

The Origin and Spread of the Celts

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Atgoffir staff a myfyrwyr Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant bod hawlfraint ar y darn hwn ac ar y gwaith y cafodd ei gymryd ohono. Gwnaed y Copi Digidol hwn o dan delerau trwydded CLA sy'n caniatáu i chi:

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Sylwch bod y deunydd hwn yn UNIG at ddefnydd myfyrwyr sydd wedi cofrestru ar y cwrs astudio fel y nodir yn yr adran isod. Caniateir i holl staff a myfyrwyr eraill ddarllen y deunydd yn unig ac ni ddylent ei lwytho i lawr ac/neu argraffu copi

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Ac eithrio'r hyn a ganiateir gan gyfraith hawlfraint, ni chaniateir copïo, cadw neu ddosbarthu pellach (yn cynnwys drwy e-bost) heb ganiatâd deiliad yr hawlfraint.

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Mae hon yn fersiwn ddigidol o ddeunydd hawlfraint a wnaed dan drwydded gan ddeiliad yr hawl, ac ni ellir sicrhau ei chywirdeb. Cyfeiriwch at yr argraffiad cyhoeddedig gwreiddiol os gwelwch yn dda.

Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs HPCS4003 - The Early Celts

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The Origin and Spread of the Celts

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'DIE Kelten kommen' proclaimed the posters on the motorway at Rosenheim in Bavaria, and so did the public, 200,000 of them between May and October 1993 (Dannheimer and Gebhard 1993). But would they have done so had the exhibition 'Die Kelten' been called 'The Iron Age in Southern Germany'? What catchy slogan would have attracted so many people to see such an excellent exhibition? With the entrance fee, and 20,000 copies of the catalogue sold at £20-£30 each, the turnover must have been around £2 million, not counting the tourist spin-offs for the town. The Celts are still a potent force, culturally, economically and politically.

But, Woher kommen diese Kelten? Their origin is perhaps as obscure and varied as the Gauls who descended on northern Italy in the fourth century BC, and our Celts too may not exactly be an unmixed blessing. What I wish to do in this article is to explore the way in which the ancient Celts have been transformed into the modern Celts, the illogicality of this process, and the tacit theories which lie behind the methodology employed, which have unfortunate, and dangerous, archaeological and political implications.

The Ancient Celts

Here is not the place to make an exhaustive study of the appearance of the Celts in the written sources of the classical world. At times we are given specific information about where they lived, inland from Marseilles (Hecataeus), or that 'the Danube rises in the land of the Celts by the town of Pyrene' (Herodotus B.33). We are also told by various authors such as Livy about how the Gauls, Celts and Galatae occupied northern Italy, or settled in Asia Minor.

But these are exceptions. Generally the term is used in the most general way by authors such as Ephorus simply for the inhabitants of the area west or north of the Mediterranean world, and in this respect they simply took over from the even vaguer 'Hyperboreans', the people living beyond the north wind. Even with Posidonius, writing at the end of the second century BC, the term *Keltai* is still only a general term applied to the peoples of western Europe in and north of the Mediterranean zones of Italy and France (Tierney, 1960). North of the Alps lived the Galatai, similar to the Celts, but less civilized, and they in turn bordered on the Scythians (Figure 1).

In contrast to this generalized use of the term, Caesar is very precise, at least in the opening section of the *De bello Gallico*. 'Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres', and only one of these parts was occupied by the Celts—the others by the Belgae and the Aquitani. They were divided from one another by rivers; the Garonne separated the Aquitani from the Celts, and the Seine—Marne the Celts from the Belgae. Thus the Celts, a name which Caesar claims they used of themselves, only occupied part of Gaul, though they are clearly the same as the Celts who occupied northern Italy, as similar tribal names are found in both areas, and the ancient



FIGURE 1 The ethnic groups north of the Alps, according to (a) Hecataeus *c.* 500 BC; (b) Ephoros *c.* 250 BC; (c) Posidonius, late second century BC.

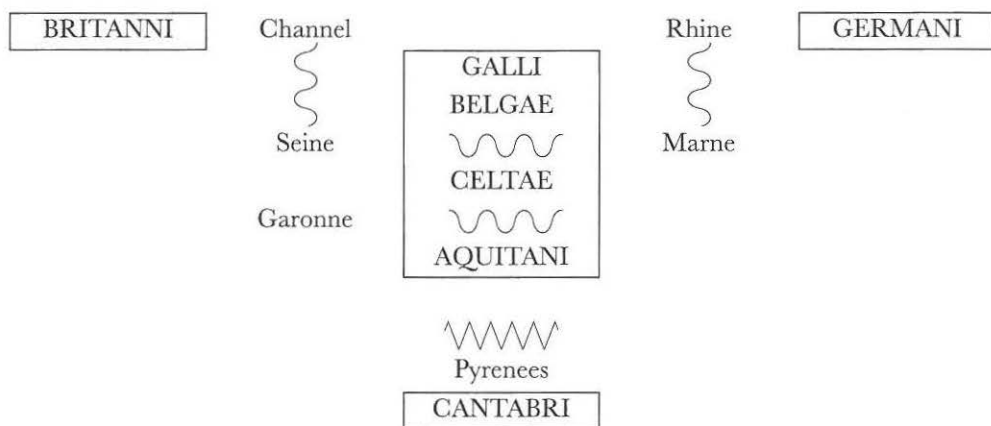


FIGURE 2 Ethnic divisions in western Europe, according to Caesar, 58-55 BC.

sources such as Livy state that the Celts of Cisalpine Gaul were derived from the Celts of Transalpine Gaul. Unfortunately Caesar muddies the issue somewhat by saying that these *Celtae* are what in Latin Romans call *Galli*, and then using the term *Galli* for all the inhabitants of Gaul: Celts, Belgae and Aquitani.

