

Reflections on Some Ethno-linguistic Parallels between Celts and Basques

(The Atlantic substratum of the “red devil” & “black wizard”)

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The article studies the possible relics that could confirm that some folklore motifs based on mythological traditions demonstrate some particular examples showing supernatural and chthonic features. Some of the cultural and linguistic remains of insular Celtic reflect contact with early non-Indo-European languages of the Atlantic region in the context of a Pre-Celtic substratum. One of the leading traces of it are the symbolic similarities of “red”, “black” and “white” between specific Celtic and Basque (Pyrenean) mythological and linguistic features.

The field of our study is the search for possible relics confirming that some folklore motifs based on mythological traditions demonstrate some particular supernatural and chthonic features. Taking into consideration some semiotic factors (double references, enantiosemey due to the Upper Palaeolithic period) many specifically Celtic (or more generally Indo-European) ethno-linguistic elements can be discerned within the pre-Indo-European neolithic (Atlantic) substratum, from which Basque is the unique supersite in Western Europe. The hypothesis that some of the features (cultural and linguistic) of insular Celtic reflect contact with early non-Indo-European languages as voiced by E. Lewy, H. Wagner, H. Birkhan, E. Polomé, D. E. Evans and others have emphasized the importance of a Pre-Celtic substratum which strongly influenced the Celtic world.

Proceeding from the importance of “red”, “black” and “white” as the main terms for the universal color system, we try to trace some similarities between specific Celtic and Basque (Pyrenean) mythological and linguistic features.

One of the euphemistic names for the oldest Basque mythological personage – *Mari* (a mountain genie) (Barandiarán 1991: 99-123) is *Ionagorri* “Red skirt”, literally ‘Skirt red’ (López Mugartza 2004: 247). See also a Bizcayan tooth extraction charm: *Maritxu teilatuko / Gona gorridune / Eltzi agin zarra / Ta ekarzu barria* (Holmer and Holmer 1969: 188) “Maritxu from the roof / Red skirt / Pull off the old tooth / And bring (me) a new one”. The same can be found in Guipuzkoa: *Maria, gona-gorri ...* “Maria, skirt red ...” and in Soule: *Andere kota-gorri ...* “Lady, skirt red” (Azkue 1984: 629; see also Zélikov 2018: 79). While in some areas of Europe *Mari* (the Great Goddess) was transformed and absorbed into Indo-European mythologies, in the Basque country she retreated into those places in which her power and mystery had always been great: into the caves, wells and mountains of the high Pyrenees (Everson 1989: 278).

Moreover, *Mari* can often be connected with a carrion-eating bird of prey (appearing as a vulture, owl, eagle or raven) which was symbolic of the Bird Goddess in her role as “Wielder of Death” who was associated with megalithic monuments both in art and grave goods throughout western Europe. As M. Everson points out, images from Brittany and western Iberia are decorated with the eye-and-eyebrow indicative of the Goddess as an *owl*, and often with enlarged vulvas (regenerative aspect), sometimes schematized (Everson 1989: 282; Gimbutas 1989: 187-195). There is a close correlation between the ornamental elements that occur on Irish and Iberian megalithic tombs (O’Sullivan 1991; for the protohistoric relationship between Breton & Iberian pictorial art see Briard (1992: 7)). It is also worth mentioning that the Italian word for “witch” – *strega* derives from Latin *strix*, *strigis* – a kind of owl that according to popular belief sucks children’s blood during the night-time. The same function is ascribed to Basque *lamiñak* (also connected with *Mari*) associated with *Mara* of different European mythological traditions, and being an incarnation of nightmare or French *cauchmare*, which maintains the recollection of the mythical *mare* which settled down on a sleeping man’s breast. *Mare* is the *lamia* or night’s vampire (Quignard 1994 (2000): 66).

