

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLACE-NAMES AND ANCIENT LINGUISTIC GEOGRAPHY

Place-names preserve fragments of history. *Stratford-upon-Avon* is an English name containing an English preposition and English syntax, *ford* is an English word, with a well-known Germanic sound change (Indo-European **p* > Germanic **f* by Grimm's Law), *Strat-* (Modern English *street*) is from Old English *stræt*, a loanword from Latin *strata* 'road', and *Avon* is the Welsh word for 'river', medieval Welsh *avon* – *afon* in Modern Welsh spelling. The Anglo-Saxons gave the name *Stratford* to the settlement where the Roman road crossed a river, and the name of the river was picked up from Celtic-speaking Britons.¹ Thus the name *Stratford-upon-Avon* tells us of Celtic-speakers, Latin-speakers and English-speakers in Warwickshire. In the same way *Nogent sur Avon* in France tells us of Celtic-speaking Gauls in Seine-et-Marne.²

Such place-names confirm what we already knew about the history of England and France. In many countries, however, place-names are the only non-archaeological evidence to have survived in bulk from early times. Potentially they have as much to tell us about human history as the DNA we carry in our bodies – in both cases if only we knew how to interrogate them. And, unlike DNA, which has wandered from country to country, place-names are fixed in space.

The toponymy of the landscape can be compared to a palimpsest upon which successive linguistic groups have written their signatures, and continue to do so. Some have supposed that our oldest place-names go back to the end of the last Ice Age;³ speculation on such matters is best deferred, however, until the layers of the palimpsest written in the last two to three thousand years are identified. Here philologists have two good starting-points. One is that they can easily get back two millennia by consulting Greek and Latin texts. The other is by following the well-established methods for differentiating languages. For example *f* < IE **p* is one feature that makes *ford* Germanic, versus Latin *portus* 'passage' etc., where **p* was retained, or Gaulish *ritu-*, Welsh *rhyd*, Old Cornish *rit*, Old Breton *rit*, 'ford', where IE **p* was lost, as was regular in Celtic.

¹ It is still unclear whether **Abona* was actually a name or whether the English name was derived from the common noun **abona* (VEPN s.n. **abonā*). Cf. Smith, 'Survival of Romano-British toponymy', p. 37.

² Nègre I, §§ 1012 and 2385; DLG s.vv. *abona* and *nouuios* (and p. 10, n. 4).

³ Vennemann, 'Linguistic reconstruction', p. 263.

For those who study the early history of the Celts, it is particularly important to establish the distribution of their language in Europe and Asia Minor because modern scholarship is almost unanimous in defining 'the Celts' primarily as 'speakers of Celtic languages'.⁴ This linguistic definition is much more precise than any definitions available to historians,⁵ archaeologists and art historians⁶ from within their own disciplines.

'Celtic languages' means languages which philologists have assigned to the so-called 'Celtic' sub-family of the Indo-European language family on account of various innovations and peculiarities, like the loss of *p above, which these languages share in distinction to the other sub-families, such as Germanic, Greek and Indo-Iranian, which descended independently from Proto-Indo-European.⁷ The term 'Celtic languages' does not necessarily mean languages spoken by people who were called, or called themselves, *Celti*, nor languages spoken by people who favoured so-called 'Celtic' art styles such as the 'La Tène' style. Some speakers of Celtic languages certainly called themselves Celts – the phrase *Celtica lingua* is no modern coinage – but others, including the Celtic-speakers of Britain and Ireland,

⁴ Some of them would have been bilingual or multilingual of course. Some – perhaps most – of them would have acquired Celtic at the expense of other ancestral languages. As a result we cannot expect to correlate linguistic evidence with biological evidence; on that fallacy see Sims-Williams, 'Genetics, linguistics, and prehistory'.

⁵ Historians have to depend on ancient writers' use of the ethnic label 'Celts' (*Keltoi*, *Celti*, *Celtae*, etc.) and its synonyms or near-synonyms 'Galatians' (*Galatai*) and 'Gauls' (*Galli*). Notoriously, many ancient writers use ethnic terms loosely (cf. Whittaker, *Frontiers*, pp. 212–13), especially from the linguistic point of view, failing to distinguish Celts from Germans, for example, and never referring to the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland as 'Celts'. See Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism'. On whether the terms *Celts*, *Galatians* and *Gauls* are linguistically Celtic and etymologically identical see *ibid.* pp. 21–22. In the present work I will accept the linguistic Celticity of these three terms, following the consensus (e.g. GPN, pp. 332–33; Schmidt, 'Sprachreste', p. 15; PNPG Celtic Elements s.v. *gallo-*) and so classify names like *Galli* or *Pagus Gallorum* as linguistically Celtic. The lack of correlation between the linguistic origin of tribal names and the language of the tribes so named is well known (Papazoglu, p. 262), so I do not count the names of 'Celtic' tribes as linguistically Celtic except on etymological grounds. Note that although purists might label *Pagus Gallorum* as Latin (and similarly *Stratford-upon-Avon* as English and *Nogent sur Avon* as French), that would be inappropriate in the present investigation; in the same way, I shall treat hybrid names like *Augustodunum* as Celtic, not Latin. All are relevant to Celtic linguistic geography. In another context a more discriminating approach to hybrid names would be needed; see García Alonso, 'Ptolemy and the expansion of Celtic language(s)', pp. 138–40.

⁶ Archaeological discussion of 'the Celts' tends to depend on nineteenth- and twentieth-century definitions of 'Celtic' material 'cultures' which fail to coincide fully either with areas where Celtic speech is attested in inscriptions, for example in Spain and north Italy, or with areas assigned to the Celts by ancient writers. See Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', pp. 31–32; Collis, *The Celts*, pp. 208–9. Collis reiterates points made in Sims-Williams, 'Degrees of Celticity', about place-name evidence for the distribution of Celtic speech and adds that he is 'highly sceptical how much archaeology can contribute to the debate'.

