

that other archetypical Celtic instrument, the bagpipes, is the proper analogue to the blood-drenched heroic poetry of the *faith*.

In Ireland three epic cycles have been preserved: the Mythological Cycle (which is more a collection of historical legends, Aryan mythology, Druidic wisdom and very ancient romances than an epic cycle properly speaking), the Ulster Cycle and the Leinster Cycle (90). Also, in all Celtic countries (including much of Spain) many legends and romances survive which no doubt are fragments of lost epic cycles, since there is no doubt that the greater part of the Celtic epic tradition has been lost. The Ulster Cycle, preserved in Ireland, and, in part, in the Scottish Highlands, shows signs of great antiquity and demonstrates the care with which the *faith* conserved the heroic and chivalrous traditions of their race.

There are other proofs of the antiquity of the Celtic epic tradition. The Persian poet Gurgani, using ancient, traditional material, wrote a long romance based on the Parthian tale Vis and Ramin. Scholars noted that the similarities between the Welsh-Breton romance Tristan and Isolt, really a part of the Arthurian Cycle, and the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin are much too close to be coincidence, and some have postulated that the plot of Vis and Ramin was brought to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades.

However, anyone knowledgeable in Celtic studies could inform the above-mentioned scholars that, as the English say, this is

"utter bilge". In the first place, the earliest Welsh and Breton versions of Tristan and Isolt are far earlier than the time of the Crusades. In the second -place, there are the Irish romances Deirdre of the Sorrows, which is really part of the Ulster Cycle and The pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne , which is part of the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle of the Irish epic are very ancient indeed and whose plot is also that of Vis and Ramin and Tristan and Isolt. The only possible conclusion is that the common plot of these three romances goes back to a time when the Celts and the Iranians had not yet separated. This is proof of the great antiquity of the Celtic epic tradition, and is also yet another proof of the close kinship between Celts and Iranians, between Erin and Iran. Finally, it is yet another proof that the Spanish Celts must have possessed and epic tradition. The Ulster Cycle has come down to us in a mixture of prose and verse, which shows that it has been lost in its original form, which was no doubt entirely in verse. Nevertheless there is no lack of proof as to its ancient origin. The protagonists of said epic cycle use the same arms as the pre-Roman Gauls, i.e., shields, long swords, lances, javelins, slings and war chariots. Also in the Ulster Cycle one encounters customs typical of the pre-Roman Gauls, such as the use of the chariot for transport, but combat on foot, svered heads as war trophies and giving the choicest cuts of meat to the most valiant warrior. Another ancient custom mentioned in the Ulster Cycle is the "heroic nudity". Although the ancient Irish knew perfectly well how to forge armor and coats of mail

(there is no lack of references to armor in the Ulster Cycle, it was considered a mark of valor to go into battle without a helmet and without armor).(91). David Greene has noted: "Certain elements of the society portrayed in the Tain bo Cualnge (a "catha" or chanson de geste of the Ulster Cycle) - totem and tabu, taking heads as war trophies, combat in chariots - were unknown in Christian Ireland, and therefore cannot be inventions of literary men influenced by Latin culture"(92). Proof of the high antiquity of Deirdre of the Sorrows, and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne and therefore also proof that the common plot of Vis and Ramin, Tristan and Isolt, Deidre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne was not brought to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades. In conclusion, although the version which we have of the Ulster Cycle is of relatively late date (6th or 7th Century AD), it is perfectly clear that it is based on authentic epic traditions conserved with care over the centuries. It is also perfectly clear that no part of the Ulster Cycle was brought to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades. Many centuries after the composition of the Irish epics, the bards of Wales and Brittany created a new epic cycle based on the life of a Celtic Briton king and his knights who fought against the Saxons. No doubt said cycle contains much material older than the time of King Arthur. As we will attempt to show later, the Grail legend appears to be in this category. *En toto*, the Arthurian Cycle is an excellent example of the persistence of the Celtic epic tradition. No doubt the Mabinogion and other collections of Welsh

legends contain fragments of lost epic cycles. One may say the same concerning a vast number of legends of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, as well as the ballads and romances which are so plentiful in Celtic lands. As we said before, Tristan and Isold as well as Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne are examples. We shall speak of this in more detail when dealing with the Parthian *gosans* or epic bards.