The motive of demonic red color – according to Basque legends *Mari* lives in a cave thanks to her connection with the

devil – had been developed in some tales. For example, we have “Two brothers & the old mother” (Bizcay):

Eta amari erropa gorri bet imiñi (eutsen) eta kaballua baten ganien ondo amarreu ta basora bota. Eta ardiyek yaboten (egoaan) gizon batek ikusi zuen kaballua kapa gorri dun bet ganien deuela eta ikeratute yoan zan abadiñe, pentseurik inpernuakoak diziela, esaten berinkasiñua botateko (Holmer and Holmer 1969: 218)

“They dressed their mother in a *red robe* and tied her above the horse and sent her to the forest. And one man who was shepherding saw the horse with a being in a *red cloak* sitting on it and got frightened and ran to the priest, thinking that they had come from *hell* and started begging him to bless the being who was sitting on the horse”.

The material of Basque mythical legends shows that the red color (like the black one) is the color of some mystical animals, for example: *zezen gorri* “red bull”, *txalgorri* “red calf”, *beigorri* “red cow”. The same goes for the trousers as the dress attribute of the anthropomorphic and tabuized *devil*: *galtxagorri* (Guipuzcoa) “red trousers” (Estornes Lasa 1976: 274-275). The undoubted parallel for the Red rider is the subject of three riders all clad in red from the Irish saga “The destruction of Da Derga’s hostel” (liter. “ ... the hostel of Red God” – *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*):

“Then Conaire traveled along the Cualann road and soon after saw in front of him three riders galloping towards the house. They had three red cloaks on. Their bodies, hair, clothes, horses and they themselves were red from head to foot” (Predaniya 1991: 107).

A. Muradova, mentioning the similarity of the Irish saga with a Breton tale “The dead head dog”, points out some instances related to the red color in the Breton source: red glow, red bloody castle, red dog eyes, dark red rocks of dry blood, red servant’s caps, red clothes in which they dressed the hero (see above the same changing of clothes in the Basque tale – M. Z.) and others (Muradova 2005: 298-301). Muradova goes on to say that the devil in human form is often associated with the red

color in Breton folk tradition. The author adduces some “particular” Breton examples (Muradova 2005: 293-294) which could be complemented with Basque parallels. So, Bret. *ar skorn ruz* “severe frost” (liter. “frost red”), *naon ruz* “severe hunger” (liter. “hunger red”) and *mallozh ruz* “great misfortune” (liter. “red misfortune”) correspond in Basque to *negu gorria*, *gose gorria*, *damu gorria* “id.” (Elhuyar 1996: 262). The last Breton adjective example – *mallozh ruz* which also means “terrible (liter. “red”) malediction” (Muradova 2005: 293) – could be compared with Basque *gorrian ari izan* “to damn” (Elhuyar 1996: 262), liter. “to be in the red” (as the consequence: “to become red crying or damning to smb.). See also Basque (Biscay, Roncal) *ipar gorri* “cold wind” (liter. “north red”), also “northern wind”, which also have a sinonimic model based on the adjective component *black*: *ipar beltz* (liter. “north black”) (DEV, VI: 345).

As A. Muradova has recently shown: “the devil is largely represented in Breton folklore like in the oral tradition of other Christian nations. Meanwhile the Breton devil has some special characteristics ... In the Breton folk tradition the red color is associated with the devil and other infernal creatures ... In Gaulish and Breton the epithet “red” had a connotation “bad, harmful, dangerous” (Muradova 2006: 65). See the late reminiscences of the same meaning of red color in the novel “The Water of the Wondrous Isles” by W. Morris (Sedykh 2005: 45).

