

The Celts Origins to Modern Era (HPCS7003) Assignment 1

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**The Celts: Origins to Modern Era
(HPCS7003)
Assignment 1**

Anne Tod

*To what extent are history, philology and archaeology in
agreement with regard to the geographical location of the
ancient Celts?*

To try to unravel the possible origins of 'The Celts' it is necessary to stress that this term has evolved over time and was not a term used by the people that it is supposed to represent. It has always been a convenient label with which to identify a social and political 'other' that has evolved over millennia. Over the years, scholars of every persuasion have tried to apply structure to the development of differing languages, ethnicities and archaeological finds, and these strands of intellectual thought have attempted to create a framework for each succeeding generations of people who wish to understand the context of their antecedents.

The origins of the diverse tribes which were to ultimately be defined as Gauls, Celts or Celtiberians are spread from the far reaches of Eastern Europe into the heartlands of Europe, the Baltic, Iberia and the islands of Britain and Ireland. This was a fluid, migratory presence that can only be substantiated by historical accounts, archaeological interpretations and linguistic comparisons.

History

There are no historical references before the 6th century BCE when Hecataeus, whose fragmentary writing were quoted by later historians, stated that Narbon (Narbonne) in France was a Celtic city and Massalia (Marseilles) was a Greek city founded near the lands of the Celts. Nyrax was also thought to be a Celtic city which may have been in Austria.¹

Herodotus, Greek historian and so-called 'Father of History', writing *The History* in the 5th century BCE, was of the opinion that the people called the Keltoi lived in the upper reaches of the Danube, the source of which he erroneously surmised lay in the Pyrenees.

¹ Barry Cunliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford University Press, 2003), p.9

I am willing to believe that [the Nile] rises at the same distance from its mouth as the [Danube], which has its source amongst the Keltoi at Pyr{n{ and flows right through the middle of Europe, to reach the Black Sea at Mi-letos's colony of Istri.²

That this theory identified a specific race of peoples in Western Europe has, of course, been shown to be based on a false premise. This has to an extent coloured the perception of Herodotus as a reliable historical source over centuries, with a suggestion that he relied on mythology and half-truths for many of his theories.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, writing between 384BCE – 322BCE, promoted rational scientific thought and was much revered by civilized the Greek world, which was in total contrast to the way in which the 'barbarous' Gauls and Celts were seen. Aristotle suggested that 'the Celts have been known to take arms against the sea'. He also said that the Celts had homosexual relationships, that they conditioned their children to survive the cold, and that they had a predilection for warfare. Overall, this was an emphasis of the differences between what was seen as an uncivilized, barbarian threat to the ordered, civilized Greek society, although it should be noted that homosexuality was perfectly acceptable in Greek society, albeit in the form of pederasty.³

The Greek philosopher Poseidonius, 135 BCE- 51 BCE, travelled extensively and wrote *Histories* which may have provided material for later writers including Strabo and Julius Caesar. He was a Stoic and may have accentuated the 'noble savage' image of the Celts, in relation to excessive 'drinking, boasting, superstition and human sacrifice' and their penchant for nailing severed heads above the doors to their houses.⁴

² John Koch, *Celts from the West, Appendix I*, (O'Donnell Lectures, 2008), p. 271

³ David Rankin, 'The Celts through Classical Eyes' in *Celts and Christians*. ed. by M. Atherton (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1996), pp. 21-33, p. 24

⁴ Ibid., p. 28

⁵ John Collis 'The Origin and Spread of the Celts' in *Studia Celtica Vol. 30*. (CMCS Publications, 1996) pp. 17-34 (p. 17)

⁶ Ibid., p. 18

The Roman general and politician, Julius Caesar 100 BCE–44 BCE, was mainly interested in expanding the borders of the Roman Empire and so came into contact with the Gauls and also the Britons. In his writings he identified the importance of the Druids whom he saw as being above the law in their society and therefore influential. He also had a keen interest in the social structure of the Gauls. Caesar provided quite a precise geographical delineation of the various tribes in *De Bello Gallico* according to John Collis:

Gallia est omnis divisa in partres tres, and only one of these parts was occupied by the Celts- the others by the Belgae and 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.⁵