Surrounding Gaul three other groups are mentioned. Firstly there were the Germani who should have been separated from the Gauls by the Rhine, though the Germani seemed less aware of this than Caesar! It was the involvement of the Germanic Suebi that gave Caesar one of his pretexts for interfering militarily in central and eastern Gaul. The second group were the Cantabri of northern Spain, perhaps more of a tribal rather than an ethnic group, and separated from Gaul by the Pyrenees. Thirdly there were the Britanni, the people who lived on the islands on the other side of the Channel. Caesar and other classical authors following him were clear that these people were not Celts or Gauls. According to Caesar they were similar to the Gauls (*B.G.* V.12), and it was those who lived in the south-east of the island who most resembled the Gauls (*B.G.* V.14). No ancient author ever refers to the inhabitants of Britain as being Gauls or Celts (Powell 1958: 17-18).

Caesar thus attempts to apply these ethnic terms in a strictly geographical way. But he does also link up these groups culturally. The Belgae were 'descended from tribes who had come across the Rhine from Germany'; the inhabitants of south-east Britain included Belgae who

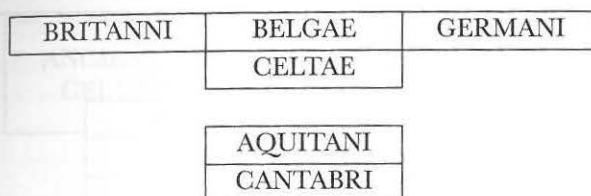


FIGURE 3 Cultural affiliations between ethnic groups according to Caesar.

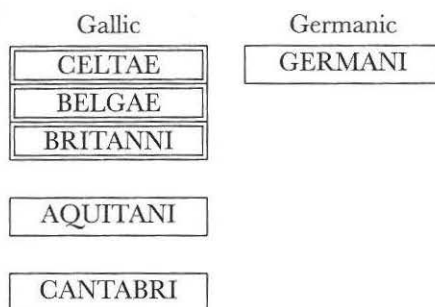


FIGURE 4 Linguistic groupings at the time of Caesar (double-lined box certain, single-lined probable).

'had come to raid and make war ... and then settle'; the involvement of the Cantabri was due to their close links with the Aquitani. This gives us a different configuration from the strictly geographical one (Figure 3). What the relationship was between the Aquitani and the Celtae we are not told, while that between the Britanni and the Celtae is obscured by the ambiguous use of the word *Galli*—were relationships close only with the Belgic Gauls, or also with the Celtic Gauls?

The third configuration is that of the language spoken. On this Caesar gives us no unambiguous information, and we can only glean from names of tribes, people and places what that language may have been. Certainly it would seem that the Celtae, the Belgae and the Britanni spoke dialects of a related language. It also appears that the Aquitani too spoke this 'Gallic' language, and, on other evidence, it is likely that the Cantabri did too, though there must be some reservations about whether all the population in this area spoke similar languages as we must assume that some people in the area spoke a non-European language, the ancestor of modern Basque. On the other hand we assume that the Suebi and other Germani spoke what linguists would classify as a Germanic language. However, we suspect, as in the modern day, that there were dialects which fell between the two, and probably people who were also bilingual.

From this brief outline, I wish to emphasize two points:

1. 'Celtic' is not a word ever used by any ancient author as an ethnic name for the British Isles. Our best informant, Caesar, only uses it for some of the inhabitants of ancient Gaul, who called themselves Celtae.

The linguistic Celts	
Ancient	Modern
Gallic	Welsh
British	Irish
Celtiberian	Gaelic
	Breton
	Cornish

FIGURE 5 The concept of the 'Celtic' language group as conceived by Buchanan in 1582, and developed by Pezron and Lhuyd in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries AD.

The national Celts		
Peoples	Celtic language	Non-Celtic language
Ancient		
CELTAE	GALLIC	
BELGAE	GALLIC	
BRITANNI	BRITISH	
CELTIBERIANS	CELTIBERIAN	
Modern		
WELSH	WELSH	ENGLISH
BRETONS	BRETONS	FRENCH
IRISH	IRISH	ENGLISH
SCOTS	GAELIC	LALLANS
CORNISH	(CORNISH)	ENGLISH

FIGURE 6 The concept of the 'Celts' as speakers of Celtic and non-Celtic languages, seventeenth-nineteenth centuries.

- There was a widely spoken language, dialects of which were used not only by the Celtæ, but also by other groups such as the Britanni and the Belgæ.

The Linguistic Celts

It was not until the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries that the term 'Celtic' and 'Celt' came to be applied to the inhabitants of the British Isles. George Buchanan (1582) is usually credited with this (Powell 1958: 19), though he only applied it to the Scots and Irish, not the Welsh or British, and he used the term 'Gallic' to describe the language group (Collis forthcoming 1). The term 'Celtic languages' was only introduced and popularized by authors such as Edward

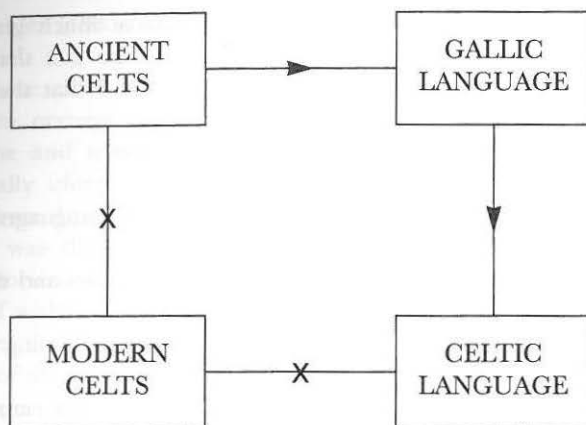


FIGURE 7 The development of the concept of the Celts from ancient to modern via the concept of language, showing the logicity (arrow) and illogicality (cross) of the process.

