Germanic evidence may

therefore suggest that Britain was also earlier subject to a comparable sequence of two Celtic occupations, again a 'southern' and then a 'northern' one.

In the end, Wessex destroyed the power of Danelaw and unified 'England', which for a short while remained under the control of Wessex and Danish kings. Only after the Norman capture of England did the unified state become fixed and permanent. This is the beginning of the long slow rise to imperialism. But the Norman Castle and Norman government are new and medieval developments and the Normans can tell us little about the Keltic tribal and confederate past.

6.2 The Resistance

In the early period of settlement, the resistance for which we have a historical record is localised and, it seems, improvised. In one legend, Hengist and Horsa (ancestor gods) are pitted against Vortigern ('Big Chief', a title not a name). Like the figure of Níall, these seem to *represent* history rather than *being* history. Other early resistance leaders are Ambrosius Aurelianus in the east (possibly in and around Camulodunum) and Artorius in the west. Ambrosius faded but his centre may have been later transferred to Artorius, to become his *Camelot*.

In fact, Arthur's victory at Mount Badon, if we consider the early dynasts of Wessex, may have been long-lasting. Cerdic, Cynric and Cadwallon all have Welsh names. If Arthur defeated the West Saxons – at that time presumably grouped within a loose nexus of power – a succession of British kings seems plausible. The early by-name for Wessex, Gewissae ('confederates') is similar enough to the meaning of Cymry that it may be a translation of it. As the Welsh names are part of the Wessex dynasty, this would strongly imply that they were kings of the West Saxons and hence themselves in a sense

West Saxon. They may therefore not have been considered proper *wealh*. An honour indeed.

There is an interesting theory that the Cilternsaete were a British group, probably based around Verulamium (the centre of the pre-Roman Catuvellauni, though whether any tribal identity survived the Empire is anyone's guess). There was a battle at Aylesbury in 571 that may have been between Saxon and Briton. This would explain where the 'North Saxons' disappeared to. This region was later absorbed into the larger kingdoms.

The Jutish kingdom of Kent must have been in some ways a continuation of pre-Roman Cantion, as it was likewise divided into four parts.

However, there are no British kingdoms known in the south. In the far west, the Dumnonii survived as a polity long enough to be incorporated into a shire (Devon). The rump (*kernu*) of Dumnonia beyond the Tamar remained wealas, the Corn-wall ('wealas of kernu'). Cornwall remained 'Welsh', but became part of England.

In Northumbria, as well as the English kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia we find the British kingdoms of Elmet¹⁹² and Rheged (which indeed means 'the kingdom'). Both these, like the Welsh kingdoms, are Romanised or post-Roman. These are kingdoms, then, but I suspect they were somewhat artificial ones, with contrived dynasties. That lack of a genuine tradition would have made them vulnerable. The kings of Mercia, as *Beowulf* shows us, could trace their ancestry all the way back to Angeln. No doubt the justifiers of the Bernician and Deiran kings could achieve similar feats. Elmet and Rheged probably could not and did not survive.

In the boundary area of northern Britannia – only briefly

192 It is interesting that 'Deira' and 'Elmet' mean 'water' and 'land'.

part of the province and hence still tribal, yet very heavily Romanised – we find Alcluth (presumably a rebadged Damnonii) and Gododdin (Votadini). North of this the Roman-era confederation of the Picts survived, though in a somehow altered form, because where the Caledones once were was now a people who rudely named the area ‘a second Ireland’ (Ath Fotla¹⁹³ ‘Atholl’). Maybe these regions were simply more remote from the English, but the fact that the confederation lay outside the Province and had therefore maintained an independent polity and its own traditions, is significant. Throughout Britannia, what were people defending themselves *for*? They must have been inspired to defend themselves against a no doubt brutal invading force (and a consequent servitude and slavery, for the Anglo-Saxon legal documents testify to the low status of the *wealh*). But what *for*? For a province that no longer existed? And *who* would defend it? When the Roman personnel left, to a large extent government itself must have left. The Britons were left with their municipalities and their villas and their town councils. The people who had banked on Rome had lost their coin and the rest of the population never possessed any. That is the fundamental reason why Britain became Germanic so quickly and remained Germanic. *The invaders were able to settle in dominating force and the natives were unable to resist.* This is the First Law Of The Invader and, lamentable as it is to say it, likely the Last.

193 This may however be a folk etymology of an ‘Ath Fochla’ derived from a native Welsh ‘Ath Gogledd’ [‘path of the north’].

7. Early Irish Kings

Earlier in this book, we have discussed the Missing Deity myth and provided many variants and cognates from the Near East and Greece and also from Germanic and Celtic myth. In Celtica, I believe, this myth became primarily a myth of Sovereignty. Can our understanding of this myth help us interpret the legends of the early Irish kings? I shall of course answer ‘yes’.

Let us begin with an Irish variant of the myth itself, the myth of Balar. Balar dwells in Tory Island. He has a single eye in the centre of his forehead, to gaze into which means death. When Balar hears a prophesy that his ‘grandson’ will kill him, he shuts his ‘daughter’ Ethniu in a tower. But Cian (‘the long-living’) enters the tower and Ethniu gives birth to triplets (that is, a triadic god). Balar throws the boys into the sea but Lug survives. At the final battle of the Celtic ‘apocalypse’, Lug does indeed kill Balar with his sling, which shatters Balar’s eye.