⁷ An introduction to this field from the linguistic standpoint is Ramat & Ramat (eds), *The Indo-European Languages*. Attempts to locate speakers of Proto-Indo-European via biology and archaeology are fraught with methodological problems; see Sims-Williams, 'Genetics, linguistics, and prehistory'; also Day, *Indo-European Origins* (with my review).

seem never to have called themselves Celts before the modern period. Similarly, while Celtic-speakers certainly favoured the La Tène style in some areas, in other parts of ancient Europe Celtic languages co-existed with different styles: for example, the Celtic 'Lepontic' language in north Italy was accompanied by the so-called 'Golasecca' culture and its existence would hardly have been imagined if it were not for the lucky survival of the 'Lepontic' inscriptions.⁸

1.2 THE EXTENT OF CELTIC SPEECH

Inscriptions are the most tangible evidence of ancient Celtic speech, but their distribution is unfortunately restricted, owing to the greater prestige of Greek and Latin as written languages and the limited literacy of Celtic-speakers. Ancient Celtic inscriptions are concentrated in northern Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Gaul.⁹ They are completely absent, for example, from Galatia in Asia Minor¹⁰ and from ancient Ireland. No inscriptions in any language survive from Ireland before about the fifth century AD, when we have the first Irish inscriptions, written in the ogam alphabet,¹¹ while in Britain, apart from some fragments from Roman Bath, the first vernacular Celtic inscription is the one in Old Welsh from Tywyn, c. 800 AD.¹²

Four types of source provide evidence for Celtic speech over a much wider area of ancient Europe and Asia Minor than the surviving inscriptions. One is the Celtic personal names recorded in inscriptions in Latin and Greek from the various provinces of the Roman Empire.¹³ Their distribution is significant despite the problem that many people such as soldiers and potters were highly mobile. The second source is the names of Celtic divinities named in Latin and Greek inscriptions.¹⁴ Only a few of these, such as Epona, attained a cult beyond their original locale. The third source is the items of Celtic vocabulary recorded by ancient scholars or surviving as loanwords in other languages, such as the Romance dialects.¹⁵

⁸ On the above see Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism'.

⁹ For maps see RIG and De Hoz, 'Mediterranean frontier of the Celts'.

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Anatolia*, i, 51.

¹¹ McManus, *Guide*. For early medieval inscriptions in Irish and other Celtic languages in Britain and Brittany see CIB; they are greatly outnumbered in CIB by inscriptions in Latin but containing Celtic names.

¹² Sims-Williams, 'Five languages of Wales', pp. 6–9. In RIG ii/2, the Bath tablets (nos. L-107–8) are regarded as Latin, but see Sims-Williams, 'Common Celtic, Gallo-Brittonic and Insular Celtic', and Schrijver, 'Early Celtic diphthongization', pp. 57–60.

¹³ For maps see Mócsy, *A római név mint társadalomtörténeti forrás*, pp. 31–35, and Sims-Williams, 'Five languages of Wales', p. 13. Dr M. E. Raybould and I are preparing a more detailed study of compound names; see section 12.4 below. The best source is now OPEL and the classic studies are KGP and GPN; see also DLG and KPP.

¹⁴ These are the subject of an international project; see De Bernardo Stempel, 'Die sprachliche Analyse'.

¹⁵ For an example of such material see Grzegza. Cf. Billy's review of Grzegza, p. 358.

Unfortunately vocabulary, unlike toponymy, is always 'on the move'; words can be acquired in one place and turn up later hundreds of miles away. This makes it difficult to extract ancient linguistic geography from vocabulary, and this is also true of the loanwords that appear in toponyms. For example, ancient toponyms containing the element *burg* are limited to the Rhine–Danube area, with the exception of those containing the Latin loanword *burgus* 'tower', which turn up in western Gaul and north Africa. Clearly, once it had been borrowed into Latin, *burgus* could be used anywhere in the Empire and provides no clue to the locality of the language(s) that originally provided the term.¹⁶

The fourth source, which is the subject of the present study, comprises the Celtic place-names recorded by ancient authors and geographers and occasionally found on inscriptions.¹⁷ While place-names offer many problems, they are at least abundant throughout the Roman Empire and to some extent beyond it – extending even to Ireland, mainly thanks to Ptolemy c. AD 150.¹⁸ Moreover, since some of them probably date back many centuries beyond the time when they were first recorded, they are potentially the oldest as well as the most widespread Celtic linguistic records. At least, that seems a reasonable hypothesis. In practice it is not easy to separate out early and late names, chiefly owing to the lack of early sources for most areas;¹⁹ consequently this study presents a chronologically 'flat' picture of Celtic place-names in Antiquity at their widest known extent, with Celtic ethnonyms recorded by early writers like Caesar appearing on equal footing with names of estates recorded in the Late Empire. A few names may be of the 'New York' or 'New South Wales' type, that is names with only a shallow chronological significance. A relevant fact here is the Roman custom of deliberately posting 'ethnic' army units far from home.²⁰ This may have led to the movement of names. Obvious examples on the Danube frontier are *Asturis* (near Vienna) and *Batavi* (Passau), reflecting the names of units of Astures and Batavi from Spain and the Low Countries.²¹ Such place-names are early examples of the process that led to

¹⁶ See section 12.3 below.