Lhuyd in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But why was the term 'Celtic' used, rather than, say, 'Gallic' or 'British'? Tim Champion (pers. comm.) has suggested that in fact it represents a translation from the works of the French linguist Pezron. The interchangeability of *Galli* and *Celtae* in the ancient authors was perpetuated by these scholars, and in English it was the term Celtic which stuck.

The National Celts

On this assumption, the use of the term 'Celt' to describe a speaker of a Celtic language is a secondary extension. At the time of writing I am not sure how early this short-hand terminology was introduced—I suspect almost simultaneously. A further extension of 'Celt' was to apply it to all members of those nationalities which speak, or recently spoke, 'Celtic' languages, and are now either bilingual, or speak a version of English or French as their primary tongue. This gradual extension of the use to what we might call the 'national Celts' was fully developed by the nineteenth century, and led directly on to the romantic movement which does not concern us here (Champion 1996).

The logic of this process is shown in Figure 7. We have an ancient people called the *Celtae* who spoke a Gallic language. This Gallic language can be classified into a family of languages which are then termed 'Celtic', though this language group could equally well have been termed 'British', 'Gallic', or 'Hispano-Gallic', or any such combination. The choice of 'Celtic' is thus fairly arbitrary, and is useful simply as a label. Up to this point the process is quite logical and acceptable as long as the linguistic term 'Celtic' is seen only as a heuristic device, with no meaning outside the field of linguistic history and classification.

It is the next stage where confusion and illogicality steps in, in the use of the term 'Celt' to describe all speakers of Celtic languages. It brings us into direct conflict with the ancient sources such as Caesar, and there is no logic in calling the indigenous inhabitants of the British Isles 'Celts'. Even less logical is to claim an ancestral link between modern 'linguistic Celts', or 'national Celts' and the ancient inhabitants of parts of the European continent called *Celtae*.

The modern inhabitants of southern and central France have much greater justification in seeing their ancestry in the ancient Celts of Caesar, despite the fact that they now speak a Romance language derived from the Italic language group, and that they are called after a Germanic tribe, the Franks.

The conclusions to be drawn from these two sections are thus:

1. The choice of the term Celtic to label a group of related languages is largely arbitrary, and a matter of historical chance.
2. The extension of the term 'Celt' to speakers of these languages and their descendants has no historical basis.
3. Modern groups calling themselves 'Celts' have no basis for claiming the ancient Celts as their ancestors.
4. The modern definition of 'Celts' as speakers of a Celtic language cannot be applied to the ancient world.

The Archaeological Celts

Both in popular folk culture and scholastic revival the Celts have been forgotten. I cannot think of a single historical monument that bears their name. Romans, Huns, Danes, Swedes, English and others are all commemorated somewhere, as are individuals such as Julius Caesar, Vespasian and Attila. But perhaps this is because it is usually outsiders, invaders, who are remembered rather than the home-grown—King Arthur and Oliver Cromwell are a couple of exceptions. Ancient places may survive: Tara, Navan Fort, Geneva, Besançon, Vienne; or ancient tribes in the names of modern towns: Paris, Soissons, Bourges, Reims. Only one pre-Roman hero survives in the name of certain Welsh hill-forts—Caradoc/Caratacus. The Celts disappeared, and their revival is a phenomenon of the Renaissance.

From an early date antiquarians used terminology which derived from classical written sources to describe archaeological sites and objects (Piggott 1967). In Britain 'British' and 'Druidical' (as in Stukeley 1740, 1743) were the two most commonly used adjectives for prehistoric finds; Celtic was in use in Germany by the nineteenth century. In a not very exhaustive search for its use in Britain to describe archaeological objects, the earliest I have noted is in an article by Clarke in *Archaeologia* for 1817. Franks (1863) took a step further, and one which is not acceptable, in calling decorated objects from Britain 'Late Celtic', based on the belief that the early inhabitants of Britain were Celts, and it is from his usage that the modern archaeological concept of 'Celtic Art' is derived. By the late nineteenth century, 'British' and 'Celtic' could be used almost synonymously, though 'Celtic' was in the ascendant.

One of the great achievements of nineteenth-century archaeology was the establishment of a relative chronology for European prehistory. It started with the classification of individual objects by Christian Thomsen in the establishment of his 'Three Age System'. His successors such as Worsaae made use of the association of objects together in stratigraphical sequence to confirm the veracity of the chronology, but these associations of objects with specific types of burial practice or monuments allowed typologists to develop more refined chronologies, notably by Montelius. For the Iron Age it was Hildebrand in 1872 who suggested the basic division into an earlier Hallstatt Iron Age, and a later La Tène, to be followed by yet further refinements by

scholars such as Tischler (1885). Hildebrand considered both Hallstatt and La Tène as both 'Germanic' and 'Celtic'.