This myth has very many similarities to variants we have met with earlier. The story of Zeus and Acrisius and Danaë in Argos is perhaps the most *striking* analogue. Perhaps the most *instructive*, because it is so obscure, may be Heimdall. We have seen that Heimdall is opposed to Loki in the Norse ‘apocalypse’. Here we see Lug put out to sea, just as Heimdall is born of the sea. We see Ethniu, who is Ipunn, the intermediary. Balar is clearly the ‘Sun’, with his burning eye, but here he represents the Otherworld. I have suggested that the opposition of Heimdall and Loki (‘the shining one’, an analogue of Lug) was originally the opposition of Loki and Balder. The roles of Lug and Balar are here closely comparable to what I believe is the dualism (‘heim’ vs. ‘mar’) of the Germanic tradition. Ethniu (Ipunn) here is ‘hidden’, that is she has become *Hel* (or veiled *cailleach* or masked

persephone). Is she the *Celta*? The mystery at the heart of the 'Celtic' cult? We can also refer to the rex nemorensis and its analogues, to a ritual of Youth giving battle to the King, the guardian of and consort to the Queen. Finally, the myth recalls the Cronos (king?) myth which revolves around the prophesy given to Cronus that his son will kill him, as Zeus duly does. We can infer that the relationships in this myth are artificial and that the killing of Balar by Lug originally formed a core part of the myth/ritual. We can also understand what the role of Lug is in this myth — he is an *intermediary* god. He is not Sovereignty itself. He can, however, lead Sovereignty from this earth to the Otherworld. The final aspect of this myth is the name *Cian*, which has curious analogues with female gods such as *Senona and Sirona. This can be explained if we suppose that certain actors in the ritual can be male or female. The myth is a revolving myth, the characters belonging to it changing with the seasons, from spring to summer to winter; harvest to wasteland. Many of the variations in the fragments of the myth that have been handed down in the Irish tradition may be due to the seasonal progress of the myth.

If we examine the early Irish kings, we can clearly see the basic myth and the rituals repeated over and over.

- *Oengus Tuirbech Temrach*. Oengus has sex with his 'daughter' 'while drunk' and his son Fiacha is born. Fiacha is put in a boat and sent out to sea. His epithet *tuirbeach* is likely to have been originally 'the bull'. Oengus will be Oengus of the spear, that is to say a doublet of Lug (or Lugaid/Leucetius 'lightning'). In this tale, the dionysian aspect of the ritual is emphasised.
- *Eterscel Mor*. Eterscel is given a prophesy that a foreign (?) woman will give birth to a son. He forces

the beautiful Mess Buachalla, ‘daughter of’ Etain and Eochu Feidlech to marry him. An ‘unknown man’ visits Eterscel’s house at night, who flies in through skylight in the form of a bird. A son Conaire Mor is born. In one variant, Conaire is exposed and raised by a ‘herdsman’. The names *Eterscel* and *Etain* seem obviously bird related, and cognates of *Ipunn*. (Probable cognates of *Eterscel* are English ‘*feather*’ and Greek ‘*pteron*’ indicating the name-element means ‘feather’.) There is a strong bovine link as well, here to the *cow*. If we compare this myth with the previous version, we might conclude that, far from being the stories of Oengus or Eterscel, they in fact refer to the inaugurations of Fiacha and Conaire.

- *Conaire Mor*. It may be significant that Conaire is said to have killed his father’s killer Nuadu Necht, the king of the Tuatha De Danaan. Anyway, when Eterscel ‘dies’, we are told that Conaire takes part in a ‘bull-feast’ in which a bull is sacrificed and a seer eats and drinks of the bull and sleeps. In his sleep, he will ‘see’ the new king. The seer sees a naked man on the road to Tara with a stone in his sling. He sees Conaire hunting birds in chariot and these ‘become armed men’. The leader of the bird troop tells Conaire to go naked to Tara. As he approaches Tara, he meets ‘three kings’ carrying clothes for him. Geasas are imposed on him and then he enters Tara and is made king. This looks like a realistic, not a mythical, description of an inauguration ritual. If I am correct, the story of Eterscel is in fact really telling us of the inauguration of Conaire so this is the same story. This ‘realistic’ version seems broadly to tally — Conaire is accompanied by a bird troop and

encounters Lug before the entrance to Tara. Lug is the man with a sling and no doubt the ‘three kings’ are the *Lugoves* again (presumably equivalent in turn to the 3x Fothads/Collas).

- *Lugaid Riab nDerg/Reoderg*. This epithet is a corruption of Rigderg *red-king* (there is indeed a legendary Rechtaid *Rigderg* who is also son of a Lugaid – Laigdech). Lugaid is likely a god and his tale is really about the inauguration of Crimthann Nia Nar. In his tale, we learn that Clothru slept with all three of her brothers, the triadic *findemna* — Nar, Bres and Lotha. The father of these four is Eochu Feidlech. Clothru gives birth to Lugaid. This is again broadly the same story, with a new detail about the *findemna*. What is indeed curious is that Nar is the *aunt* of Crimthann, Lugaid’s son. This indicates to me that Nar and Clothru are doublets and that the story is a confusion between the triadic god (the *Lugoves*) and the ‘twin birth’ myth (which we can see in the myth of ‘Macha’s Twins’, which was tied at some point to Isamnion). We have seen a variant in which, while it is the triadic ‘*Lugoves*’ who are conceived, only ‘Lug’ survives being set off to sea.
- Another tale concerns Lugaid’s wife Derbforgaill, and her part of the story refers to what seems to be a *winter* ritual. In the deeps of winter, the ‘men of Ulster’ make pillars out of snow (that is, phalluses, and no doubt in some way imitative of the Lia Fáil). Each of the ‘women of Ulster’ then competes to see who can urinate deepest into her pillar. Derbforgaill (the ‘Queen’, remember) wins and, we are told because of ‘jealousy’, the losers attack and mutilate her (no doubt in effigy). This ritual, however distorted it may be in the retelling, has

the very clearly dionysian element of dismemberment and of course a very obvious sexual meaning of fertility in winter.