¹⁷ Under 'place-names' I include river-names, mountain-names, ethnic names, etc., generally without any distinction – the research could perhaps be refined by making these distinctions (see Ch. 12 below, p. 314). The most comprehensive source, Holder (supplemented by Cousin), is uncritical. DLG is more critical but selective and the same applies to the papers in Parsons & Sims-Williams (eds), *Ptolemy* and De Hoz et al. (eds), *New Approaches*.

¹⁸ Many of Ptolemy's names in Ireland cannot be localized exactly, which may partly explain the omission of many of them from *Atlas*. Those that are included are sufficient to establish Ireland's Celticity c. 150 AD, so I have not attempted to enhance the *Barrington* database for Ireland. For detailed discussion see: Toner, 'Identifying Ptolemy's Irish places and tribes'; De Bernardo Stempel, 'Ptolemy's Celtic Italy and Ireland' and 'More on Ptolemy's evidence for Celtic Ireland'; and PNPG.

¹⁹ See section 12.1 below.

²⁰ Whittaker, *Frontiers*, pp. 223–25.

²¹ *Atlas* Map 12 I4 and G4.

places being called *Asturias* in Argentina and *Batavia* in Indonesia (Jakarta), Argentina and the United States of America. Less obvious examples which have been suggested include *Gelduba* on the Rhine in Germany, with its Iberian-looking termination *-uba*, perhaps introduced by the *Cohors prima Vasconum*,²² and *Durostorum* on the Danube in Bulgaria, perhaps introduced by a unit from Belgic Gaul, where names in *Duro-* are common.²³ Fortunately such names conspicuously fail to fit into their surroundings, and are probably so rare that they do not affect the overall linguistic picture.

1.3 EARLY STUDY OF CELTIC PLACE-NAMES

Although strangely neglected in most modern books on the Celts, the study of Celtic place-names has a long history, perhaps even an unbroken history. Not long after Gaulish had died out, the tract *De Nominibus Gallicis* (also called *Endlicher's Glossary*) attempted to give the meanings of place-name elements like *dunum* 'montem', *are* 'ante', *brio* 'ponte', *nanto* 'valle', *auallo* 'poma' and *doro* 'ostea',²⁴ and similar translations from *Celtica lingua* or *Gallica lingua* appear in the works of Venantius Fortunatus and Heiric of Auxerre in the sixth century and the ninth.²⁵ Such explanations were not forgotten on the Continent, and their basic accuracy was confirmed when knowledge of the British language – known from Tacitus, *Agricola*, 11, to be close to Gaulish – became available from the first Welsh dictionaries, notably the *Dictionarium Duplex* of John Davies (1632). Thus Boxhorn, in his posthumous *Origines Gallicae* (1654), connects Gaulish *Allobrogae* with Welsh *bro* 'region', Gaulish *Augustoritum* with Middle Welsh *ryd* 'ford' and so on,²⁶ and Adrien de Valois, in his *Notitia Galliarum* (1675), interprets *Aballo* as the word for 'apple' *lingua Gallicâ & Britannicâ* and *Augustodunum* as 'mons Augusti', and so on.²⁷ Scholars in England could draw on Welsh more directly. William Camden had set about learning Welsh in order to analyse Romano-British place-names in his *Britannia* (1586) – where *Camboritum* in Britain and *Augustoritum* in Gaul are already

²² *Atlas* Map 11G1. Cf. Rasch, Einleitung and §§ V and VIII; Weisgerber, pp. 353–54; Villar, *Indoeuropeos y no indoeuropeos*, pp. 63–68, 141 and 157 (Germanic according to Reichert i, 315, and ii, 519).

²³ *Atlas* Map 22E4. Suggested by Rivet, 'Celtic names and Roman places', p. 13 and n. 30 (for other possibilities see p. 216 below).

²⁴ Lambert, *Langue gauloise*, pp. 203–4, and 'Gaulois tardif et latin vulgaire', pp. 410–11. A name which the ancients were unable to explain correctly was *Mediolanum*: Dottin, *Langue gauloise*, p. 23; PNRB, p. 4.

²⁵ Dumville, 'Ekiurid's *Celtica lingua*', p. 89; Sims-Williams, 'Celtic languages', p. 347.

²⁶ Boxhornius, *Originum Gallicarum Liber*, pp. 36–45 (but he confounded Gallo-Brittonic words with homonyms in other languages).

²⁷ Valesius, *Notitia Galliarum*, pp. 1 and 61. His importance is noted by Gendron, *Les noms des lieux en France*, p. 19.

explained by the Welsh for 'ford' (*rhyd*) – and in 1687 John Aubrey, who employed a Welsh servant for his conversation,²⁸ regarded Welsh as the best key to Gaulish place-names:

The Franks did overrun Gaule and settled the French language: but the old Gallick names of Rivers, Townes &c: (I think) are not so much obliterated/lost as here: & the present French language does retain many Gallick words: which I have heretofore desired some learned friends of mine of Wales, who were masters of the French tongue, to collect out of the French Dictionary, or French Janua Linguarum: but I could not persuade them to undertake it, though so easie a Taske. Quære if any one has made a Villare Gallicum? Buxhornius has made a Tentamen for the interpretation of the names of severall Townes, and Rivers in France: for which he deserves praise, but no body can doe it as it should be; but a Welshman, that is master of the French tongue; of which there are many that are. It would be delightfull to curious persons, and Lovers of Antiquity, to unde[r]stand the meaning of antiquated words, now un-intelligib[le] which may give light to many things. This ancient language (that is now crept into Corn[wall] and disesteemed) was heretofore the current Speech over a[ll] Brittain, & Gaule: from the Orcades and the northern Isles to the Appenine-hills; (nay the very name (Pen) seems yet to speake it.) and to the Pyrenean-hills: and though it be so out of fashion; is in it selfe, as significant & copious as a[n]y of the modern languages, which the learned that understand doe assert.²⁹