However, from these chronological studies it was quickly realized that different styles of object and burial rite occurred in regular association, and that such differences could be mapped both in time and space. In some cases such associated groups of finds could be assigned to historically identifiable 'peoples'. Thus, in 1871 de Mortillet recognized the similarity between Iron Age burials in northern Italy and those in northern France, and postulated that this was the archaeological correlate of the historical Gallic invasions of northern Italy. Prehistorians were beginning to recognize 'culture' in a similar sense to that used by anthropologists, of a shared tradition within societies which could be transmitted from one generation to another.

By the beginning of the twentieth century this concept of 'culture' was taking on a new and specifically archaeological meaning. The earliest clear expression of this new, ethnic meaning of culture is to be found in Kossinna (1911): 'Sharply defined culture provinces always equate with specific peoples or tribes.' This view was generalized by Gordon Childe in his much quoted definition of culture in *The Danube in Prehistory*. 'We find certain types of remains—pots, implements, ornaments, burial rites, house forms—constantly recurring together. Such a complex of regularly associated traits we shall term a "cultural group" or just a "culture". We assume that such a complex is the material expression of what today would be called a people' (Childe 1929: v-vi). However, these ideas were already current long before Kossinna and Childe defined them, for instance in the writings of Joseph Déchelette.

Kossinna was primarily concerned with the origin and spread of the Germanic peoples and sought to document this in prehistoric times through the identification of specific types of object as Germanic. Expansion of a culture was mainly envisaged through the mechanisms of migration and invasion. In an Iron Age context, the Hallstatt 'culture' has always been difficult to define. Distributions of swords, daggers, ceramic styles or burial rites have not been readily interpretable in ethnic terms, though a 'Western Hallstatt Kulturkreis', typified by rich centres with rich burials (such as the Heuneburg) has been linked with Herodotus' location of the Celts on the upper Danube.

However, the La Tène period has been specifically associated with the 'Celts'. La Tène art is 'Celtic art', La Tène brooches are 'Celtic' brooches, and La Tène flat inhumation cemeteries are 'Celtic' flat inhumation cemeteries. The person who brought together the various lines of research—historical, linguistic, artistic and archaeological—is probably Joseph Déchelette in his influential *Manuel d'Archéologie* (1910, 1913, 1914), and the general linkages that he proposed have generally been accepted by later authors without questioning of his conceptual framework or methodology. Just as Kossinna had linked Germanic languages with archaeological 'cultures' and with the historical evidence for the expansion of Germanic tribes, so Powell (1958) and Filip (1956, 1960) have used archaeology, linguistics and historical evidence to document the 'spread' of the 'Celts' from a putative homeland in eastern France and western Germany in the fifth century BC into central and eastern Europe, western France and Britain (Spain has always been a problem since it has Celtic languages, but few La Tène objects!).

These theories of Celtic expansion are accepted dogma on the Continent and in most popular books on the Celts—almost all exhibitions on the Celts or books on the Iron Age reproduce one version or another of maps purporting to demonstrate this (cf. Megaw and Megaw 1989, Figure 2). Yet the whole methodology is that of Kossinna, and it is still tacitly

accepted for the Celts, even though Kossinna's methodology has been completely demolished in a Germanic context by authors such as Wahle (1941) and Eggers (1959). The selection of the objects deemed to be ethnically significant were arbitrarily chosen, or selected to fit the preconceived theory. No account was taken of the biases caused by deposition and discovery. At no time did Kossinna critically review to what extent objects or cultures can be interpreted ethnically.

The same is true for both Powell and Filip and their followers. Chronologies are warped to fit in with the 'arrival' of the Celts (Collis 1986); gaps in distributions are ignored—the whole area occupied by Caesar's Celts is a blank on most distribution maps, so it is assumed they did not arrive until archaeological finds start to reappear. It is only a blank because there are no easily recognizable burials, though settlements are now beginning to be identified and excavated, giving a totally different picture (Collis forthcoming 2). Powell, having quoted the ancient sources which state there were no Celts in Britain, then assumes there were Celts