Apart from direct evidence in Greek and Roman sources, the analogy with other Celtic peoples and the proofs of the high antiquity of the Celtic epic tradition make it very likely indeed that the Spanish Celts possessed an epic tradition. There are yet other proofs. There exists an Irish chronicle of the 7th century called Leabhar na Gabhala or Book of Invasions whose content is related to the Mythological Cycle (93). The theme of said chronicle is the conquest of Ireland by the Celts. The chronicle says that the Celts came from Scythia. For this reason the author says that the Celts are descendants of Japhet, son of Noah, because Flavius Josephus in Antiquities of the Jews says that Magog, son of Japhet, was the ancestor of the Scythians. Perhaps there is a memory of the ancient relation between the Celts and the Scythians in the name Scotta, one of the female protagonists of the Leabhar na Gabhala and in the name Scot, which anciently meant "Irish", but which was taken to what is now Scotland by a migration, where it is still found in the names Scot, Scotland, Scotch and Scottish. Some think that the names "Scythian" and "Scot" come from the Iranian stem *skuth*, which means "archer" (94).

In the light of what we have said above, it is well to remember that the Parthians were of *Saka* or Scythian origin.

The first Celts who came to Ireland were called "the People of Partholan". These Celts were defeated by the *Formorio Afraic*, a seafaring people (*mor* = sea), apparently Indo-Europeans but not Celts. Because he did not understand the name *Afraic*, the author of the chronicle says that the Formorians were descendants of Ham, son of Noah, ancestor of the Africans. Now it is thought that "Afraic" is related to the Sanskrit *aparic*, which means "Occident" or "Occidental"(95), something perfectly reasonable in the context. In Ireland the 1st of May, the ancient feast of *Beltain*, is still celebrated as the anniversary of the arrival of Partholan in Ireland(96). The name "Partholan" appears to be related to the Vedic Sanskrit stem *parashu*, which means "war axe", from which come the names *Persia*, *Parsi*, Parthian (97) and *Parisi*, this last the name of a Celtic tribe of Gaul and Britain from whence comes the name "Paris"(98). Pliny (3,8 & 5,6) and Salustius (Jug.) speak of Persian in what is now Western Andalusia(99). It appears evident that said "Persians" were Celts.

After the people of Partholan two more Celtic groups reached Ireland, apparently from Gaul. The first group, "the people of *Neimidh* (which may mean "he who has a name" or "the renowned") or the *Firbolg* (whose name comes from *Bolga*, Celtic god of thunder, equivalent to the Vedic *Indra*(100) was in the beginning defeated by the Formorians, but returned and succeeded in establishing themselves, although they were unable to conquer the whole island.

Later arrived the *Tuatha de Danaan*, "the People of (the goddess) Danaan". As we said before, Danaan is an aquatic goddess, "sister" of the Iranian *Anahita* and the Vedic *Danu*(101, 102). The *Firbolg* and the *Tuatha de Danaan*, hostile at first, soon discovered that they were kinsmen who spoke the same language. On the 1st of November is celebrated in Ireland the fiesta of *Samhain*, which commemorates the great battle of *Moytura* between the *Formorians* and the *Tuatha de Danaan*.

The *Leabhar na Gabhala* also speaks of a great king in Spain named *Breoghan*, who founded the city of Braganza among others. One of his descendants, named *Milidh*, served in Egypt as a mercenary and returned to Spain where he died, but soon afterward a group of Celts left Spain for the conquest and definitive Celtization of Ireland (103). It is interesting to note here that in the Irish tradition the three most ancient Gaelic poems were composed by a Spaniard, the bard of the "People of *Milidh*" called *Amergin Glungel*. Said poems are clearly pagan and are of a philosophical-theological nature, since their main topic is metempsychosis or reincarnation (104). The name "Milidh" appears to be related to two Sanskrit words: *mil* = "assembly" or "congregation" and, by extension, "army" (see the Latin *miles*) and the suffix *dha*, "he who has" or "owner". "Milidh" therefore means "Leader of the Army"(105). Note that a particular city, Braganza, is mentioned together with a reasonable etymology of its name. Also, said quotation from the *Leabhar na Gabhala* is related to certain Spanish legends. The local legend of the city of La