According to Collis, Caesar also writes of the Germani who he stated were on the eastern side of the Rhine, and the Cantabri in northern Spain on the southern side of the Pyrennes. The Britanni, on the islands now known as Britain, were not seen as Celts or Gauls although Caesar said that the peoples of the south east of most resembled the Gauls. They also included Belgae who had come from lands beyond the Rhine.⁶

The Greek historian, **Diodorus Siculus** 90 BCE-30 BCE in his writings accentuated the wine drinking and long drooping moustaches of the Celts. In Book 5 of his *Bibliotheca Historica* he wrote:

The Gauls are terrifying in aspect and their voices are deep and altogether harsh; when they meet together they converse with few words and in riddles, hinting darkly at things for the most part and using one word when they mean another; and they like to talk in superlatives, to the end that they may extol themselves and depreciate all other men. They are also boasters and threateners and are fond of pompous language, and yet they have sharp wits and are not without cleverness at learning.⁷

⁵ John Collis 'The Origin and Spread of the Celts' in *Studia Celtica* Vol.30. (CMCS Publications, 1996) pp. 17-34 (p.17)

⁶ Ibid., p.18

⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* Book 5: The Library of History of Diodorus Siculus published in Vol. III (Loeb Classical Library edition, 1939) para.31.

https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/5B*.html
[accessed 14 February 2021]

The Gauls are portrayed as warlike, extreme in ^{stature} and prone to drinking beer, mead and wine, for which they traded with the Romans. Drinking, friendship, storytelling and feasting were most important and cemented bonds between families and tribes. They went to war in two-wheeled chariots drawn by horses and dismounted to fight, beheading those of their opponents who were revered and treating their heads as trophies of war. They wore brightly coloured clothes and sported much gold jewellery, although they also went into battle naked. They had Bards who promoted poetry and music, and the elite Druids who used human sacrifice to foretell the future and so direct the actions of the tribes. The Druids were thought to be in touch with the spiritual world and such was the fear of their power that there was a huge massacre of them on the island of Anglesey in 60 CE.

And it is a custom of theirs that no one should perform a sacrifice without a "philosopher"; for thank-offerings should be rendered to the gods, they say, by the hands of men who are experienced in the nature of the divine, and who speak, as it were, the language of the gods, and it is also through the mediation of such men, they think, that blessings likewise should be sought.⁸

Diodorus also draws a distinction between the Gauls and Celts:

And now it will be useful to draw a distinction which is unknown to many: The peoples who dwell in the interior above Massalia, those on the slopes of the Alps, and those on this side the Pyrennes mountains are called Celts, whereas the peoples who are established above this land of Celtica in the parts which stretch to the north, both along the ocean and along the Hercynian Mountain, and all the peoples who come after these, as far as Scythia, are known as Gauls; the Romans, however, include all these nations together under a single name, calling them one and all Gauls.⁹

At this time there was also a distinction between the Gauls in central and eastern Europe and the Celtiberians in the southern parts of the continent. Britain was still an undeveloped country with its people living simple lives but there was trade in tin between areas such as Cornwall and the continent.

The Greco-Roman Stoic Strabo, 63 BCE- 24CE, travelled extensively and was impressed by the Celts' hardiness and their disregard for death, courting it in a way in which seemed uninhibited by

⁸ Ibid., para.32

⁹ Ibid., para.32

fear of the consequences. 'They are ready to face danger even if they have nothing on their side but their own strength and courage'.¹⁰

The Roman historian Livy, 63 BCE-17CE, said that the Celts thought that 'sooner or later the world as they knew it would come to an end'.¹¹

Both the Greeks and the Romans were extremely wary of the tribes to whom they ascribed the terms Keltoi or Gauls because of their warlike nature. The Celtic ability to sack towns with ferocity caused the societies that saw themselves as civilized to be apprehensive for the survival of their cultural superiority. The tribes were collectively identified as warlike savages, but the methods of combat reminded the Greco-Romans of their past and they had a certain respect for Celtic customs and bravery.