- *Crimthann Nia Nair*. Crimthann undergoes a ‘voyage’ with his aunt Nar ‘for a month and a fortnight’. He returns with the whole paraphernalia of Sovereignty. Some of these clearly represent Lug, such as a spear and sling which never miss the intended target. Nar herself must represent Sovereignty. This story may help explain why Conchobar is *mac Nessa*.
- *Feradach Finnfechtnach*. He is Crimthann’s son. He is interesting because in his ‘reign’, Ireland was ‘fertile’ and he patronised the legendary judge Morann mac Main. This indicates the close relationship of *ri* and *judge*. Feradach, also may have a Pictish name (Urad).
- *Fiacha Finnolaid*. ‘Fiacha of Vindolanda’? Fiacha was killed in the ‘uprising’ of ‘the aithechtuatha’. I think the whole sequence of legends about this ‘uprising’ is closely linked to a genuine historical *process*, if not event. However, very many justifiers have clearly been at work on these legends over a very long period of time. The general context is nevertheless clear — we are in the period of the raids of the Scotti (or Goidel). Soon we shall also meet the Feni. And, of course, the polity I have labelled *Gael* is what I see as some combination of Scottic and Fenian warbands (in some sense the descendants of the *Vennicni* and *Robogdi*). If I am correct about Fiacha’s byname, he was clearly a Scottic leader based in the north of Britain. If we ask what such a character can possibly be doing in a list of High Kings of Ireland, when he quite

clearly cannot have been a High King, the obvious reply is that he was a Gael and the Gael 'won', and so Gael justifiers grafted their genealogies and their leaders onto the fiction that is the High King list. Fiacha's 'wife' was Ethne, 'daughter' of the king of Alba (that is north Britain). Ethne the 'mother' of Tuathal Techtmar. We can note the obvious mythical nature of this. The mythical element is reduced to the bare minimum here, it is true, but Ethne is still 'Ipunn', the intermediary of Sovereignty. Tuathal, we are being told, is a true king!

- *Tuathal Techtmar/Fedlimid Rechtmar*. These two are, I believe, doublets. 'Tuathal' (is this a Welsh or British name?) seems to mean 'chief of the tuath', indicating the two names are broadly congruent. The bynames are obviously doublets, but *Techtmar*, implying mobility (*techt*, 'going'), is an appropriate byname ¹⁹⁴. Tuathal is, most probably, the 'founder' of the *legitimacy* of the Gael in Ireland. In the myths of the justifiers, there was a 'revolt' against the High Kingship led by 'Elim' or 'Cairbre the Cat Head'. Disaster! There was famine! Only Tuathal could save Ireland! Which he did. He created a coiced system with four (not five) ritual centres, though he did create Mide ('centre'). All of which is obvious nonsense. The coiced system is likely to be far older, as is the ritual kingship. The idea that a Scottic king would be capable of imposing a polity over the entire island also seems ludicrous. Against that must be set the apparent importance of Tuathal. This is what the hordes of

¹⁹⁴ Compare the name of the Volcae *Tectosages* and perhaps the *Textoverdi* known from an inscription in the north of England.

justifiers have hidden from us. The myth says – and this myth fits neatly within the ideology of the *ri* that we have outlined, that the *ri* upholds *natural law* – Tuathal upheld natural law. There was, it is clear, some sort of challenge to the cultural order (that is, ‘natural law’). Tuathal confronted this challenge and restored the ‘natural order’. Yet if we ask what is likely to have been the challenge to the ‘natural order’, and this ‘natural order’ is likely to have been not only ‘Sovereignty’ but ‘Keltic sovereignty’, the most obvious answer is Scotti and Goidels and Fenians. In other words, the mythical Tuathal represents what any actual Tuathal would have opposed¹⁹⁵.

- *Conn Cétchathach*. Conn seems to have been brought into the core mythology of the Gael. His epithet is equivalent to the early Pictish king Drest who ‘fought a hundred battles’. It looks like a title and perhaps a formal one. Conn is dragged into what looks like a later layer of propaganda in which Ireland is divided into two halves (Leth Cuinn | Leth Moga). If we want to understand the earlier significance of Conn, we can refer to his primary myths. We know, for example, that the five roads to Tara (i.e. the coiced) were ‘discovered’ on the night of Conn’s birth. The Lia Fáil is linked to Conn. The coronation stone at Tara is said to roar when the rightful king stood on it. A druid is quoted to explain the meaning of the stone — first there is a mist; then a horseman throws three spears at Conn. There is a house on a plain by golden tree. In the house you (the king) are

195 We may compare the anti-Roman Jesus becoming the founder of the chief religion of Rome.

welcomed by a woman bearing a golden crown before a silver vat. You see a 'phantom' tall and beautiful. He is an enthroned man. He is Lug. The woman you see is the sovereignty of Ireland. The woman serves you a meal. Conn ('you') can look forward to a long reign. None of this is historical, but it indicates a strong belief in the legitimacy of Conn (the progenitor, after all, of the *Connachta*). I suspect, though, that the underlying significance of Conn is his apparently intimate relationship with the *Fianna*.