O. Ir. *gorm* “red (face, skin)”, Gaul. *gormo-* “bloody, red” (Billy 1993: 84) can be compared with Basque *gorri* “red” (also “plant’s rust”, “measles” and “great heat” in dialects). (It was C. C. Uhlenbeck who drew together Basque *gorri* with *gar*, *kar* “flame”) (DEV, V: 828). In *Dictionarium Linguae Cantabrigiae* (N. Landuccio, 1562) *gorria* means “colored” and *corrincoa* “rotten yolk” (Michelena 1961). In Aquitanian indigenous names (attested from inscriptions in south-west France of the Roman period) *Bai-gor(r)i-xo/ Bai-cor(r)i-xo* (connected with the place name *Bai-gorri* (< *ibai* “river” + *gorri* “red”)) (Michelena 1954: 416, 438).¹ About the possibility of the reading “red” of the second element of another place name *Calagurris* (=

¹About Basque g = Aquit. g/c (Michelena 1961: 255).

Kalakorikos in a Celtiberian coin legend - MCH, I, A. 53) (Hubschmid 1960: 468-469; Villar, Prósper 2005: 449) see Caro Baroja (1945-1946: 192). The same could be suggested for *-corri-* (= Basque *gorri*) in the Aquitanian personal name *Herauscorritsehe* (Lafon 1956: 62; see also (Gorrochategui 1989: 30)).

J. Gorrochategui considers Basque *gori* “ardent” (*rr / r* is normal here, see e. g. – *ber(r)i* “new” as an old toponymic Pirenaic component (DEV, II: 945)) – M.Ir. *gorim* “ardent”, W. *gori* “incubate”, Bret. *gor* “hot, ardent, flame” < i. e. **g^whero* “hot” as one of the most reliable Celto-Basque parallels: **g^wh-* > *g-* is met only in Celtic and Ibero-Romance dialects, e.g., Sp. *huero*, *güero* “infecundated egg”, *engorar* “incubate” etc. ≠ e. g. to lat. *formus*, goth. *warms*. “In spite of the Ibero-roman correspondences the semantic difference is relevant to guarantee a direct loanword from Celtic without any romance intermediation” (Gorrochategui 1987: 957);² see also the metathesis *gor* > *gro* in O.Sp. *groya* (Juan Ruiz, 972) “red”, Sp. (La Rioja) *grojo* “a variety of juniper” (DRAE: 748). For the relationship of Basque *gor(r)i* with words from a Pyrenean substratum see Hubschmid (1965: 34; DEV, I: 309-310).

There is another series of words for “hot” and “boil” common to Basque and the Celtic languages which have an initial bilabial *b-*, explained by J. Corominas as a result of the development of *g^wh-* > *b-* (Corominas 1976: 155).

²Pyrenean (and particularly Aquitanian) autochthons lived surrounded by Celts at least from the 3rd century BC: they were pressed by Gauls from the North and by Celtiberians from the South (Gorrochategui 1987: 951). This accounts for the numerous ethnolinguistic interferences. The obviousness of the fact in question caused G. Rohlfs to make an assumption about the existence of a kind of intermediate Celto-Basque language in the Pyrenean area (Rohlfs 1952: 209). More probably, we are dealing with the strong celtization of certain Pyrenean tribes (Vascones, in particular) (Perex Agorreta 1986: 68). As a result of such kind of mixture could be the appearance of the personal name *Belheio-rigis* (← Aquit. *Belheio* + Gaul. *-rix*), tribal name *Bocontiae* (← *Vocontius* as a consequence of a local evolution *v* > *b*) etc. (Gorrochategui 1987: 952). It is not accidental that the majority of Indo-European parallels in Basque are Celtic. Besides, in this case we should speak of differently directed loanwords (Celtic → Basque and vice versa) (Zélikov 1993: 172).

So Basque *bero* “hot, heat” has been drawn together with Bret. *berwi*, *beruein*, *beroi*, *birviñ*, *bero*; W. *berwi*, M. Ir. *berbain* “boil” and the Gaulish theonym *Boruō*, *Bormō*, from which the famous Bourbon, Bourbonne (the name of warm springs) and Fr. *bourbe* “mud” (Guillaume 1975: 324; DEV, II: 938; Lambert 1994: 190) ~ to Lat. *ferveo* and others (See also a Nostratic stem **bur’a* “boil, seethe”: Sem.-Ham. *br.*; i.e. *bhreu*; Ural.- Alt. *pura* – *ora* and Dravid. *pur* (Filimonov 1982: 91)).