For all these antiquarians, Irish (Gaelic) lay unnoticed outside the Gallo-Brittonic family, and there it remained for most scholars until Edward Lhuyd's *Archaeologia Britannica* of 1707.³⁰ An early exception, however, was George Buchanan (d. 1582) in his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*.³¹ Buchanan also made pioneering use of place-names, as John Collis has described:

He combed through such ancient sources as Ptolemy, Caesar, Strabo, the Antonine Itinerary and *Notitia Dignitatum* looking for correspondences between place-names in Britain and on the Continent. Whereas previous authors might have used the apparent similarity of tribal names to claim links (whence, for instance, the confusion between Cimbri, Cimmerii and Cymry), Buchanan based his argument

on name-elements whose meaning could be plausibly deduced, and whose occurrence was not confined to one or two cases, but comprised what we would call a statistically significant base. Thus, for example, he lists fifty-two names beginning or ending with the element *dun/dunum* (for which, on the basis of Modern Gaelic *dùn*, he deduced the meaning 'fort'); forty-five names containing *bria/brica/briga* (which he took to mean 'city'); twenty-one with *magus* (which he took as 'home', 'building', 'city'); and thirty-five containing *duro/durum* (taken as meaning 'water'). His conclusion from this body of evidence was that in the pre-Roman period there was a common Gallic language spoken across western Europe, which was also spoken by the earliest inhabitants of Britain, who must therefore have originated in Gaul.³²

Remarkably, the first three of these elements seem not to have been mapped before Helmut Rix mapped them in 1954, with no reference to Buchanan, and the *duro-* names were not mapped before A. L. F. Rivet in 1980.³³ Obviously Buchanan made mistakes, for example in translating *durum* as 'aqua' (p. 66), perhaps influenced by knowledge of Welsh *dŵr* (really from **dubron*), but his work was by no means inferior to what passed for scholarship among reputable historians as recently as 2003:

The standard proto-Celtic word for 'river' is reflected in the modern Welsh word *dŵr*, meaning 'water'. It recurs in river names across Europe wherever ancient Celtic settlements were established, and in forms as varied as *Douro* (Portugal), *Dordogne* (France) and *Derwent* (England) – that is, 'White Water'. So it is not unreasonable to suppose that Odra [Oder] may belong to the same series. One should also take note of the curious figure called Odras in Celtic mythology. The prehistoric Celts spurned all forms of writing, but the legend of Odras has survived in Ireland. There, she is presented as a wayward nymph who, having offended the vengeful queen and deity, Morrigan, is changed into a pool of water.³⁴

Every single one of these equations is incorrect!

²⁸ Piggott, 'William Camden', pp. 201 and 207; PNRB, p. 5; Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', pp. 12 and 15.

²⁹ John Aubrey's unpublished 'Villare Anglicanum' (1687), ed. Fellows-Jensen, 'John Aubrey, pioneer onomast?', pp. 104–5. The English name *Pennines* was invented in the eighteenth century: Coates et al., *Celtic Voices*, p. 343.

³⁰ Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', p. 15.

³¹ Especially Liber II. See Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', p. 15 and references.

³² Collis, 'George Buchanan and the Celts in Britain', pp. 100–1. (Collis objects to the term 'Celtic' for this language family but does not suggest an alternative. I accept it as not wholly misleading and sanctioned by centuries of usage.) See also MacQueen, 'Renaissance in Scotland', pp. 46–47, and Collis, *The Celts*, pp. 36–40. On the meanings of Buchanan's elements see below, Ch. 4.

³³ Rix, 'Zur Verbreitung' (distribution maps frequently repeated since, e.g. by Piggott, *Ancient Europe*, pp. 172–74, Grzegza, pp. 29–31, and Collis, *The Celts*, pp. 130–31); Rivet, 'Celtic names and Roman places', p. 14. Cf. my maps in section 12.1 below.

³⁴ Davies & Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, p. 43. For Odras (eponym of a river *Odhras*) see Gwynn (ed.), *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, pp. 196–201. Cf. Schwarz, *Ortsnamen der Sudetenländer*, pp. 26–27; Skála, 'Ortsnamen', p. 389.

1.4 IDENTIFYING CELTIC PLACE-NAMES

From the point of view of modern philology, place-names can be identified as Celtic, with varying degrees of probability, to the extent to which they include elements which show:

- (i) typically Celtic sound changes vis-à-vis the other Indo-European languages, or
- (ii) typically Celtic suffixes, inflexions or other morphological features, or
- (iii) correspondences with words attested in ancient or modern Celtic languages.

Some would add the criterion:

- (iv) that the element in question was frequent in what we regard as 'Celtic' regions,

although there is an obvious danger of circularity if this is the *only* criterion.³⁵

On the basis of such criteria it has been suggested that place-names could be graded on a 'scale of Celticity'.³⁶ Although hard to carry out with scientific precision, as an approximation with cumulative value this seems a theoretically reasonable procedure, so long as it is understood what is being implied: a name with a low degree of Celticity must in reality be either Celtic or non-Celtic; its lowish grade is an indication of our own difficulty in classifying it, not an indication that the name has an inherent weak Celticity. This sort of diffident assessment may arise because a Celtic name-element, such as *corn-* 'horn', has not evolved sufficiently from its Proto-Indo-European prototype to be securely assigned to Celtic rather than to another Indo-European language. While one might feel fairly confident of the Celticity of a case of *corn-* in a predominantly Germanic area (where *chorn-*, later *horn-*, would be expected in Germanic),³⁷ one would feel much less certain in a predominantly Italic area, where *corn-* could simply be Latin. At other times, a name may show a Celtic sound change but still be dubious because the same sound change occurred in some other Indo-European language. For example, *Boukolion* in western Turkey might be regarded as Celtic on the grounds of the sound change PIE **g^w* > Celtic **b* (compare Welsh *bugail* 'cowherd,

³⁵ Vendryes, 'Note', p. 641, complained that Continental Celtic was chiefly known from proper names and yet proper names were explained on the basis of Continental Celtic: 'Il y a là une manière de cercle vicieux.' Since 1955, however, the corpus of non-onomastic Continental Celtic has grown rapidly.