- *Art mac Cuinn/Art Oenfer*. Here we have a variant of the myth of the Twins. Conn has two sons. Connla falls in love with a 'fairy woman' and goes with her to Mag Mell to be never seen again. The other son Art is left alone (Oenfer). Be Chuille (=Bui, the *cailleach*?) imposes a geis on Art that he must leave Ireland until he can find *Delbchaem*. He is forced to kill Delbchaem's mother, who has been foretold by druids she would be killed by a suitor of her daughter. Art and Delbchaem return to Tara and Delbchaem banishes Be Chuille. This restores fertility to the Ireland. This is interesting because, in this apparent variant of the Cronus myth, it is Delbchaem who receives the prophesy that she will be killed. Of course, if we understand that the core point of the myth is youth and death and resurrection, this makes perfect sense. Be Chuille is 'the veiled one', a doublet of Delbchaem ('the beautiful', that is the Youth). It is the basic fate of Youth to die. Delbchaem becomes Be Chuille and is then resurrected. Art means 'god'. So, Art is 'Lug', that is to say the king; royalty. Conn, meanwhile, means 'judgement', a suitable name for a judge of the dead. It seems unlikely, to

me, that either Conn or Art were anything but mythical figures.

- *Cormac mac Airt*. In Cormac's time, Tara flourished. He was famed for his judgment. He was, therefore, like the Sandinavian Frodi ('the fruitful'), the archetype of the Good King. The birth of Cormac is worth noting. His mother Achtan is said to have a vision while she was sleeping next to Art. It begins when she sees herself with her head cut off and a great tree growing out of her neck. The vision continues in a suspiciously detailed allegorical form. But the motif of the beheading may be significant, if we consider Medusa and Orpheus, not to mention Mimir and Bran. Cormac is abandoned and brought up by a hunter (are we now in the culture of the eclanned Fenian?). At the age of thirty (perhaps a Fenian threshold?), Cormac 'goes to Tara' and meets a 'weeping woman'. In Tara, Cormac confronts the king Lugaid, but here it is his 'judgement' that wins him the crown. The weeping woman was bringing a case to Lugaid, and Cormac's judgement on it is superior to the king's. Lugaid abdicates in favour of Cormac. However, the saga of Cormac then has the Ulaid king drive him *from* Tara (i.e. he goes 'missing'?) and so he must regain the kingship in alliance with Tadg¹⁹⁶ son of Cian and Lugaid Lama. This part of the myth is used to explain the origins of the kingdom of Brega. There is, it is significant, a good deal of 'secular' detail about Cormac's battles, against the Ulaid and Connacht, and Munster, even in Britain. This places him in

196 'Yew', that is to say perhaps, the 'royal wood'; the wood from which Lug's spear is made.

the period of Scottic raids. He is specifically linked, in the saga of the 'Expulsion of the Deisi', to what looks like the end of this period. But on the whole Cormac seems to me a largely mythical character.

- *Cairbre Lifechair*. In Cairbre's 'reign', we are told that the Feni have become too powerful, so an army is raised from Ulster, Connacht and Leinster and is joined by the Fenian Goll. Munster and the Deisi side with the Feni. Cairbre is victorious at Gabhra, but is killed. Finn is also killed. This is probably a myth, a variant of the Celtic 'apocalypse'. But a historical basis is likely. It probably refers to some political settlement between the 'kings' and Fenian (that is, Gael) warbands. Cairbre's byname localises him to the area in and around Tara.
- *Fiacha Sraibtime*. What is interesting about this king is that he is 'not allowed to go to battle'. His son Muiredach Tirech must lead the troops (that is, the Feni).
- *Muiredach Tirech*. We are now close on the tail of genuine history. Muiredach 'exiles' the 'three Collas'. These (presumably being Feni) then enter his service and lead his armies.
- *Eochaid Mugmedon*. Eochaid has two wives, Mongfind (daughter of Fidach, which is, perhaps not by coincidence, a region of Pictland) and Cairenn¹⁹⁷. Anyway, it is Cairenn who is the mother of Níall himself. And it is here, at the cusp of true history, we are returned to our myth.

¹⁹⁷ Possibly *Carina*, but she is said to be a 'Saxon', and if this is a memory of a political alliance and not a mere anachronism, this could be a corruption of a Saxon name.

Mongfind, we are told, hated Cairenn. Níall was exposed, but rescued by Torna (a poet this time, not a herdsman or fisherman). Cairenn is reduced to servitude by Mongfind (that is, loses Sovereignty). At length, Níall 'returns to' Tara and saves his mother from her servitude. Níall is perhaps Nél – the divine mist. He is, like Lug, an intermediate god. He is, really, the mist that surrounds Lug. Samhain, we are informed, is called by some the *Festival of Mongfind*. And for good reason surely. She is the 'white-haired', Sirona, *Senona, the 'veiled one', masked, hidden. She is Hel. *Celta, perhaps, as we have suggested, the very core of the Celtic cult.