Coruna in Galicia concerns a lighthouse on a headland in the outskirts of the city. The present lighthouse is mainly of Roman construction, but according to the local legend in pre-Roman times there existed another tower on the same site. Breoghan climbed to the top of this tower, and from there saw Ireland far to the North. It was thus that the descendants of Breoghan knew of the existence and whereabouts of Ireland, and thus some of them migrated there. To this day most Coruneses call the lighthouse "the Tower of Breoghan". Celtic ruins abound in La Coruna and its immediate vicinity. Anyone familiar with Galicia who has read the novel Bard by Morgan Llewelyn will recognize "the stronghold by the headland" of said novel as La Coruna. However, the city of Betanzos, not far from La Coruna, which was called "Brigantia" in pre-Roman times, also claims to be the port from whence the descendants of Breoghan left for Ireland. The anthem of Galicia is called *Fogar de Breoghan* (home of Breoghan), and there are even soccer teams named for Breoghan.

A relative of the very old Gallego family called Caamaño, dona Mercedes Gil Rigueira of Santiago de Compostela, has in her possession a manuscript which the department of paleography of the University of Santiago de Compostela says is of the 17th Century. The anonymous author of said chronicle speaks of a local tradition concerning a king named *Brigo*. In a very Renaissance manner, said author attempts to relate something not well understood to the classical world. The author did not take his information from Irish sources, since he does not mention Ireland, nor does he

mention Braganza. Numerous Gallegos have told me of oral traditions among illiterate villagers concerning Brigo or Breoghan.

It is said that Arcos de la Frontera, near Jerez de la Frontera and not far from Doñana, was originally called *Arcobrigan* from its founder, a king named *Brigo*(106). Here we are very far south of Galicia, near the mouth of the Guadalquivir and not far from Gibraltar. The Celtic names Brigo and Breoghan are related to the Sanskrit stem *brih*, which means "great" or "excellent" and "prayer" (107). The Indo-European *ghw* and *gh* are *h* or *gh* in Sanskrit, hard "g" (as in "gum") in Celtic (108). From the stem "brih" come the names Brahman and *Brihaspati* (lit. "Lord of Prayer"), the Vedic god of wisdom and eloquence to whom 11 hymns of the Rig Veda are dedicated (109) as well as the name of the Celtic goddess of wisdom, *Brigit*(110). Note the similarity between the name "Brigit" and the participle of "brih", which is *brihati* (111). In reference to the names Brigo and Breoghan, the presence or absence of the final "n" is of no importance. The final "n" is a case ending of the accusative, genitive and dative in certain declensions of Old Irish (112) and a case ending of the vocative and accusative in certain declensions of Sanskrit (113). "Aryan" is *Arya* (nom), *Aryan* (accus) in Sanskrit, *Airya* in Avestan, *Iran* in Persian and *Eriu* (nom), *Erinn* in Celtic (114). From "Erinn" comes the name "Ireland", which, like "Iran", means "Land of the Aryans". The *arco* of *Arcobrigan* may also have a Celtic etymology.

In Celtic *ardd*, *ard* and *ardu* mean "high" or "height" (115). Sanskrit has two words for "high" and "height", i.e., *aruda* and *aroha* (116). The relation between the Celtic "ardd", "ard" and "ardu" on the one hand and the Sanskrit "aruda" on the other is clear. "Aroha" is cognate with the Latin *arx*, "fortress" or "height", and the Persian *arg*, fortress. Now, within the great Indo-European family, it is precisely with the Indo-Aryan, Iranian and Italic groups that the Celtic languages have most relation. It would be very strange indeed if a stem found in Sanskrit, Persian and Latin did not at some period also exist in Celtic. By the laws of phonetic changes within the Indo-European languages, "aroha" in Celtic would be *arg*, the same as in Persian. One may assume that the stem "arg" disappeared from the Celtic languages before they came to be written in the 6th-7th centuries AD, surviving only in place names. Near Noya on the Western coast of Galicia is a place called *Argalo*, once important but now reduced to a village. This name readily breaks down to *Arg-Galo*, "the Fortress of the Gallaecos", the Gallaecos being a Celtic tribe from which the name "Galicia" is derived. So, at last we have something similar to *Arcobrigan*, "the Height of Breoghan" or "the Fortress of Breoghan". Later the "arg" fused with the Latin cognate "arx", giving "Arcobrigan". Anyone who has visited the lovely town of Arcos de la Frontera will testify to the appropriateness of this name.