³⁶ See Sims-Williams, 'Degrees of Celticity', pp. 4–5; De Bernardo Stempel, 'Ptolemy's Celtic Italy and Ireland', p. 84. This type of evaluation was pioneered by García Alonso, 'On the Celticity of some Hispanic place names' (see also Curchin, 'Celticization and Romanization') and has been further discussed in the 'Ptolemy' workshops and by the reviewers of Parsons & Sims-Williams (eds), *Ptolemy: Billy, and Falileyev, 'Ptolemy revisited'*. See also Anreiter, *Die vorrömischen Namen Pannoniens*, pp. 147–48, and Sims-Williams, 'Measuring Celticity', pp. 268–70 and 276.

³⁷ Unless there is hypercorrection, archaism or Latin influence! See Reichert, *passim*.

shepherd') but, since the same change took place independently in Greek, *Boukolion* could equally well be Greek.³⁸ Where an element shows more than one Celtic sound change, for instance *ritu-* 'ford', which shows both the loss of **p* and the typical Celtic development of *ri* < IE **r₁*, the probability of the element being anything other than Celtic is greatly reduced. Even in such a case, however, a Devil's advocate could hypothesize the existence of an unknown IE dialect in which both these sound changes had also occurred.³⁹ While that might seem special pleading, it can hardly be doubted that there were many IE dialects which have left no trace except in toponymy.⁴⁰ Fortunately, the cumulative nature of the evidence is helpful: while a completely isolated *ritu-* 'ford' might conceivably be non-Celtic, it would be perverse to doubt the Celticity of a *ritu-* name surrounded by other names showing other Celtic sound changes.

In the present study I have placed most emphasis on criteria (i) and (iii) for Celticity. Criterion (ii) is used less often, partly because the inflections of ancient Celtic names are often distorted in the ancient sources (as we may see when a name is attested in several texts),⁴¹ partly because the Greeks and Romans tended to recycle familiar suffixes when adopting and adapting foreign toponyms,⁴² and partly because inflectional features found in Celtic are often shared by other Indo-European languages.⁴³ The only frequently occurring suffix which seems to be distinctively Celtic is /a:ko-/,⁴⁴ and even

³⁸ See below, p. 270. The same applies to places called *Boion*; see below, p. 263.

³⁹ Summary tables of the main IE sound changes are given by Watkins, 'Proto-Indo-European'.

⁴⁰ Scholars of place-names in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean littoral are more alert to such possibilities because they know from other sources of the existence of lost Indo-European dialects (see Woodard (ed.), *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the World's Ancient Languages*). In the same way, northern Europe presumably had IE dialects other than the well-known Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and so on. On the other hand, there is no advantage in hypothesizing them *praeter necessitatem*. Some of the grander substratum theories (critically described by Mees, 'Stratum and shadow') gratuitously applied labels like 'Ligurian', 'Illyrian' or 'Old European' to names which could satisfactorily be assigned to well-known Indo-European families. It is only constructive to postulate new dialects and languages where there is a reasonable amount of data for them to explain; from this standpoint 'Old European' is still the best contender. For more optimistic views than Mees's, see Bammesberger & Vennemann (eds), *Languages in Prehistoric Europe*.

⁴¹ Examples in Dottin, *Langue gauloise*, pp. 31–32, and Barrauol, p. 139.

⁴² Katičić, *Ancient Languages of the Balkans*, p. 48, cites *-essos* in *Tartessos* in Spain; cf. De Hoz, 'Sobre algunos problemas', pp. 119–20.

⁴³ With the completion of the main dictionaries, Celtic word-formation is at last attracting systematic attention (see especially NWÄI), but much remains to be done, especially with place-names.

⁴⁴ Russell, 'Suffix', although he cautions that 'we have no means of knowing whether *-ako-* was productive as a native suffix in any of these other languages [Illyrian, Thracian, Dacian, Scythian, etc.]' (p. 164). Establishing the quantity of the *a* is a recurrent problem. In the analyses in AILR and PNPg the *a* is only marked long (using an acute accent rather than macron to aid automatic alphabeticization) where this is reasonably unambiguous. In a paper at the Munich 'Ptolemy' workshop Russell showed that in Ptolemy *-(i)akos* was common in Greece and Asia Minor, that *-akon* was typically Western (presumably Celtic), though not as productive as *-acum* later became, and that *-aka* was found very widely. See also Rubio Orecilla, 'Las formaciones secundarias en *-ko-* del Celtibérico', and VCIE, pp. 88–89.

this seems to have been absorbed into Gallo-Latin, especially as a proprietary marker, in names like *Iuliacum* (compare English and American names like *Bournville* and *Jacksonville*, which cannot be used to map French speech).⁴⁵ The most one can say is that *-acum* was productive in areas which were probably regarded as Celtic in language. In this study I will draw attention to any areas where the /a:ko-/ is the sole evidence for Celticity.⁴⁶

Criterion (iv), unaccompanied by other criteria, has only been allowed for one or two elements which seem securely attested in ancient Celtic toponymy and have a viable Celtic etymology, for example **ocelo-* 'sharpness, promontory', which lacks any descendant in the medieval and modern Celtic languages.⁴⁷ This book is arranged in such a way as to enable readers unhappy with criterion (iv) to identify and eliminate the effect of such data if they wish.