Another Basque word for “devil” is *tusuri* recorded firstly in “Les Proverbes Basques ... “ by A. Oihenart: *Tusuria deabruari erraten zioten euskara zaharrean eta orano hitz haur usaten da Suberoan* (Oihenart 1657: 208) “In Old Basque they called “the devil” *tusuria* and now this word is used in Soule”.

It was H. Schuchardt who compared *tusuri* with Gaul. *dusii* “dēmons incubes” of St. Augustin (De civ. Dei, XV, 23) and Isidore: ... quos daemones Galli Dusios vocant (Etimol., VIII, 11, 108) (Schuchardt 1914 – 1917: 324). See also Weisberger (1969: 58). P.-Y. Lambert interprets Gaul. *dus-* as “bad” (Lambert 1994: 168). G. Dottin connected *dusii* with Corn. *Dus* “devil” and Ir. *duis* “noble” (Dottin 1918: 254). As they point out “the name *Dusius* from Aquitania, survived in the Romance languages, possibly in Breton *Diz* “devil” and in the (post-Roman) adoption into Basque *tusuri* “devil” show a supra-regional dissemination” (Zeidler 2006: 224). We guess that the enantiosemic couple *tusuri* – *dusii* “bad, malicious / noble” evokes a possible comparison with Basque *gentil(iak)*, *jentill(a)k* – gigantic mysterious beings who lived in caves and who were ascribed some wizard’s features, e.g., the possession of enormous strength such as, for example,, the *gentiliak* like the *mairuak* are builders of dolmens (e.g. one of its names is *gentilbaratze*, liter. “garden of gentil”) (Caro Baroja 1980: 272). It’s very significant that this Latin term was attributed to the Basques (= i.e. pagans) by the authors of late Antiquity (e. g. Prudencio, IV–V). With the passage of time the original attributive meaning “pagan” in Ibero-Romance languages as a result of enantiosemic taboo has changed: “noble”, “agreeable”, “attractive”, “graceful”. Meanwhile the oldest semantic development “gentil – magician / devil” is still maintained in Basque oral tradition and in Pyrenean folklore (see, for example, the play “The cave of

Salamanca” by Cervantes where the “devil” (*diablo*) is materialized as a *gentil*) (Zélikov 2018: 103-106).

According to one of the tales written by J. M. Barandiaran in 1917, the people living in the Cave of Leizai one day saw a star of extreme beauty. They were very frightened and didn't know how to explain this phenomenon. So they took out a half-blind old man from the cave and lifted his eyelids with the poker and let him see the sky. “Oh my children, - exclaimed he. *Kixmi* (= Jesus Christ) is born! We'll perish. Throw me down to the abyss!” (Barandiarán 1991: 141-142). As J. Caro Baroja notes, the notion connected with the *gentil* is exceptionally Basque and there is no mention of it in any other place in Spain (Caro Baroja 1980: 271).

Nevertheless, we could refer to one mythological parallel for Basque *gentil* in the Atlantic region of Europe: the problem that arises here concerns a syncretic Fomorian personage *Balor*, who was one of the ancestors of Celtic (Gaelic) giants. The eyelid of his poisonous (demonic) eye was so heavy that only some strong men could lift it. For other mythological parallels with *Balor* and particularly with Gogol's *Vij*, see Ivanov (1971).

In connection with *Balor*'s poisonous eye which could kill any man alive V. Kalygin gives his own very attractive etymology: *Balor* < **g^ulro*- < **g^uel*- “to kill”, which coexists with “the blind-eyed” (Blažek 2001) and **boleros* < **bhel*- “to flash” (O'Rahilly 1946) (Blažek 2001: 129). Earlier this connection of **g^uel*- with W. *ball* “plague, *Black Death*” was noticed by H. Birkhan (1970: 420).