Historic-linguistic studies appear to confirm the historical basis of the Leabhar na Gabhala. For phonetic reasons, the Celtic

languages are divided into two groups, that of the "p" and that of the "q" (117). In pre-Roman times the Celts of the "p" occupied all the island of Britain and all Gaul except for a zone in what is now the French Alps which was occupied by a tribe called the *Quariates*, apparently of the "q"(118). Until the great migrations from Ireland to Scotland in the 5th-5th centuries AD and the less important migrations from Ireland to Wales and Cornwall during the same period, there were no Celts of the "q" in any part of Britain and apparently never had been (119). The Celts of the "q" are found in Ireland, and, after the 5th Century AD in Scotland (120). Also, the great majority of the Spanish Celts were Celts of the "q" (121). The latest researches affirm that there were indeed four waves of Celts who reached Ireland, the first group being little known, the second and third groups being Celts of the "p" (shown by analysis of personal and place names) and the fourth (which finally came to dominate the whole island) were Celts of the "q" (122). It is somewhat difficult to explain how Celts of the "q" could have come to Ireland if not from Spain; besides, it appears that there were relations between Ireland and Spain even in pre-Celtic times (123).

Therefore it would appear that the Leabhar na Gabhala has a historical basis, and that the legends of King Brigo or Breoghan, found from Galicia in the extreme North of Spain to Arcos de la Frontera in the extreme South, as well as the references to Breoghan and Milidh in the Leabhar na Gabhala all from an epic cycle of the Spanish Celts. In the case of the references to

Breoghan and Milidh this epic cycle was in part at least brought to Ireland by a migration, as a great part of the Ulster and Leinster cycles were brought from Ireland to Scotland by a later migration. In this connection it is interesting to note that, according to the Leabhar na Gabhala (124) Milidh served in Egypt as a mercenary. In the books of Henri Hubert cited various times in this work are mentioned numerous cases of Celts serving as mercenaries in the Near East, including Egypt. Also, the case of archaic words such as "apartic" or "afraic" shows the antiquity of the Leabhar na Gabhala. It is interesting to note here that, as was said before, *Deva*, the name of various rivers in northern Spain, is pure Sanskrit (125, 126, 127). It would appear evident that *Deva* as well as *afraic* date back to a period in which the Celtic languages were much nearer to Sanskrit and Avestan than they are at present. One may conclude that it was the *vatis* or *faith* who conserved the memory of Breoghan or Brigo in Ireland and Spain. Alfonso X "the Wise" was not completely misguided when he used the chansons de geste as historical sources. As Heinrich Schliemann demonstrated by his discoveries at Troy, the historical memory of a people who have a strong epic tradition is not to be despised, and one should not underestimate the persistence and the care with which the epic poets preserved and transmitted their traditions.

A "catha" whose theme is a frontier incursion has a special name; it is called a tain (128). The Tain Bo Cualnge (the *tain* of Cooley), the Tain Bo Regamna, the Tain Bo Aigen and the Tain Bo

Fraich are all part of the Ulster Cycle (129). It is not difficult to see in these *tain* the forerunners of the border ballads of Scotland which deal with the constant wars and incursions on the frontier between England and Scotland. The theme of these ballads is "bonnets over the border": "England shall for many a day/Speak of the deadly fray/When blue bonnets came over the border", as these ballads say. In the frontier romances of Spain which deal with the frontier between Castile and the Muslim Kingdom of Granada at times one may detect admiration for the courage and chivalry of the Muslims. In the Scottish border ballads there is no feeling toward the English save implacable hatred, as these lines show:

Burn their women, ugly, untrue
Burn their uncouth children too
In the cabins and in the palaces
Princes and peasants, burn them all
While you have breath do not pardon the Sassenachs (Saxons,
Englishmen)
Drown them in the pounding waves (130)

For the Scottish frontiersman, the only good "Sassenach" is a dead one.