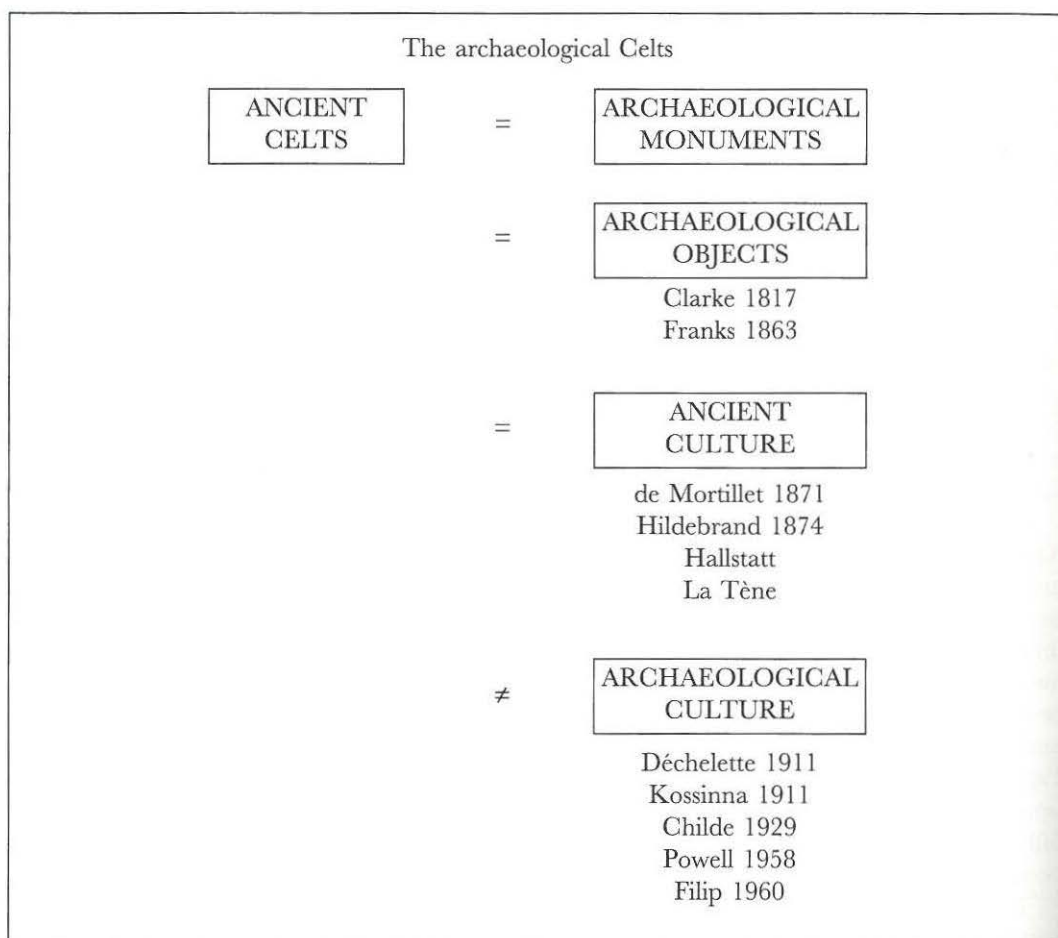


FIGURE 8 The development of the correlation of archaeological finds in Britain and on the Continent with the Ancient Celts.

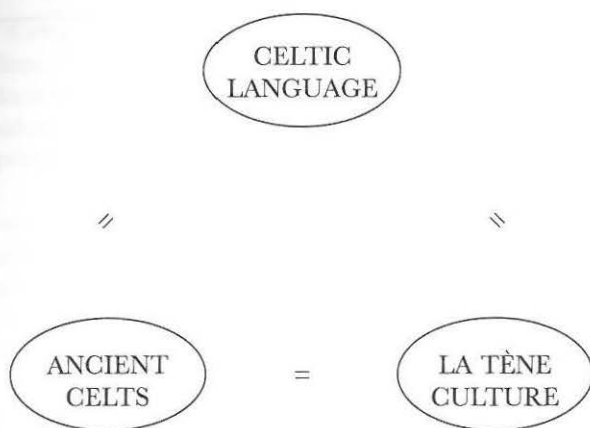


FIGURE 9 The tacit, and totally false, assumptions which lie behind the 'culture-historical' interpretations of Celtic expansion.

because there is La Tène art and the Britons spoke Celtic languages. The belief that the 'homeland' of the Celts is to be found in southern Germany is just one of the theories developed in the late nineteenth century, but the correlation of the Celts and La Tène is based on the tacit acceptance of this particular theory, and the rejection of other, more plausible, theories. The truth is, the ancient sources are completely ambiguous and contradictory. The assumption shown on Figure 9 which lies at the basis of this interpretation is flawed in every respect. There is no absolute correlation between Celtic language, ancient Celts, or La Tène 'culture', indeed I would reject the whole concept of the archaeological culture as a paradigm (Collis 1977a).

The points which I want to make from this archaeological section are:

1. It is entirely legitimate for archaeologists to investigate matters such as ethnicity, or to compare archaeological and historical data. However, the methodology must be logical and acceptable.
2. The concept of the archaeological 'culture' as developed by Kossinna and Childe is unacceptable, especially where an ethnic interpretation is assumed.
3. The correlation between Celtic language, La Tène culture, and the ancient Celts blatantly does not work, and should be rejected, as should concepts like 'Celtic art', 'Celtic society' and 'Celtic religion'.
4. Maps showing the 'origin' and 'spread' of the Celts are based on a total misreading and distortion of the archaeological record.

Modern Celts

The term Celtic has now become common parlance to signify the societies of the Atlantic coast—Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Brittany—where languages of the 'Celtic' language group are still spoken, or have been spoken in recent historical times (Cornwall, Isle of Man), but it is also extending to areas where Celtic languages disappeared a long time ago—Galicia,