The otherness of the Celts had to be emphasised, and perhaps distorted, while at the same time their prowess as a noble and worthy foe had to be built to such a point that Greek or Roman victory could be presented as a great triumph.¹²

Archaeology

The archaeological finds relating to the various tribes which came to be called 'the Celts' span the period from the 8th Century BCE to the 1st Century BCE. The finds are delineated geographically into the Hallstatt area in present day Austria, and La Tene in modern Switzerland, but also areas of the present Czechia, Germany and Northern France.

The Iron Age Hallstatt period lasted from the 8th to the 7th Century BCE, namely 600 BCE – 475 BCE. The La Tene period lasted from the 5th to the 1st Century BCE but the archaeological remains of both were not recognised until the 19th Century. The Celtic expansion from these areas is not sufficiently demonstrated by archaeology as without written historical records, no trace of occupation has been discovered. 'A user of a La Tene sword is not necessarily always a Celt'.¹³ However, the findings are

¹⁰ Cunliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction* p.11

¹¹ Rankin, 'The Celts through Classical Eyes' p.24

¹² Cunliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction* p.14

¹³ Jonathan M. Wooding, 'The idea of the Celt' in *Celts and Christians*, ed. by M. Atherton, (University of Wales Press) p pp. 39-59 (p.44).

in line with contemporary writings from Greek historians such as Diodorus who describes the invasion by Brennus and the sacking of Delphi in 279 BCE.

Brennus, the king of the Gauls, accompanied by one hundred and fifty thousand infantry, armed with long shields, and ten thousand cavalry, together with a horde of camp followers, large numbers of traders, and two thousand waggons, invaded Macedonia and engaged in battle.¹⁴

The battle that ensued ^{was} were disastrous for the Gauls of the time and in the subsequent retreat, the Galati went across the Bosphorus to Ankara and became Galatian and Anatolian Celts. They adopted local styles rather than La Tene but were still thought to be speaking a Celtic language. They were called Galatians for 600 years but no La Tene culture was developed at this time although they still used the Galatian language.

Although archaeological finds of various items cannot categorically provide evidence of a particular culture, the accumulated indices of similar objects can suggest an acceptance of norms associated with a particular way of life.

A huge burial site at Hallstatt denoted the first known area of the Iron Age in the Europe of 800 BCE and was split into the Western zone consisting of Western Austria, Bohemia, Switzerland, Germany and Eastern France and the Eastern zone of the rest of Austria, Hungary and Slovakia.

The Western area contained fortresses near rivers and princely burial tombs such as at Vix. High ranking members of society lived in the fortresses and the grave goods contained four-wheeled wagons. Princely grave goods were not burnt suggesting a hierarchical structure of society and the areas involved were aligned with the sources of major rivers which facilitated trade, particularly gold from the Mediterranean. The Heuneburg hillfort was surrounded by a mud-bricked wall, a Greek feature, and was on a major salt trading route. The Hochdorf chieftain's grave contained a gold torque, dagger sheaf and overshoes as well as a couch on which the chief's body would have lain and a wagon to take him to the next world. In Vix, a princess's grave contained a huge bronze vessel in the Greek style and the

¹⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History of Diodorus Siculus* published in Vol. XI (Loeb Classical Library edition, 1957) Fragments of Book XXII, para.9

princess would have lain on a wagon wearing a gold torque. In the Eastern area the graves were not so prestigious and did not contain wagons.

After the arrival of the Etruscans from Italy the nature of grave goods heralded the La Tene Iron Age period from the 5th-1st BCE which lasted until the Roman conquests. The culture spread from areas to the north of West Hallstatt regions mainly in Switzerland and also above the West Hallstatt area from Champagne to Bohemia arriving in Britain in the 4th and 3rd BCE. There was no La Tene culture in Iberia, Ireland or Southern Gaul although the Celtic languages were present there. The grave goods consisted of two-wheeled chariots rather than four-wheeled wagons and ceremonial daggers were replaced by swords, spears, and shields for the men, which would suggest a warlike society. Women were buried with brooches and jewellery. Bodies were buried in single graves in cemeteries and cremation became more popular later on. La Tene art incorporated swirling lines and animal forms and are characteristically 'Celtic' being influenced by Etruscan, Greek and Syrian art. Graves are found near notable rivers suggesting waterborne trade was important.