This enumeration is sufficient to see that the exact nature of these early kings is difficult to gauge from the evidence. It is clear enough some of these names are the names of the gods of the cult. Perhaps that is the key, *a cult*. This was a cult, with an ideology. Its exact nature is so hard to see because, in the time from which we have written evidence, the only type of evidence in which names and snow pillars can survive over centuries, not only a new cult, but an *opposing* and *hostile* cult had established itself. The notion of a High Kingship survived, but many of the whys and wherefores that once drove it had now become taboos. Were these early kings political figures or symbolic ones? Did High Kings have to fight to be a High King, or were they either *elected* or even *selected*? Whatever the specific answer to these questions, if there can be one, it is clear that there was an ideology of Kingship in pre-Gaelic Ireland. But the High Kingship known to history was a different one. It was Gael and it was Christian and it was a mere talisman in the fierce world of secular politics. It is hard to believe this was always so and the High Kingship was doubtless once far

more than a mere talisman, in the days when Lug really did descend on Tara in his magical mist.

Afterthoughts, By-thoughts

A book must be finished, but its ideas outlive it. What follows is a few afterthoughts about our subject, joined to which are some marginal ideas I considered inappropriate for the main text.

1. The Widespread Gallo-Brittonic Language

The area over which Gallo-Brittonic was spoken – and this seems to be essentially a single language with barely-detectable dialectal differences – is surely remarkable. Jerome, as is well known, stated that the language of the Treviri (> Triers) and the Galatians (north-central Turkey) was one and the same. Place- and tribe- names to the very north of Scotland bear canonical Gallo-Brittonic forms: *Smertae*, *Decantae*, *Devona*, *Deva*, etc.

The question must be, how and why?

The answer, perhaps, lies in the nature of the Galatae, who I believe were the main force behind the spread of this language. The Galatae were clearly not comparable to the Celtae of northern France. These latter are similar to – on a larger scale – the *Latini* and *Samnites* of Italy. They were a ‘people’, one made up of smaller groups, namely the manifold tribes of what the Romans called ‘Gaul’. The Galatae were *not* a people or a collective of tribes. They were, rather, a *collective of warriors*. They were *supratribal*.

It seems conceivable, then, that the language of the Galatae was of necessity a koine and this might explain its uniformity over such a wide area. Tribes such as the Volcae (southern France) and the northern Britons (from Brigantes to the Parisi to the Decantae) and of course the Galatians themselves were Galatae. Moreover, the

peoples of south-east England and of the later Belgica and environs were the 'native' speakers of this language, this being its core area.

This observation can be combined with another: the scanty but suggestive evidence that the Celtae were not themselves 'native' speakers of Gallo-Brittonic.

I think the best argument for this is a conceptual one. From where did the 'Spanish Celts' come? Their languages were not Gallo-Brittonic so, if the Celtae anciently spoke a form of Gaulish – the usual name for their language in the time of the world of words – this clearly disbars France, or at least northern France, as a source culture. If, however, Gallo-Brittonic displaced an earlier dialect of Celtic, this problem is removed.

The suggestive evidence is, as stated, sparse. But it is coherent and points in the same direction. 1) The Quariates (cf the Irish Ciarraige/Ciarrade?), a clearly Q-Celtic Alpine tribe; 2) Lepontic, with its sound change $c > s$; 3) the Armorican tribe *Osismii*, whose name seems to display this sound change ('os' \leftrightarrow *Uxisama*); 4) the apparently Q-Celtic month names in the Coligny Calendar (eg *Qutios*); 5) the name *Bolerion* for the south-west point of the 'isles of the Prettanoi' (cf the specifically Irish *Balar*). In addition, if we include Ireland here, we can compare the tribe name *Aedui* with the typically Irish name *Aed*, and *Arverni* with that of the *Iverni* themselves. Then again, that suffix is surely found in the name of the *Chilterns* ($< *Cilternos$, with an obvious root of $*cilt-$ or $*celt-$).

Sparse, then. It would never convince someone who does not wish to be convinced (and rightly so). But I myself believe firmly it leans far more towards evidence than fantasy and is therefore worth mentioning.

2. Culann and Weland

Culann. The smith famous for naming the most famous hero of ‘Ancient Ireland’. It is an outlier idea in excelsis, but are the names *Culann* and *Weland* (Norse *Vǫlundr*) related?

This is at least an interesting language lawyer conundrum.

The names may be related because a) they are similar and b) there is a perfect semantic fit.

The reason this is at all worth mentioning is because, while *Culann* is clearly not a Germanic name, if there was ever such a category as CIE within the Indo-European family of languages, and the north of Ireland (and Britain) was once inhabited by speakers of a CIE tongue, then the name can indeed be placed in a viable context. Perhaps the sound-change $w > c$ mirrors that of $w > g$ in Welsh, caused by a heavily aspirated ‘hw’ phoneme?

It is an outlier idea, then, but these names *may* be related and Culann may be a relic of a long-forgotten people of Ireland. In the main body of text, we saw the name *Cheviot*, which can be related to, for example, Old English *heafod* (> ‘head’). We may also mention the legendary character *Olc*, preserved in Munster tales. May not this ‘Olc’ be the *wolf*? Could such a name be Irish or even Celtic? Can *Olc* be placed beside *Culann* as another remnant of a long-forgotten IE people in Ireland?

So, a tiny CIE lexicon¹⁹⁸: *olc* ‘wolf’, *chiviet* ‘head, peak’, *culann* ‘smith’?