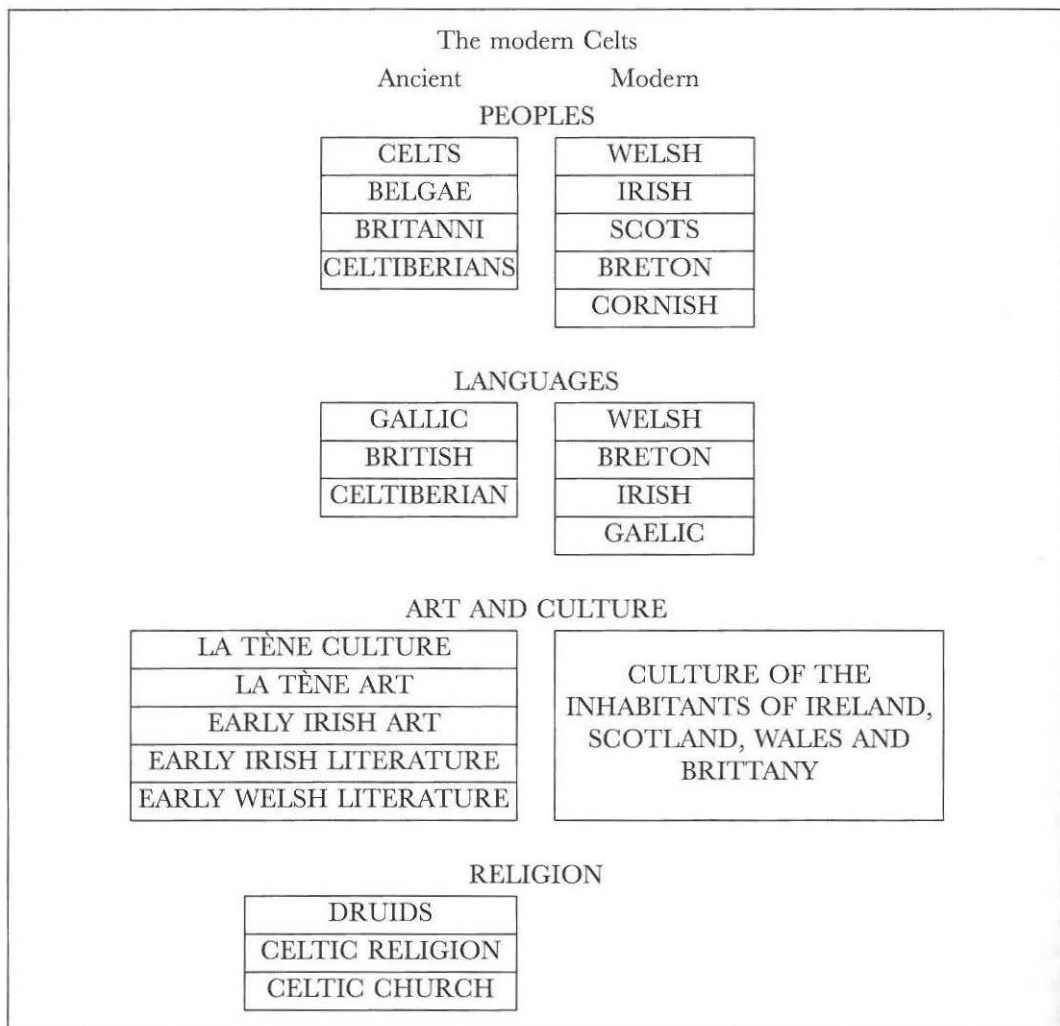


FIGURE 10 Components making up the modern concept of the Celts.

Auvergne—but where strong ‘folk traditions’ survive, or did so until relatively recently. This sense of unity is materialised in such events as the annual ‘Celtic’ festival in Lorient in Brittany. ‘Celtic’ is a very potent force in expressing and maintaining regional identity (Figure 10).

At the same time ‘Celts’ are used to promote European unity. They are seen as part of our common heritage, in the former wide distribution of Celtic languages from Spain to Turkey, or of La Tène art from Romania to Ireland. The international exhibition in Venice, entitled ‘I Celti: la prima Europa’ (Kruta *et al.* 1991), or to a lesser extent that at Rosenheim in 1993, deliberately drew on a wide range of countries for objects and information, while an earlier conference in Styr in 1980 on the Hallstatt culture specifically referred to *ein Frühform europäischer Einheit*.

The concept of Celtic used in both these regional and European definitions we have discussed above: ethnic, linguistic, archaeological and art historical. To it have been added newer aspects of culture such as music and literature. In the latter case it can include not only literature, ancient and modern, written in Celtic languages, but also poets whose major, perhaps only, vehicle of expression is English or French, such as Dylan Thomas (see, for example, Moreau 1961: 130).

I have outlined above the basically illogical and flawed scholarship on which this modern concept of the Celts is based. But does it matter? Are not all concepts of ethnicity or racial identity equally ridiculous? Why are the British so called, when properly speaking the British should only include the descendants of the pre-Roman population of the British Isles, and not the Germanic-speaking English? And why was England so called when the dominant Germanic political group were not the Angles but the West Saxons? Why is the early medieval name for the inhabitants of Ireland, the Scotti, now applied to the Scots rather than the Irish? How many Romans ever went to Rome, let alone came from there? Or why, as Pauli (1980) pointed out to demonstrate the pointlessness of looking for the origins of the Celts, could a tribe speaking a Baltic language give their name to the Prussians, the very quintessence of Germanicness? Is not the essential characteristic of ethnicity that a group of people *feel* their relationship, and their difference from other groups, however illogical the basis for those feelings may be?

The answer is, of course, yes, and I, as an Englishman (with a little Irish 'blood'), do not expect to turn the tide of 'Celticity'. If the Welsh, Scots, Irish and Bretons feel a relationship through their linguistic ties, their common historical links, and their shared need for regional assertiveness, then who am I to object? Indeed, I am a strong advocate of regional identity. Nor should I object to the linkage being termed 'Celtic', especially given that my home town was once the 'market place of the Belgae', and later the chief centre of the West Saxons, yet I am labelled as 'English' and 'British'!

There are, however, areas which are very much my concern. Firstly as a citizen of Europe, indeed 'of the world', I am involved in the uses to which ethnicity is put, and something which is laudable in terms of identity can easily turn into caricature, inter-community conflict and racism, from which few benefit; inclusion within a group naturally implies exclusion of others. The only way in which to combat such prejudice is through education, especially self-education. 'Know thyself', as the inscription at Delphi so wisely put it. This paper is, I hope, a contribution to such self-awareness.