Considering the possibility of borrowings from a non-Indo-European substratum in the western part of the Indo-European territory E. Polomé points out that the Gaulish name for the poisonous plant “henbane” *belenuntia* (= Germ. *Bilzenkraut*, Du. *bilzenkruid*, M. Du. *beelde*, OE. *beolne*, OS. *bilene*, Odan. *bylne*, *bølme*, Sw. *bolmört*, Russ. *bělená*, Cz. *blin* etc.) is linked to the name of the Celtic god *Belenus* (**Belenos* (Schrijver 1999: 22)), identified with Apollo.³ All of these words

³Additional Indo-European (Celtic, Germanic and Slavic) data in Schrijver (1999: 17-22).

usually derived from IE. **b^helH-* “shining, white”.⁴ As Polomé emphasizes:

“the link between *Belenus* and *Apollo* is not based on the fact that the Celtic deity is a solar god as some etymologists who derive his name from IE. **g^wel-* “shine” as happily as from **b^hel-* would like us to believe: *Belenus* is a healing god like *Apollo*, and that accounts for the connection with the plant which was a favorite of medicine for its narcotic and other effects (e.g. remedy against muscle spasms, nervous hysteria, and even toothache), although its alkaloids (hyoscamine, scopolamine) are extremely dangerous. As for derivation from a root meaning “white”, it is rather absurd, since the plant looks quite dark-colored, with a sticky green stem and dull green unattractive leaves; its flowers are sallow yellow with violet veins around a red-violet center. One wonders why anyone would ever call such a plant by a name meaning “white” or “shining”! All the evidence points to a plant used in magic-medical practices since pre-IE times, and this strongly suggests borrowing of the term from the language(s) of the pre-IE population of northern Europe (Polomé 1990: 334-335).

We should connect it with the Pyrenean data of great importance which involves the whole of the North-Atlantic Area. The Basque correspondence for Gaul. *belenuntia* (bel(l)inuntia) explained by Pliny as *Hyoscyaminus niger* (OLD: 148)⁵ that is “black henbane” is *eraberar* (*erabedar*, *erabelhar*), literally “poison (or lazy) herb” (DEV, IV: 300) similar to *irabelhar* “poison”, literally “fern/poison herb” (DEV, IV: 349) semantically analogous to Sp. *beleño negro* “henbane black”, *hierba loca* “id.”, literally “herb mad” or *tómalocos* “id”, literally “take mad” (Rivera Nuñez, Obón de Castro 1991: 795).⁶ It’s very

⁴See also Schrivjer (1999: 24).

⁵As P. Schrivjer points out, “forms like *belinuntia*, *bellinuntia*, βιλιν-, mentioned by Walde-Hofmann & Dottin are not found in the editions of Ps.-Apuleius & Dioskurides ... Billy (1993) does not mention these forms either” (Schrivjer 1999: 23).

⁶Port. *velenho* (Schrivjer 1999: 22) should be considered as a loanword of Sp. *beleño*. As for the original Portuguese term for ‘henbane’ *meimendo* one could suppose a reflection of Lat. *melimendrum* (Isid., 17, 9, 41) (Schrivjer

significant at the same time that the component *berar* (*belhar*, *bedar*) “grass, herb” usually attached to the Celtic derivatives from **beruro-* (Lambert 1994: 188) “a sort of aquatic plant” considered as pre-Celtic and substratic (DCELC, I: 499; see also André (1985: 185); Zélikov (2018: 137)). P. Schrivjer also admits the possibility that **Belenos* derives from a non-Indo-European language ... “its derivative ‘henbane’ did not originate in Celtic but in a further unknown non-Indo-European language”. That’s why “one cannot doubt the previous presence of non-Indo-European languages in Europe (Schrivjer 1999: 24-25, 28-29). Nevertheless, basing his argument on phonological criterion (“presumed vowel alternation”) the author considers this language hypothetical; “hence the theory is unfortunately arbitrary” (ibid.: 26). On the other side he strongly assumes that “the form **Belinos* does not derive from the British Isles but from Southern Gaulish areas” (ibid.: 28, 41). Hence, on the basis of copious ethnolinguistic data one could suppose that this “hypothetical” language (languages) could be localized in Pyrenean (Aquitanian & Basque) area.