198 Other possible items from northern Britain: *wedra* ‘water’, *tis* ‘quiet’ (< R. Tees, cf R. Tisza).

3. A Keltic Centre?

An outlier idea to the main text.

The centres of the pre-Gaelic and pre-Christian coiced are notably focussed in the centre of the island. Is this significant? Does this indicate a) that the coiced system was definitively Keltic and b) the limits of Keltic political and military control of Ireland?

This would imply that Munster (Mumu) and Connacht, and the south of Leinster, were perhaps not a part of the coiced system. That, in fact, the coiced system was essentially *Keltic*. Not Irish.

The Kelts had a strong control over the midlands (Tara > Cruachan) and, probably, the north (the Ulaid).

In the main body of the text, the Kelts and Irish form, essentially, a single polity. Mumu is one of the coiced just like the Keltic ones, and their equal (as every part of a coiced must be). Here, the Irish are outsiders: wealas or 'strangers'. *Hostis* and not *gastis*.

If the Kelts *were* a Norse-like invading force, and the native Irish *were* by definition 'welsh', perhaps this idea may gain some traction. After all, the original observation I think cannot be denied that the coiced centres *are* situated rather close to the centre of Ireland. So, while we can say that Uisnech was *supposed* to be the centre of Ireland, the coiced centres were merely the centres of each 'province'.

So *why* are they so marginal in relation to the area of each province, especially if we accept that the natives of each province were Irish, not Kelts?

4. Rex and Meddix

Can the Italic roles of *rex* and *meddix* tell us anything about Ireland? I suggest, maybe.

The first thing to note is the hypothetical but probable symbolism of the coiceda. As the fundamental idea of the coiceda is the five cardinal points, it is scarcely believable these had no symbolic value. One likely way that these points were viewed is as a combination of North-South and East-West. That is N-S and E-W were two *binaries*.

The most plausible binary, discussed in the main text, is that of Connacht and Ulster. It is clear that these are the 'North' in terms of symbolic geography, yet equally clearly are 'West' and 'East'. In the Ulster Cycle, moreover, Connacht can be related to the idea of *judgement* and Ulster to *kingship*. There is a consistent notion in these traditions that 'west' is *there* and east is *here*. The representatives of Ulster are Conchobar, of course, but he seems to represent Eochaid Ollathair and the Dagda. Connacht, meanwhile, seems to represent Conn and Midir.

This binary is remarkably close to that of the *rex* (kingship) and *meddix* ('judgement' by etymology) in Italy.

In Italy, there seems to be no connection between these two titles. The *rex* is found in Latium (or at least in Rome) and the *meddix* in particular in Samnium. However, the word survives in Latin as *medicus* (from which *medicine* for example derives). The word also existed outside of Italy in such names as *Midas*, *Medusa* and *Medea*.

The IE roots of each title appear to be complementary – 'rule' versus 'judgement'. That is, the one stands in for law and the other enacts or explains it. It seems plausible to me that the titles date from a very early period, and

the ideas behind them still earlier, perhaps the dynamic days of the Yamnaya culture, if we factor in Indic *raja* as well as *rex* and *rix*. In the Yamnaya it is likely that a binding mechanism for the *arya* was ritual, and if that is so, this may have been presided over by the one who embodied the law (the ‘king’) and the one who spoke the law (the ‘priest’). This is more or less the Dumézilian model of the ‘function’ of sovereignty, which I think is one of the strongest parts of his theory.

If this is correct, the Latin *medicus* and *flamen* are likely to share, if we go back far enough, a similar origin, and so too the Celtic druid and Indic brahmin. This would imply that the dualism of the king and priest extended to *here* and *there*: the king was of *here* and the priest of *there*. The king represented power and the priest wisdom. The king, action; the priest, learning. The king presided; the priest incanted. And so forth.

Unfortunately, this is a short note to a book and not the book that would be required to investigate this idea. But I think the idea of a rex/med- dualism emerging in the Yamnaya period is an interesting one, as is the idea that vestiges of the dualism survived in early Europe.

5. Two Triads

If we interpret the name of the deity Mac Cécht (‘son of the ploughshare’) as a folk-etymology, the name may be compared with that of the healer Dian Cécht, where it means ‘powerful’. We know almost nothing about Mac Cécht except that he is certainly one third of a triad with Mac Greine and Mac Coll.

Mac Greine means ‘son of the sun’, but I suspect Mac Coll (‘son of the hazel’) is another folk etymology, the name being better linked to Goll (or Coll). So, he too would be ‘son of the sun’.

We are told that the three Macs held the kingship in rotation and that for example when Mac Cécht was king, Fótla (that is ‘the land’ or ‘Ireland’) was queen, which is to say that she was Sovereignty.

The rotation of kingship here can hardly be separated from the traditions relating to Macha Mong Ruad that we examined in the main text. Here too, kingship is rotated between three kings (‘every seven years’). The names here are Áed Rúad (the Dagda), Cimbáeth (‘hostage’, the name being comparable to that of Aillil) and Díthorb (‘divine bull’). The two triads seem to have remarkable similarities (if we ignore the folk etymologies)

Mac Greine and Áed Rúad are clearly comparable, but so too are Mac [G]oll (if this is how we interpret his name) and Cimbáeth, for Goll is a leading member of the Fomorians and Cimbáeth is, I believe, equivalent to Aillil (the hostage and surrogate). The former therefore represent *here* and the latter *there*. As Áed and Goll are both in some sense the sun, it seems to me they represent different aspects of it. Áed is the healing and warming power of fire *here* and Goll is the burning destructive power of *there*. The similarity of the name Mac Greine to the continental deity Grannus may also perhaps confirm the relationship with the warm healing aspect of solar power.