The Scottish ballad is different from the English ballad in many respects, and many believe that the Scottish ballad passed from Welsh and/or Gaelic to "Scots", the variant of English spoken in the Lowlands (the Highlands were Gaelic speaking until very recently, and indeed there is a present a Gaelic revival in the Highlands; unfortunately the Welsh once spoken in the Lowlands

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seems to be irremediably lost, though Scots contains many Welsh

words), bringing with it its rhyme and metre (131). As an anecdote, in a recent edition of the Bible in Scots, the Devil speaks English. Any good Scot knows that the Devil is a "Sassenach". In Ireland and Scotland are still sung Gaelic ballads, called "Ossianic", which deal with the heroes of the Irish epics and with more historical topics, such as the struggle of Irishmen and Scotsmen against the Vikings (called *Finn Ghail*, "blond strangers" or "pirates of *Lochlainn*, "Lochlainn" being Scandinavia).(132) The metre varies in length, but generally forms four-line stanzas or quartets, which predominate in the Rig Veda. The rhyme schemes vary a great deal(133).

Frontier incursions being a staple of Spanish epics and romances from The Seven Princes of Lara to the frontier romances mentioned above, it is not difficult to see a Celtic substratum here as well. The resemblance between the Scottish ballad and the Spanish romance is obvious, so obvious that it is a current practice to translate Spanish romances to English using the metre of the Scottish ballad. Sir Walter Scott and Robert Southey among others have done this (134, 135). It would appear that the Gaelic ballad and the Spanish romance have followed parallel lines of development. Warlike incursions are a principle theme of both the Irish and the Castilian epic. The Gaelic ballad and the Spanish romance both use themes derived from the epic, both deal with frontier incursions and in both the metre is similar. Only the Irish and the Castilian epics have frontier incursions as a

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principle theme. Neither the English ballad nor the French ballad

nor the German epic-lyric deal with themes from their respective epic traditions: only the Celtic (Irish or Scottish) ballads and the Spanish romance do so. Also only the Scottish ballad (in Gaelic or Scots) and the Spanish romance have a special genre which deals with frontier incursions. The English ballad is an exception only in part, since it is of much less importance than the Scottish ballad, and the role of frontier incursions is much less.

Ergo, the evidence that the Spanish Celts had an epic tradition is conclusive, or nearly so. No one can deny with any basis in fact that the Spanish Celts passed at least a reflexion, a substratum, of their epic tradition to their descendants. If the evidence in favor of this supposition is not conclusive, the evidence against it is nil, and those who attempt to deny it have a great deal to try to explain away. It would appear evident that the Spanish Celts had their "faith" or epic bards and their epic tradition. The possibility of a Celtic substratum in the Provençal, Gallego-Portuguese, Castilian and Hispano-Arabic lyric verse is an interesting topic, which I have treated in another place (136).

Certain Romanists, or specialists in the philology of the Romance languages, have said that nothing of the Celtic literary tradition in Spain could have survived the process of Romanization. Said *a priori* judgement is inadmissible; great though the destructive power of Imperial Rome may have been, it

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was not omnipotent. The survival of the Basque language or

Euzkera proves this leaving no room for doubt. If a language has survived the centuries of Romanization, much easier would it have been for various poetic and literary elements to pass from Celtic to Vulgar Latin or Romance during various centuries of bilingualism. A complete collection of the Celtic survivals in the the Penninsula would fill various thick tomes. The Celts of the Northern Plateau and the Northwest resisted the Romans with afury and heroism almost incredible. The great military genius of the Spanish Celts was the Lusitano Viriathus, whose name in Celtic means "Torque Wearer". The Lusitanos had been reduced to desperate straits. By the treachery of Galba, 30,000 Lusitanos were killed or sold into slavery. But the Lusitanos were not finished. With about 10,000 men Viriathus invaded Western Andalusia, and at Tribild, near Ronda, killed 4,000 Romans. Viriathus repeated this success against Plaucius. The same fate overtook Claudius Unimanus and Nigidius. On one occaision 300 Lusitanos defeated 1,000 Romans. Yet another Roman general, Fabius Maximus, had no better luck. Servilianus was also defeated with the loss of 3,000 men. He suffered yet another defeat at the hands of the Celtic tribes of Western Andalusia, no doubt inspired by Viriathus. For a time it looked as though the Spanish Celts were going to drown the Romans in the Mediterranean.

But the Lusitanos were tired of war, and were willing to accept the Roman promises, in spite of the many examples of Roman

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perfidy. But Cepion, the new Roman consul, provoked a new war.

Viriathus, accepting an offer to negotiate, was slain by treachery.