L. Michelena and other researchers suggest that Basque *berar* is the herb used for preparing some magic potions. It’s a commonly known linguistic fact that during the Witch Trial held in Logroño (La Rioja) in 1660 it was called *berarbelça*, liter. “herb black” (Michelena 1961: 228). The Basque name for “witch”, “wizard” and “magician” is *belhagile* i.e. “herb maker”, O.Sp. *yervera* “witch”, literally “(female) herbalist” (Michelena 1958: 40). There is a possibility of connecting *ira* (*larre*) “fern” with Celtic forms descended from **rāti* (Lambert 1994: 93; Caro Baroja 1945-1946: 201 see in Zélikov (1999: 14-15; 2018: 124-125).⁷ The reminiscences of this personage could be seen in the literary works of Fernando de Rojas (“La Celestina”) and M. de Cervantes (in the novel *Coloquio de los perros*) (Zélikov 2018: 122, 139).

On the other side one can point out that *berar*, *belhar* carries the stem *bel-* “black”, testified also for Iberian *Iskerbeles*

1999: 23), exhibiting the common substratic alternation *b/m* (*beli* > *meli*), see Zélikov (2018: 157, 163).

⁷About Basque *iratxo* “brownie”, *irasko* “goat”, *aketo* (← *akher* “goat”) - Sp. *encabritado* (← *cabra* “goat”) “infuriated” (as a consequence of “drunken”) (Zélikov 1999: 15; 2018: 124, 140).

(Misc. 100), which would be interpreted as “(the) man empowered with magic”, or “magician” (Pattison 1983: 513;⁸ see also *belendrin* “witch” (Azkue 1984: 793) and *belater(ra)* “priest”, earlier “predictor” (= lat. *augur*) from *belatx* “hawk” and *bela* “raven” (both *black* birds)⁹). The last one is present in Iber. *Ildubeles-eban* (Iglesuela del Cid, Aragon) (MLH, 3: 343), *Belagasi-kaur* (Alcoy, A) in which L. Michelena notes *kaur* = Basque (*h*)*aur* “child”, comparing it with Celtib. *Belli*-genus (Livio XXI, 43), liter. “born by Bell” (Michelena 1976: 361). See also Ir.ogam. *Branogeni* “íd.” (Korolev 1984: 123) and the name of the first Goidelic king of Tara *Cormac* and descendant of *Lug* which may etymologically mean “raven-son”: **korbo-makkvos* (O’Rahilly 1946: 283 – 284; Wagner 1970: 24).¹⁰

H. Birkhan, analysing the name of prince *Llywelyn*, sees a combination of two components: *Lugu* – *belinos*: “... die Beziehung zwischen den Göttern *Lugus* und *Belinus* funktionell oder gar genetisch enger sein ...” (Birkhan 1970: 361).¹¹ Perhaps we are dealing here with a sort of reduplication. The possibility of the link between *Lug* and Gaul. *λουγος* “raven” as a totem word for this chthonic black bird, suggested by J. Pokorny (Pokorny 1938: 114) and supported by H. Wagner (Wagner 1970: 24), identical to the Basque *bela* “raven” – *beltz* “black”

⁸In Iberian, where it occurs frequently in men’s names, it may have had a more affirmative, positive value: perhaps something to do with the moon goddess whom the Romans called Hekate to whom they sacrificed *black* puppies and *black* lambs and who presided over magicians and enchanters” (Pattison 1983: 512). About the first element *isker* of Iberian inscriptions (mostly in the South-Eastern area), which often appears with *sacar* (p. e. *sacariscer* - Liria) and is identified with Lat. *sacer* “sacred”, *sacerdos* “priest” (Lafon 1953), see Fletcher Valls (1981: 72-73).