It is hard to separate Díthorb from the infamous ‘bull feast’ in which a bull was sacrificed. In one telling of the tale of Macha, Áed (‘father’ of Macha) dies and Macha claims sovereignty but Díthorb and Cimbáeth refuse and Macha does battle, as a result of which Díthorb is killed. Substitute ‘sacrificed’ and you have the bull feast, the sacrifice of the divine bull. As the bull was a symbol of physical power, we have a good match for the epithet *cécht*.

In the Macha myth, the core meaning seems to refer to the cycle of father~son and king~surrogate. We see in it *father* (Áed), *son* (or youth) (Díthorb) and *surrogate* (Cimbáeth). That is, in Ulster Cycle terms, Conchobar, Cuchulainn and Aillil. Among the Macs, the most obvious link is between Cimbáeth and Mac [G]oll. Mac Greine can reasonably be linked to Áed and Mac Cécht to Díthorb. Mac Cécht is thus the youth who overcomes the fiery surrogate Mac [G]oll and assumes sovereignty as Mac Greine. Given this reading, Donn Cúailnge (cause of the ‘Cattle Raid of Cooley’) and Díthorb may be one and the same and refer back to the inauguration ritual of a king and the bull sacrifice.

An interesting sidenote to the three Macs is the figure of Ériu, the ‘wife’ of Mac Greine in this tradition. Elsewhere, she is the ‘lover’ of the Fomorian Elatha, whose name implies ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’. Elatha is therefore comparable to Conn and Midir. The son of Elatha is Bres who, in a famous tale, replaces Nuadu to become king of the Tuatha Dé Danann. That is to say, he becomes a surrogate king.

Bres’ wife here is Brigid (‘sovereignty’), just as Elatha is ‘married to’ Ériu (that is, ‘the land’, or ‘Ireland’). After seven years, Nuadu returns and Bres is exiled. Bres assembles an army that features the fiery Balar, fated to be killed by Lug. In one account Bres himself is let be by Lug, but in another he too is killed. One tradition, moreover, has Balar as the father of Bres, not Elatha. This leads to the suspicion that Elatha, Balar and Bres are aspects of each other and also the same as or Fomor inversions of Mac Greine, Mac [G]oll and Mac Cécht respectively.

The father of the Macs was, goes one tradition, killed by

Lug and in revenge we are told, the Macs killed Lug. This is the story of Balar and Bres versus Lug. The tradition also recalls the tale of fiery Áillen who harassed Cormac's court at Tara every Samhain. That name is suspiciously similar to that of Ailill, thus linking yet again to the Ulster Cycle. In the tale of Macha Mong Ruad, the kings rule for seven years, as they do in the saga of Bres. The name Elatha is essentially the same as that of Conn and Midir. Nuadu is the Dagda, who is Áed Rúad, who is perhaps Mac Greine.

The names Áed Rúad and Macha Mong Ruad ('the red' and 'the red-haired') are significant, for red is the colour of the king, of Sovereignty. Macha Mong Ruad can therefore be contrasted with Mongfind ('the white haired'), Findubair (the same, more or less) and Bé Find, white perhaps being the colour symbolic of Sovereignty *there*. The colour of *there*.

It seems to me that, the closer you look into these old myths and legends the more you see this same tale of the judge (there) and king (here), and father and son (or youth), of surrogate and sovereignty.

The immediate origin of the story is surely that it is the central myth of the druids, the mythos that upholds both the cosmos and the king. But beyond that, it perhaps reflects the much older figures represented in Italy by the judge (*meddix*) and king (*rex*) and maybe even the early society of the Indo-European-speaking peoples of the Yamnaya culture complex.

6. Anglo Saxons

It is generally believed that Britain was invaded by the Angles and the Saxons and that this invasion created Anglo-Saxon England. (The Jutes are generally mentioned as a side-note here.)

In my view, this is a misleading picture. It is, I believe, more accurate to say that Britain was invaded by peoples from what is now Denmark and that the invasion was essentially English. There was no Saxon invasion or Anglo-Saxon invasion.

The earliest references to the 'Germanic' (an exonym, of course) peoples makes it clear that the coastal peoples from south of the Rhine to the Danish peninsular formed a single ethnic group: the *Ingaevones* (or **Ingvaeones*). These were the people devoted the deity Ing or Ingvi, attested in the later Norse tradition as Yngvi Freyr. Another great, central-European, group of tribes was the Suebi, who seem to have been expanding westward at the time the Romans first encountered the northern peoples. One of the most northerly groups of the Suebi was the Angles, situated to the south of Denmark.

The fact that the Angles are associated by both the *Ingaevones* and Suebi indicates subtleties in the ethnic make-up of the Germanic tribes that there is insufficient evidence to resolve into a proper understanding of its nature. It would strongly imply though that the Anglii belonged to a different ethnic group to the Saxon tribes. However, as the Saxon propaganda epic the *Heliand* shows, the English and Saxon languages were similar. Perhaps the Anglii were a native Ingaevonian tribe allied (willingly or not) to the expanding Suebi.