Basse-Yutz flagons were discovered in 1927 that date from the mid 5th BCE and were made in Eastern France but were based on Etruscan artefacts used for mixing wine and water. They were inlaid with coral from the Mediterranean and red enamel from Asia Minor and represent an early La Tene or Celtic art with a combination of Greek and Etruscan influenced dogs, Egyptian influenced spouts and native Celtic ducks.

Italian Celtic culture was displaced by La Tene in the 4th BCE in an area covering the Southern Alps to the river Po and the Italian lakes south of the Hallstatt zone on other side of Alps. Princely four-wheeled wagons were excavated in 1842 which was earlier than other discoveries of artefacts of the period. The area overlaps with those connected with the Lepontic language present in 7th and 6th BCE which is the earliest instance of a distinctive Celtic language. A bronze helmet in the Etruscan style was discovered in Cornwall and also a wagon similar to the Hallstatt wagon which represents the time of transition from the Hallstatt to La Tene cultures, 480 - 450 BCE.

In Britain, roundhouses with conical roof were typical because 'local cultures continued to develop in an uninterrupted manner, long-established sites remained in occupation, and the native style of circular house was ubiquitous.'¹⁵ Continental houses were rectangular or square in the middle Iron Age in Gaul and Iberia on the Mediterranean and were rectangular and stone built in inland Spain. This allowed houses to be extended which was not the case in Britain. North of the Alps, houses were rectangular with thatched roofs and in the Netherlands and northern Germany longhouses were built.

Evidence of Iron Age chariot burials are sparse and only around twenty have been found. Apart from one near Edinburgh, all have been found in east Yorkshire where the Parisi tribe were centred. The Arras culture found here is related to the Parrisii tribe in Gaul. Horses were buried with their chariots and these types of burials have also been found near Saucisson whose tribes were neighbours of Parrisii. The Battersea Shield made some time between 350 - 50 BCE, was discovered in the river Thames and is a decorative shield cover with a central boss which is distinctively British. It is decorated with red glass enamel and is not related to any other object found elsewhere which therefore denotes it as being made in Britain. In Kent, in the area of the Belgae, Whealstone pottery and coinage have been found which suggest connections between Gaul and Britain at the time.

In Ireland, no princely graves with chariots or coinage have been found in Ireland in the pre-Christian period, although not much had been found in Britain dating from before the 1st century BCE. La Tene culture came late to Ireland around the second century BCE and is distinctively Irish although it may have originated in Britain. Beehive quern stones have been found only in Northern Ireland and are absent from the South where no La Tene artefacts have been found.

In Iberia, the tribes were divided into two groups, with some distinguishing features, the most prominent being the loss of the Celtic language in the Meseta group based inland in North West Spain and Portugal. The Celtiberians, Vettones and Vaccaeï of the Hallstatt D period had hillforts at the source of major rivers, practised cremations and made objects of pottery, ceramics and iron including weapons, but no

¹⁵ Cunliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction* p.74

coins. It was a hierarchical society with princely high status graves and burial practices and the building of rectangular houses.

On the coast, the Gallaeci, the Astures and the Cantabri were located in the North West Iberian Peninsula and had a continuity with the Celtic language. Their hillforts were near the sea and they built roundhouses such as in the late Bronze Age. Metal objects were spears and daggers with no elite weaponry which would suggest a low status society. Horse burials were not common but the crafts involved did not depict a backward society as precious metalwork predominated. They were different to other tribes in Iberia and their practices were more related to the Bronze Age although there were some similarities such as cremations, with the inland tribes.

Philology

By 600 BCE the tribes and language of the continental Celts had spread from what is now southern Germany, Austria and the Czechia to France, Belgium, Spain and Britain. By 400 BCE the tribes had moved south into Northern Italy and south east into the Balkans and beyond. After Julius Caesar conquered Gaul and Britain was conquered by Claudius, Latin became the dominant language but an insular Celtic language developed in Britain after 6th Century BCE. In Ireland the language developed independently as there was no invasion of Ireland by the Romans or the Anglo Saxons.