The danger of circularity arises when an element is labelled 'Celtic' because it occurs in a supposedly 'Celtic' region and is subsequently employed to 'confirm' the region's Celticity. There is a reverse danger, of course, in arguing that an element cannot be Celtic because it occurs in supposedly 'non-Celtic' regions.⁴⁸ Most of these problems can be expected to solve themselves once the names of an area are examined in sufficient bulk. They must, however, be examined from a linguistic point of view and primarily with reference to what is *actually known* about the Celtic language from ancient inscriptions and the medieval and modern languages. The circularity of labelling names as Celtic or non-Celtic on *geographical* rather than linguistic grounds are well brought out by Fanula Papazoglu:

From Mursa to Ratiaria there were many place-names along the Danube which are considered Celtic. Holder includes the following in his 'Treasury of ancient Celtic names': *Cornacum*, *Cuccium*, *Bononia*, *Malata*, *Cusum*, *Acumincum*, *Rittium*, *Burgenae*, *Taurunum*, *Singidunum*, *Tricornium*, *Vinceia*, *Vimniacum*, *Lederata*, *Picum*, *Taliatae*, *Egeta*. Some of these names are certainly Celtic, others may be so. Unfortunately, one who is not a specialist cannot form any definite opinion on this matter, for the place-names of this region have not yet been the subject of special investigation. The majority of the names quoted above are included by Mayer in his lexicon of Illyrian names, but this collection, like Holder's, is

⁴⁵ See below, p. 307, on *-briga* names.

⁴⁶ See especially Ch. 11 below, p. 302

⁴⁷ See below, pp. 31–32 and 96–97. See already Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, p. 68, on *Ocellum*.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rostaing, *Essai*, p. 105 (and cf. p. 28 and Dottin, *Langue gauloise*, p. 22): 'Il est exact que le celtique possède le mot *briga* dans son vocabulaire. Mais nous le trouvons dans les régions où les Celtes n'ont jamais pénétré; nous sommes donc autorisés . . . à considérer le mot comme antérieur au celtique, donc pré-indo-européen.' The last phrase (my italics) introduces a further *non sequitur*; on the vexed subject of the 'substrat . . . méditerranéen, appelé aussi préceltique' compare the more agnostic approach of Fabre, *Noms de lieux du Languedoc*, pp. 30–31.

based rather on geographical principles than on linguistic ones when peripheral areas with a mixed population are in question, so that it leaves the historian in complete perplexity. Of the place-names quoted, *Bononia* and *Singidunum* do not appear in Mayer, or *Vimniacum* (according to P. Skok . . . a Latin name), *Lederata*, *Egeta* and *Taliata*, which were on territory considered to be Thracian. How far all this is uncertain is shown by the following examples: while for Holder *Pincum* is Celtic (II, 1004, where reference is made to the name *Pinci*, *-acus* in Gaul), for Mayer . . . and Krahe . . . it is Illyrian, and for Detschew . . . Thracian. In the same way, *Egeta* is, according to Holder, I, 1048, Celtic, according to Tomaschek . . . and Detschew . . . Thracian. Krahe . . . has not got *Taurunum*, *Cusum*, *Acumincum*, *Rittium*, while Budimir . . . considers *Cusum* and *Acumincum* to be Illyrian names, and also *Taurunum*.⁴⁹

The fact is that it is dangerous to assume *a priori* that the place-names of any region must be, or cannot be, Celtic. Given what we know about the travels of Celtic mercenaries as far afield as Sicily, Egypt and Libya,⁵⁰ the possibility of Celtic names in the most unlikely places cannot be ruled out.

A similar point can be made about chronology;⁵¹ the fact that we have no historical information about Celts in Asia Minor before 280 BC does not rule out the possibility that some names attested before that date could *in theory* be Celtic, due to earlier, undocumented migrations.⁵² In this book I shall therefore avoid assuming that the presence or absence of Celtic names is intrinsically likely or unlikely anywhere or at any period. In the final analysis, however, the apparent Celticity of a name in Egypt, or of one in Asia Minor before 280, is bound to attract more scrutiny than a similar name in Britain or Gaul!

1.5 PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIONS

The study of ancient Celtic place-names has been neglected. The most eminent Celtic linguists have tended to avoid this often inconclusive subject in favour of elegant grammatical topics of little interest to non-linguists.⁵³ Rudolf Thurneysen even claimed that:

⁴⁹ Papazoglu, p. 368 and n. 299. On *Pincus* cf. Duridanov, 'Thrakische und dakische Namen', p. 831.

⁵⁰ Freeman, 'Earliest Greek sources on the Celts', pp. 20–21; Collis, *The Celts*, p. 209; below, p. 290 n. 24.

⁵¹ The opposite is well argued, however, by Luján, 'Galatian place names', pp. 255–56.

⁵² In fact Sergent, 'Les premiers Celtes d'Anatolie', p. 358, deduced a Celtic arrival as early as the eighth century BC (from very fragile evidence).

⁵³ 'Revisiting the nasalizing relative clause instead of answering prehistorians' questions', as a noted archaeologist put it in a lecture in Aberystwyth!