As the Roman Empire settled down and consolidated, the tribes across the Rhine confederated, and one of these

confederations called itself the *Saxons* (literally ‘dagger-men’). The nature of the Saxon confederation was, clearly, geared toward war. Sure enough, the Saxons caused trouble over a wide area. It is largely forgotten today, but there was significant Saxon settlement along the coast of what later became Normandy, so much so that many old Germanic names there could be either Norman or Saxon¹⁹⁹.

Of course, it is Britain that bore the brunt of Saxon attacks and from the 4th Century on, the Saxon threat was always there at least in the background. So much so that Roman administrators created a Count of the Saxon Shore to defend the province. But these Saxons were facing a Rome still capable of defending itself. Britain was *attacked* in this period. Not *invaded*.

Another key point is the name ‘Saxon’. It became a Roman one and acquired a Roman meaning. The Latin name did not mean ‘dagger-men’ or ‘warriors’, it meant ‘raider’ and specifically ‘Germanic raider’. Moreover, both the British and the Irish adopted this name with this meaning.

This period of raids is quite different to the English (and Jutish) period of invasion and settlement. If we consider who the ‘Saxons’ were in England, we notice they are predominantly groups settling along the Thames, up into what became Wessex. The South Saxons (> Sussex) were a coastal group sandwiched between two Jutish areas (Kent [< British ‘Cantion’] and the Solent region).

Was this ‘Saxon’ group actually Saxon in an ethnic sense?, seems a reasonable question to ask. If we consider that the name was adopted by both the Roman administration

¹⁹⁹ Just as it is long-forgotten that the English moved down the Elbe into Bohemia and dominated it. Their brief domination was ended by the Franks.

of Britannia and the local population, it is clear that the English (and presumably Jutes) would be seen as ‘Saxons’. That is, I suggest, the origin of the name. The Thames region, all the way up to the Cotswolds, was the most Romanised and most wealthy part of Britain. Moreover, although the details are as ever utterly unclear, it is a remarkable coincidence that, in the region of Arthur’s great victory over the ‘Saxons’ – the core area of what became Wessex – the evidence suggests either British dominance or at least not subjugation, given the preponderance of Celtic and probably Celtic names among the earliest Wessex kings²⁰⁰. The earliest attested name of Wessex, land the ‘Gewissae’ *confederates* is curiously similar in meaning to *Combri*.

In short, ‘Saxon’ in the names *Wessex*, *Middlesex*, *Sussex* and *Essex* may have the Latin and British more general sense, not the more specific ethnic sense. These ‘Saxons’, may have been simply the English who settled along the Thames amongst often wealthy local population groups and these groups called them by that name.

In this model, then, there were two ‘Anglo-Saxon’ periods:

- an earlier time of predominantly *Saxon raids* and
- a later predominantly *English invasion*.

²⁰⁰ **Cerdic** [< Ceredig < Caratacus], **Creoda** [< ‘Cruth’ ‘the Briton’?], **Cynric** [< Cunorix, an Irish name], **Ceawlin** [< Cunobelinus?] and **Cædwalla** [< Cadwallon < Cassivellaunus].

Epiface : *Llu[ng]d(n

I am just finishing studying the ethnosophy, as I call my work, of primitive London which involves some extensive philography and its' work I'm proud of. I've now certainly got some important groundbreaking ideas here. I hope I have simplified them enow for you.



It, London I write of, was founded by the Iberians and means 'cheese market' in the Iberian tongue. The Iberian form of the name is given you above. I do not need repeat it here. London cheese was esteemed

extremely before writing was invented. The cheese trade was of central import to these Iberians.

Then after the Celts invade London, there the next invaders of Albu, they name it Augusta, meaning 'the young or new city' but the Romans soon convert it back to the old ways. In the Eternol City they know their onions (which by the way were introduced by *Iben-ngan, an Iberian (perhaps of Carthaginian parentage), in the 11th century bc with the Deveril-Rimbarg Volker) about how to govern the locles.

London was a proper little world back then, and Stoke Poges ('the golden tempol' in Iberian, where I live) was its moon, white as a wintry mink (a delectation incidentally eaten in a ritual I will be publishing hopefully June next).

Many of the names of the rivers of London came of gods names' as they so often do I think. There is Tammuz (which gave us the Thames), the Pinn (Pan), Mole (recta 'molk' before its' attested, that is Moloch), Crane (Cronus the god of and father of Time and Juppiter respectively) and Fleet (recta 'plot' before the famous 'umlute' or Grim sound shift of 450 BC, that is Pluto and how appropriat the Street of Shame should be named after him though they've all gone to Wapping now).

Only the Yeading (from 'Ged-ing') and the Gade are from the so-called Christian god.

The Greeks and the Romans and the Phoenicians altogether! I think therefore this shows that the religion in London is much deeper than a palstaffian prick of a pin.

The Tower of London (cf 'tower' and Old Cornish 'tor' meaning 'an eminent place'!) was once a druid's temple, or was builded over one (see Geoffrey of Monmouthshire). It was the eastern counterpart of Durrington Wells, its saracen stone brought over from Thule in primitive coracols.

I have found foothark writing in Tothill and beth-luis-nion occam inscriptions in Cheapside. There are ritual signs out as far west as Denham is.

And as the Thames takes her Estuary English upland of herself, I say good luck to her if that's what she wants. You can't kill the old ideas, they can but fade away, of their own accord. Old Tammuz will carry on taking, forever and a day, up her old primitive pagan history, and I'll bet the Iberians will be remembered, long after we've packed it all in.