Secondly, as an archaeologist, I have more specific concerns. I am a searcher after that elusive goal 'truth', and though it is something which in archaeology can probably never be discovered—each generation will have its own version—at least we can expose non-truths, misrepresentation and distortion of our archaeological data and their meaning. Thus, for me, the term 'Celtic' should never be used as a synonym for La Tène; indeed even terms like 'La Tène' and 'Hallstatt' can channel our thoughts in ways which lead us to misunderstand and misinterpret our data, matters which I have discussed elsewhere, and will not repeat here (Collis 1983, 1993).

More seriously, I am concerned with the way in which archaeology can be used for unacceptable political ends—all archaeology is political, but like all knowledge it has to be used wisely and honestly. As we have seen above, the equation between language, archaeological 'culture' and ethnicity was an idea first openly propounded by Gustav Kossinna. His

interpretation of prehistory, of the expansion of the Germanic peoples through Europe, formed the basis for the Nazi view of prehistory, and of Germanic supremacy over other ethnic groups. Kossinna's views of prehistory were contentious at the time they were propounded, and few German archaeologists would see him as representing the mainstream of the German academic tradition (Kossack 1992). Though his methodology was attacked by prehistorians such as Wahle (1941), his theories remained official doctrine until the defeat of Hitler.

The equation laid out on Figure 9 and the equation 'La Tène = Celtic' represent precisely the same methodology as developed by Kossinna; the models of 'Celtic' migrations and expansion proposed by Powell and others contain precisely the same mistakes and pitfalls as Kossinna's Germanic expansion. Though I do not envisage armies of Welshmen and Irishmen invading the Continent to claim back what is 'rightfully' theirs, we must be aware that these concepts are reappearing elsewhere in the world to lay claim to 'traditional homelands', in the Balkans, in the Near East and even in Norway. We archaeologists cannot pick and choose when we can make use of a false methodology because it suits us; it must be condemned in all cases, and it is now time, given the renewal of racism and nationalism on our own doorstep in Europe, that we should set our house in order.

Epilogue

When the organizers of the Cardiff conference (see Acknowledgements) invited me to speak, it was recognized that my contribution was likely to be controversial and produce strong reactions. My lecture, given time constraints, concentrated on the way in which the concept of the Celts has developed over time rather than what it means in present-day society, and the way in which it can be used and abused. I hope this written version presents a more balanced view.

Controversial it proved to be, as in their summing up of the conference, Ruth and Vincent Megaw chose to concentrate almost exclusively on my paper, attacking its fundamental concepts, and the approaches which lie behind it. Their contribution was largely prepared before they had heard my paper, but it reiterates a number of points from two articles recently published, which they kindly set to me before publication (Megaw and Megaw 1995, 1996). As my paper was the last one presented at the conference and no discussion was timetabled either after my paper or after the Megaws' summary, I take this opportunity to reply.

Most of what they had to say, I felt, completely missed the point of my paper, and, indeed, of what the present debate is all about. I do not deny that ethnicity was in the past, and is today, a very potent force; nor do I deny that it is a subject which we should take into consideration and study. The problem for the archaeologist is to find the appropriate techniques for us to study it; the culture concept of Kossinna and Childe is a false way, a blind alley.

Nor do I object to the term 'Celtic' being used to describe archaeological material as long as its use can be historically justified. Thus the museum at Mont Beuvray can be called a Celtic exhibition as the local tribe, the Aedui, considered themselves Celts, at least if we believe what Caesar tells us. It is on more doubtful ground, however, when it becomes a European 'Celtic' museum. There is also some justification in calling the new museum at Hochdorf a *Keltenmuseum*, though the reasoning is not so strong, and needs to be explained to the visitor. The rich society described at the conference by Jörg Biel lies in Baden-Württemberg in which the Danube has its source, an area which in the fifth century BC was, according to Herodotus,

occupied by Celts. Given the continuity at such sites as Hochdorf and Asperg, a case can be made for them also being Celts in the sixth century.

What is totally unjustified is to refer to the pre-Roman inhabitants of the British Isles as Celtic. It flies in the face of the historical sources. Nor are we justified, as the Megaws do in their recent book (1989), in assuming La Tène art is 'Celtic' art—some of it was, and some of it was not. The reality is likely to be much more complex, as suggested by Otto-Hermann Frey's contribution on northern Italy, where a comparison of the distribution of La Tène objects with known areas of Gallic settlement suggests that La Tène-style objects were also being used as status symbols by neighbouring, non-Gallic groups.

The Megaws are also totally wrong in their statements about the origin and development of the debate. They see it in what they somewhat disparagingly dismiss as 'an undergraduate paper' by Nick Merriman (1987), and in Colin Renfrew's *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (1991). For my own part, the history of the matter is much longer than that. Eggers' *Einführung in die Vorgeschichte* was the book with which I taught myself archaeological German in 1963. As a Cambridge student, I was educated in an 'anti-invasionist' atmosphere (Clark 1966) and also tutored by David Clarke who was then writing *Analytical Archaeology* (1968). Clarke was revamping the archaeological 'culture' as 'polythetic' rather than 'monothetic', and as something which only approximated to other non-archaeological concepts—linguistic, ethnic, political—but that existed in its own right as a heuristic device which archaeologists could use for purposes of classification and analysis.