The study of place-names is dry, and of interest mostly to those who live in a particular district. The results, as a rule, are likewise far from striking. We learn, perhaps, that the original name of a certain river was 'river' or 'water', or 'the limpid', or 'the red'; or that a locality was called after its owner in Gaulish or in Roman times. All this is jejune enough. . . . It is thus not surprising to find that the scientific study of such names in Germany led few to a deeper knowledge of Celtic philology. In most cases the investigator's purpose was served once he had discovered in a dictionary the meaning of the word he sought. . . . Alfred Holder, the Karlsruhe librarian, who strove to gather every Celtic name or word (known to have existed before the 6th or 7th century of our era) into his valuable work *Altceltischer Sprachschatz*, never came to understand any of the Celtic languages thoroughly. Yet he sacrificed all his holidays, up to his death during the War years, exerpting Celtic words from manuscripts.⁵⁴

Thurneysen does no justice to the wider historical importance of identifying Celtic names. Joseph Vendryes was equally scathing. For him all explanations of place-names (including those of Thurneysen himself) were hypothetical.⁵⁵ Hence,

L'onomastique est une science difficile et, chose plus grave, une science dangereuse. Malgré les tentations qu'elle offre, il faut en détourner les novices, car elle est nuisible à la formation de l'esprit; c'est la plus mauvaise initiation aux recherches linguistiques. On ne doit l'aborder qu'avec la prudence que donne une expérience consommée.⁵⁶

Perhaps because of such warnings, very few Celtic specialists have studied place-names other than those of the modern Celtic countries, leaving the matter to specialists in other languages, sometimes with dire results.

It has to be granted that the Celticity of even the most 'obviously' Celtic place-names is a matter of probability rather than absolute certainty. Yet it can be a high probability verging on certainty. For example, *Augustodunum* (Autun) in France is regarded as a definitely Celtic name in the present study. The second element *dunum* corresponds exactly to the word used for a hillfort in Old Irish (*dín*) and, with a regular British vowel-change, in Old Breton (*din*, glossing 'arx'); it frequently occurs in the 'Celtic' areas of the Continent

⁵⁴ *Gesammelte Schriften*, ii, 273–80 and cf. pp. 281–82. Thurneysen's article, originally published in *Studies* in 1930, is 'particularly disappointing', according to Shaw, 'Background to *Grammatica Celtica*', p. 6. Shaw shows how the great Zeuss came to pure philology via history including place-names (p. 3). On Holder and the damage caused by uncritical reliance on his work cf. Thurneysen's 1891 review; Jackson, 'On some Romano-British place-names', p. 54; Evans, 'Labyrinth of Continental Celtic', pp. 500–1 and 521; Villar, *Indoeuropeos y no indoeuropeos*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Vendryes, 'Note', p. 646 (alluding to Thurneysen's 'Etymologien' of 1932). Compare his review of Ekwall, *English River-Names*: 'Il eût mieux valu renoncer à toute étymologie, hors des cas où l'origine du mot est évidente' (p. 337).

⁵⁶ 'Note', p. 649.

and the British Isles; and it is explained as 'hill' in ancient sources such as *De Nominibus Gallicis*: 'Lugduno desiderato monte : *dunum* enim montem.'⁵⁷ Heiric of Auxerre even explains *Augustidunum* (Autun) as meaning 'Augusti mons' in *Celtica lingua*.⁵⁸ This seems as good a case for Celticity as one could have. However, a sceptic might still argue that the element *dunum* (whether Indo-European or non-Indo-European) could have been current in other north-western European languages as well,⁵⁹ or that medieval scholars like Heiric were merely speculating.⁶⁰ It might also be argued that the Romans may have picked up such name-elements in Gaul (and elements such as *-briga* in Spain) and have used them for new formations like *Augustodunum* without much concern for the language of the local population (rather as *-ville* and *-polis* are used in names in the USA), in which case they might not indicate where Celtic was spoken even assuming that *dunum* was an exclusively Celtic word.⁶¹ Finally, one could argue that a simple sequence of three sounds like /du:n/ could recur by coincidence anywhere in the world.⁶²

⁵⁷ Lambert, *Langue gauloise*, p. 203. In view of its probable etymology 'enclosure' (see Watkins, *Selected Writings*, ii, 751–53), *dunum* did not mean 'hill' originally and in fact in cases like *Caesarodunum* (Tours), 'la hauteur . . . se limite à quelques mètres' (Bedon, 'Hypothèses', p. 259, n. 19). Yet the semantic evolution to 'hill' (< 'hillfort' < 'enclosure') may have happened by the Late Gaulish period, to judge by the probable loanwords, Old English *dun*, Old Dutch *duna*, 'hill' (see Smith, *English Place-Name Elements*, i, 139, as against Gelling & Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 164).

⁵⁸ *Vita sancti Germani*, 1.353, cited by Dumville, 'Ekiurid's *Celtica lingua*', p. 89, and Bedon, 'Hypothèses', p. 265, n. 92.

⁵⁹ As would indeed be the case if Old English *tūn* ('enclosure' > *town*) and its Germanic congeners were cognates of the Celtic word rather than derivatives as usually supposed (e.g. in IEIA D-223 and by Watkins, *Selected Writings*, ii, 751). In fact Udolph, *Namenkundliche Studien*, pp. 610–11, regards them as possible cognates (similarly Elston, *Earliest Relations between Celts and Germans*, pp. 144–46). Andersson, 'Origin of the *tuna*-names', is non-committal. A possible middle way is to suppose that the Celtic and Germanic words were cognate but that the former influenced the semantic development of the latter. Note that Orel, 'Thracian and Celtic', p. 6, n. 10, and Anreiter, *Die vorrömischen Namen Pannoniens*, p. 178, n. 644, both dismiss L. A. Gindin's theory of a non-Celtic origin for *-dunum* in eastern Europe.