The debate about the origins of language associated with the term 'Celtic' revolves around whether there was a population shift from East to West, from West to East, or whether there was an evolution from the centre of Europe. Hecataeus and Herodotus implied that the Celtic homeland was in southern Germany and Austria but Patrick Sims-Williams disagrees with this centralised view.¹⁶ Theories expounded by Herodotus are tinged with the discrepancy in his understanding of where the Danube had its source so that he identified the Celts being as being Celtiberians.

¹⁶ Patrick Sims-Williams, *An Alternative to 'Celtic from the East' and 'Celtic from the West'* in Cambridge Archaeological Journal 30:3, 511–5 (McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020)

John Collis suggests that in Caesar's time:-

the Celtae, the Belgae and the Brittani 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.¹⁷

Tacitus in 98CE observed that 'the language differs but little'¹⁸ between Britain and Gaul.

The identification of so-called Celtic languages had been defined and then re-defined over time. George Buchanan (1506-1582) *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* 1582 defined Celtic languages as Scots and Irish but it was Edward Lhuyd, (1660-1709), the Welsh polymath, in *Archaeologia Britannica* 1707 made the first reference to the 'Celtic' language. Lhuyd divided the Celtic languages into P-Celtic for Welsh, Cornish and Breton and Q-Celtic for Irish, Scots Gaelic and Manx and this is still the linguistic definition of Celtic languages today. 'Lhuyd virtually invented modern comparative philology'.¹⁹ Collis suggests that the languages could just as easily have been called Gaulish as translations had been the work of Paul-Yves Pezron, (1639-1706) a Breton, in *Antiquite de la nation et de la langue des Celtes, autrement appelee Gaulois*.²⁰

Although there was no common identification of the diverse languages amongst the Gaulish tribes, there is an agreement that Celtic languages were derived from Proto-Indo-European languages that migrated with peoples from the eastern stretches of continental Europe. Sir William Jones (1746-1794) made a link between Indo-European languages and Sanskrit. He was a prodigious philologist who was fluent in numerous languages and alongside his tenure as a judge in India, he researched the structure of Sanskrit and concluded that there were common links between the languages of the Indian subcontinent and Europe.

The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some

¹⁷ Collis, 'The Origin and Spread of the Celts' p.19.

¹⁸ Tacitus, Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola in *Ancient History Sourcebook*, (History Department, Fordham University, 1999) para. 11 Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb.
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/tacitus-agricola.asp>
[accessed 9 March 2021]

¹⁹ Wooding, 'The idea of the Celt' p.48

²⁰ Collis, 'The Origin and Spread of the Celts' p.21

common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanscrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family.²¹

Although this is a continuing area for discussion, it is notable that all the so-called linguistic Celtic nations eventually shared a common geographical position, that is, having western coastal boundaries. Any population in close proximity to the sea will have used maritime transport for trading purposes as it was quicker, safer and more reliable than any other means of movement. Rivers flowing to the sea meant that inland areas could also be in contact with merchants who would have developed intricate and far-reaching corridors of trade and travel throughout millennia. Coastal communities today use the sea to develop trade links with other parts of the world and in the past this would have been an even more important resource. Development of related languages for communication would have resulted from these links.

The Atlantic zone was especially well provided (with materials). The heavily mineralized pyrite zone of western Iberia offered copper and silver in the south and gold and tin in the north. Brittany and south west Britain were sources of tin and yielded gold and copper as well, while a zone stretching across southern Ireland to north Wales was an important source of copper, with gold coming from the Wicklow mountains. Once copper alloys came to be widely used for tools and weapons in the third millennium the demand for copper and tin intensified dramatically. With this came increased exploitation and an intensification in exchange.²²

The major debate about the origins and spread of the Celts hinges on the movement of tribes across Europe. Fluctuations in populations, through war, overcrowding, ambitious raids and persecution means that the history of the grouping which have given rise to the term 'Celt' is fragmented and confusing. The one element linking these groups are the languages that still persist in what is now thought of as the Celtic homelands, Brittany, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and the Isle of Man. Historical records from Greek and Roman times certainly identify various tribes as being 'Celtic' and the archaeological remains left across Europe have some unifying factors but the living languages of