My own view, seen from an Iron Age perspective, was that this was not a useful approach to the Iron Age, a view which I finally put in print in 1977. I advocated at that time a socio-economic paradigm, looking at such aspects as production, trade, social organization and settlement patterns. This means inevitably a rejection of such concepts as the 'Celts' being the linguistic and ethnic correlate of a La Tène culture or culture group. By this time I was also familiar with the seminal paper on the Celts by Tierney (1960), still a major landmark in our understanding of the ancient texts. Thus, the views expressed by Renfrew in 1991, for me at least, were already standard by the mid-1970s, and lie behind such publications as my book *The European Iron Age* (1984), a title deliberately chosen to avoid ethnic connotations. I was not alone in these concepts, and what has been presented here now represents the consensus, with nuances, of the younger and middle-aged specialists of the Iron Age in England—Tim Champion (1994), Tim Taylor (1991), Jane Webster (1996) and J. D. Hill (1993), amongst others. Nor are archaeologists alone in their scepticism about the Celts (Chapman 1993, Brown 1996).

My concerns have in the past been more with specific interpretations that have been imposed upon the archaeological record by preconceptions of a Celtic expansion. Most especially I have been concerned with the interpretation of the sixth to third centuries BC in central and western France, supposedly colonized, or 'celticized' in the third century BC (see, for example, Boudet 1990, Collis 1994c). In fact we are dealing with an area where there has been a lack of identifiable archaeological data, but now that settlement excavations are at last taking place, the apparent importance of areas such as Champagne and the Moselle is receding. It is largely a bias of deposition (Collis forthcoming 2). Other examples of the misconceptions and misinterpretations caused by the 'historico-cultural' paradigm are quoted in certain of my articles (Collis 1983, 1993).

My present interest in the matter has been caused in part by a resurgence of the Celts in the archaeological literature. For instance, Cunliffe (1983, 1984) has attempted to impose a model of 'Celtic society' on Danebury, a model which clearly does not fit, and which has been condemned by myself (1985, 1994a) and others. He himself has somewhat retracted from this position. But more specifically I have been faced with the problem of becoming chairman of a committee entitled 'Celtic Routes', part of a programme of 'Cultural Routes' instigated by the Council of Europe. The initial literature produced was based on concepts of the Celts and a misreading of the archaeological sources which even the Megaws would consider out-of-date and garbled. I was chosen by the archaeologists on the international panel specifically to sort out this problem.

Which brings me to the accusation by the Megaws that this is some sort of conspiracy by post-Imperial English scholars with some unstated political agenda. Firstly, one can say that between myself and Renfrew there is an enormous political gulf, and the scholars I have already mentioned span a wide spectrum of political views. I am certainly no apologist for recent British governments! Secondly, as the Council of Europe incident shows, there is a wide concern on the Continent about what is meant by 'Celtic', and Ludwig Pauli for one has written a number of thought-provoking and interesting papers (see, for example, Pauli 1980). There has been especial interest in Spain where Gonzalo Ruiz Zapatero has been looking sceptically at the Celts (1991), and more recently he has discussed the way the concept of the Celts has been used in the politics of Spain in the last hundred years, especially under the dictatorship of Franco (Ruiz Zapatero 1995). I have now been invited twice to Spain to lecture on this particular theme (Collis 1993), and it was also a important component at the session on 'The Identity of Europe' at the Theoretical Archaeology Group conference at Southampton in 1992, addressed by an international group of speakers (Gamble *et al.* 1995).

That said, it is true that the majority of scholars writing on the matter, and expressing the most radical views, are English, but this has been true of a wide spectrum of archaeological theory in the last thirty years. Certainly many of the younger generation of archaeologists in Europe look to Britain as the major (though not the only) stimulus in both theoretical and practical archaeology, and in their size, and the scope of their theoretical and practical training, British university departments of archaeology are without rival in the rest of Europe (Libération 1990). It is thus not unexpected that British archaeologists should be taking a lead, but it does also raise interesting questions about the institutions and power structure in Europe, which lead to innovation or conservatism, a matter which I am trying to address so that European co-operation at a teaching level can be increased (Collis 1995a, forthcoming 3).

Ruth Megaw showed a blank slide to characterize my view of a 'Celt'. It is better to start with a blank piece of paper than with the caricatures provided by the classical authors and artists, or even by La Tène art objects, the majority of which were produced for the élite 5 per cent of society. As an archaeologist rather than an art historian, I am more concerned with the other 95 per cent: the farmers, artisans and craftsmen, the men and women who made up the majority of Iron Age society. Contrary to what the Megaws claimed, the socio-economic approach to the Iron Age is far from dead, but unlike art historians such as the Megaws, archaeologists engaged in this work are well aware that societies need to be studied in their entirety—belief systems, religion, economy, symbolism—and that art objects can only be understood within the context of production, consumption and deposition.

I am thus utterly unrepentant for the contents of my paper, even if it does attack some of the most cherished beliefs and prejudices of such as the Megaws. This paper may, or may not, as one colleague in the audience put it, 'mark a watershed in Celtic studies in Wales', but judging from the numbers of people who approached me after the conference, especially younger people, the views I expressed have clearly struck a chord, and the time has come for a basic reassessment. I hope too that this 'Epilogue' will also provide the additional reading on the subject which some students asked me for.

The last time I attended a conference in Cardiff, I was equally roundly abused for objecting to the extension of the Hawkes' system to the 'Iron Age Sea Province' (Alcock 1972). That battle was swiftly won, and the paradigm shifted (Collis 1994b); the Celts may not prove so easy to vanquish!

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