⁶⁰ As Vendryes argues, 'Note', pp. 643–44.

⁶¹ Vendryes, 'Note', p. 649, thinks of names like those in *-briga* spreading by a sort of contagion. Rivet, 'Celtic names and Roman places', pp. 4–9, compares modern Soviet names like *Leningrad* and *Stalingrad*, but notes that the second element was adapted to suit local circumstances, whence *Leninakan* and *Stalinabad* in the Caucasus and Central Asian republics (p. 9). In the same way, the distribution of names like *Augustodunum* (rather than *-polis* etc.) may reflect the distribution of Celtic speech, even if they are Roman creations (and Bedon, 'Noms de villes hybrides', p. 44, argues that they are native creations). See also section 12.1 below. Schmidt, in his review of Parsons & Sims-Williams (eds), *Ptolemy*, pp. 275–76, compares hybrid names like *Augustodunum* with hybrid ethnic names like *Ambidraui* (Celtic preposition *ambi* 'on either side of' + non-Celtic river-name). In this book I count hybrids as 'Celtic', as noted above, p. 1, n. 5.

⁶² See Chapter 3 below. In bilingual areas there will always be a few names which can now be analysed, and perhaps were analysed at the time, according to two different languages. Gorrochategui (e.g. in 'Establishment and analysis', pp. 154 and 161) instances *Andelos* in the Pyrenees which could be either Celtic (cf. *Ux-elo-*) or Basque (cf. *Pompa-elo*), and this example is taken up by Wodtko in her review of Parsons & Sims-Williams (eds), *Ptolemy*, p. 234. Cf. VCIE, p. 437. Such ambiguous names will always be in a minority, so a larger sample of names should usually clarify the overall linguistic situation.

While one must admit the force of such objections in individual instances, the advantage of working with place-names is that they are extremely numerous and so provide a cumulative picture that is unlikely to be confused by individual coincidences and paradoxes. Moreover, although it is true that the comparative etymology of names generally lacks the semantic control available with ordinary words, this is not always the case; for example, place-names containing Celtic **cambo-* 'bend' (or containing Germanic cognates like Old English *hamm*) are often situated at bends of rivers, confirming the etymology.⁶³ Such examples contradict Meillet's blanket objection: that 'les étymologies de noms propres sont incertaines parce que, des deux données dont la concordance avec des faits d'autres langues établit la valeur, le sens et la forme phonique, on peut utiliser un seul: la forme phonique'.⁶⁴

Vendryes seems to draw a distinction between unique names like *Glanum* in Provence, whose similarity to medieval Insular Celtic *glan* 'pure' could be mere coincidence, he claimed, and names which form a series, such as the Gaulish names in *-ialum*, for which he accepted Thurneysen's comparison with an alleged Welsh *iâl* 'open space, fair region'.⁶⁵ Such a distinction does not appear logical. The fact that an element recurs in a series of names does not really strengthen the probability of its being Celtic; nor can one be sure that identical-looking elements in such a series are always the same element. For example, as Buchanan observed, there is a series of names stretching across Europe in *-briga* or *-briva*, sometimes reduced to *-bria*. Many of these names may be Celtic (**briga* 'hill(fort)' or **briwa* 'bridge'), but at some point on the map they no doubt give way to names containing Thracian *bria*, which meant 'polis' according to Strabo.⁶⁶

Maps making linguistic claims from the wide distribution of what appears to be a 'single' element must therefore be regarded with suspicion, since homonyms may be involved.⁶⁷ It is much more significant, statistically speaking, when a region, large or small, contains a good number of *different*

elements which can all be paralleled in the Celtic lexicon. There may come a point when a region contains so many such *different* elements that the only economical explanation is genuine Celticity rather than an extraordinary series of coincidences.

Here we can return to the unfavourable comparison between onomastics and the etymology of common nouns. Etymologists who try to explain a proper name or a common noun without considering the context are on speculative ground, but if they consider the context their tasks are not so different. It is the nature of the context that differs. If they are looking at a *hapax* in a Gaulish inscription or a line of *Beowulf*, the etymology has to make sense in the context of the whole sentence. Place-names, however, come in the context of regions. They have to make sense in the context of the other names in the same region.

⁶³ Davillé, 'Le mot celtique "cambo"', p. 45 (map); Dodgson, 'Place-names from *hām*, distinguished from *hamm* names'; Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, p. 114; Gelling & Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, pp. 46–55; Billy, 'Le toponyme *chambon*'.

⁶⁴ Meillet, *La méthode comparative*, pp. 41–42. Cf. Davies, 'Greek personal names', p. 15: 'Most onomastic work is seen as etymological in nature and consequently flawed, since personal names are even more difficult to etymologize than normal nouns.'

⁶⁵ Vendryes, 'Note', pp. 645 and 647–48 (suggesting *Glanum* might be Ligurian). On **iâl* and *-ialon* see Sims-Williams, 'Welsh *iâl*'.

⁶⁶ See below, pp. 50, 262, and 269. Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, pp. 62–64, equated the Thracian and Celtic elements, following Stephen of Byzantium's interpretation of *Broutobria* in Spain (Meineke (ed.), *Ethnikôn*, p. 187); cf. Dottin, *Langue gauloise*, p. 24, n. 5; De Hoz, 'Sobre algunos problemas', p. 120.

⁶⁷ Guyonvarc'h, 'Le nom des Cotini', p. 198, rightly stresses the danger of equating mere homographs or homonyms, but then cuts the Gordian knot too readily by suggesting that Celticity can be established when the *majority* of occurrences are Celtic or probably Celtic. The maps in this volume disprove this, including the one for Guyonvarc'h's sequence COT in Map 4.5 below.