⁹As P. Schrivjer assumes, “it’s conceivable that *Belenos had some connection with vaticination” (Schrivjer 1999: 39). The important Pyrenean (Iberic, Basque and Pre-Romance substratic data (see also Zélikov (2018: 120-121, 157)) may well point to a non-Indo-European origin of this practice.

¹⁰*Ildubeles*, *Ultibeles* and *Ikorbeles* are regarded as personal names (Prescott 1979: 277). For other Iberian names with *beles/meles* (= Basque *beltz*) see Zélikov (2018: 157-158). See also the element *belex-* *belts-* in Aquitanian onomastics: *Belex*, *Belix*, *Beléxconis*, *Belexeia*, *Belexennis*, *Bellaisis* (Michelena 1954: 415-416, 422, 435). *Akherbelts* liter. “goat black” (a night spirit) (Barandiarán 1991: 124-125), *Bonbelex*, *Harbelexsis* (Michelena 1954: 418-419), *Tarbelsonius* (Albertos Firmat 1960: 305).

¹¹For other reflexes in British onomastics, see Schrivjer (1999: 27).

still exists, based on the dichotomic (binary) character of the stem **leuk-*: W. *llug*, Gaul. *leucetus*, M. Ir. *luach*, W. *llwg* “brilliant, shining, but Ir. *loch* “black”, W. *llug* (< **louko-* “shinning black”) “black and yellow” and others (IEW: 688). See, for example, Gr. Λύγος “lamp” ~ λυκόφως “twilight / daybreak” (Gindin 1965: 216)¹² assuming an enantiosemic development “black → brilliant (shining) → white” valid at the same time for the stem **bhel-*: Celt. *belo* – “white, brilliant”, Russ. *belyi* “white”, *blesk* “shine, brilliance”, D. *bleich* “pale”, but O.E. *blæc* “black”, M.H.D. *blach* “ink” and others (IEW: 119).¹³ The admission in question can reconcile polar etymologies proposed for the dichotomic Lug’s grandfather *Balor* (flash ≠ kill – black death – see above) and also enantiosemic (black and white) *Belenus*. More about it and about another double reference of the “shining” God – “water / fire” can be found in Zélikov (1999) and in García Quintela (1999) where the author considers some typological similarities occurring between south-western Pyrenean ritual and Irish mythological traditions (“Tochmarc Étaíne”) concerning the “humid fire”.

Moreover the decisive role of context must be taken into consideration. As, for example, Cú Chulainn depending on the context could be called *finn* “white” or *dub* “black” (Leman 1991: 7).

The pre-Celtic substratum which strongly influenced the formation of the Celtic labyrinth of their world view forces us to have many more doubts about the existence of a unified Celtic mythology (Bondarenko 2001: 255). One of the contact languages of the Atlantic Area where IE invaders collided with a pre-IE population undoubtedly was Basque (Bakker, 1988) which was spoken in the Iberian peninsula (the important link between Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds (Schumacher 2004: 179)) at least from the 3rd millennium BC.

¹²See also the derivatives of the stem **leu-g-* “blackish; swamp (= dark liquid)”: Gr. λυγαιος “dark”, Illyr. *luga(r)* “swamp”, Alb. *lëgâte* “puddle”, Gaul. λουγος “raven” (see above), Russ. *luža* and others (IEW: 686). More about enantiosemic Pyrenean and Slavic forms of **leuk-* / *leu-g-* and **bel-* / **bal-* see Zélikov (2003; 2018: 170-172).

¹³More examples for enantiosemic development of **b^hel-* can be found in Zélikov (2018: 162-164).

This statement has nothing in common with the (proto)Vasconic theory of Th. Vennemann (1994), harshly criticized by J. Lakarra (1996; see also Zélikov 2010). The coincidences in question could be explained as relics of the ancient community localized in the Atlantic area (Cantabria, Aquitaine, Basque Country, Brittany and the British Isles) (Zélikov 1993: 174).

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