²¹ Jones, Sir William, Third annual discourse before the Asiatic Society on the history and culture of the Hindus (delivered on 2 February 1786 and published in 1788) para. 33
http://www.eliohs.unifi.it/testi/700/jones/Jones_Discourse_3.html
 [accessed 16 March 2021]

²² Cunliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction* p.22

the various Celtic nations, albeit with their variations between P-Celtic and Q-Celtic, speak of a common ancestry that transcends both history and archaeological artefacts. Objects in themselves cannot guarantee a shared heritage, neither can the products of trade, but languages which have to be spread between societies can provide that assurance. The geography of the spread of the Celtic languages along the Western Atlantic seaboard speaks of ancient seafaring trading routes which preserved and maintained interaction between diverse groups which in themselves make up the Celtic nations with an inherited common root for these languages. The ebb and flow of populations has not damaged these links but they have always been under attack from the Classic might of Greek and Roman civilisations who regarded the Western groupings as 'the Other' and that is still as true today as it ever was. Proving relationships through historical and archaeological studies across the different ethnic groupings that have, over time, migrated across Europe in both directions, is somewhat speculative, but the fact that the inter-related languages on the western fringes are still spoken today provides solid proof of the history of a peoples who had their origins in the far eastern areas of the continent.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

60/100

Instructor

This essay has looked at the subject matter from the perspective of each of the three disciplines in turn, and done so, in the main, in language of a standard wholly appropriate for work at this level.

Turning to the content, the point made on page 1 about the Celtic label not being "*used by the people it is supposed to represent*" is not strictly true, as acknowledged by the Caesar reference on page 3. We also cannot know that the Celts "*spread from the far reaches of Eastern Europe*" (p. 1), as this is one of many conflicting interpretations.

The remaining historical pages give an accurate, but largely descriptive, account of classical descriptions of the Celts.

In the archaeology section, the point on page 6 about the Galatians of Asia Minor speaking a Celtic language *without* the associated material culture is an indication that the two may often not go together (and so here we have an example of an actual migration which did *not* leave much in the way of material remains - there is not always "archaeological evidence" for every movement of people). The following pages then provide a summary of the main aspects of the Hallstatt and La Tene cultures as well as the supposedly Celtic areas which do *not* show strong evidence for them.

Moving on to philology (p. 9) we cannot know whether the tribes and language had spread in the way suggested. It is also worth noting that Brittonic was well established in Britain before the arrival of the Romans, and its subsequent survival following their departure suggests that it, rather than Latin, was the dominant language. On the same page, it should be noted that Hecataeus did *not* imply that the Celtic homeland was in southern Germany. Whether or not Herodotus did so

depends on the interpretation of his source of the Danube.

On page 10, Collis is right to assert that the Celtic languages *could just as easily have been called Gaulish*, but had this happened we would now no doubt be listening to archaeologists telling us that *no Classical source ever called the inhabitants of Britain Gauls*, and so all the current controversies about "the Celts" would be held about "the Gauls" instead. Interestingly, one train of thought believes that Lhuyd chose *Celtic* as the name for this branch of languages (rather than, say, Brittonic or Gaulish) because it was *neutral* (i.e. not associated with either the British or French states) and less likely to be controversial!

With regard to the shared position of the Celtic languages geographically (p. 11), there is nothing particularly unusual about this, as can be seen if we look at the Germanic, Romance or Slavic languages for instance. Their proximity to the sea is more a case of where they can still be found, rather than the full extent of their historical location.

As a theme running through the essay, there is rather too much emphasis on migration as the means of distribution (p. 12), bearing in mind that a *catalyst* is all that is needed for material culture or language to spread. Technologies can be shared by copying, and language shift does not have to be based on population movement (the shift from Irish to English in the nineteenth century is one of many examples of this). There can therefore be no *"solid proof"* that the Celtic peoples *"had their origins in the far eastern areas of the continent"*.

Taken as a whole, this essay does provide a summary of the evidence from the three disciplines. It could, however, have been less descriptive and more analytical in parts, and less inclined to see migration as the driver for change. That said, it does represent a genuine attempt at undertaking the assignment as set.

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