

How did scholarly notions of 'the Celts' inform the nationalist movement within Wales during the Celtic Revival

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HPCS7003 The Celts: Origins to the Modern Era

Assignment 2

How did scholarly notions of 'the Celts' inform the nationalist movement
within Wales during the Celtic Revival?

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Since Patrick Sims-Williams in 1998 drew the troop lines by stating that 'the terms 'Celt' and 'Celtic' have become a battleground',¹ Celtic Studies has become very self-conscious of how it employs terminology surrounding the central subject of the study. Naturally, a degree of self-critique is necessary, especially for a field of study whose main subject matter requires high levels of interdisciplinary engagement. Collis's assertion that the term Celt has 'dangerous archaeological and political implications'² may seem overly dramatic, but there can be little doubt that the 'Celtomania' that began with the antiquarians and romantics of the early nineteenth to early twentieth centuries did create a fertile ground for the myth of "the Celt" to proliferate widely in the public consciousness. Notions of an ancient, warlike, and enigmatic people are apparent in popular culture and owe their existence to this period known broadly as the 'Celtic Revival'. The inconsistency of modern notions of the Celt as a character are reflected in the scholarship, where competing definitions for what constitutes "a Celt" in terms of language, archaeology and ascription in the historical sources can jostle and overlap often within a single academic work.

This essay seeks to shed light on how scholarly definitions of who a Celt *is*, *how* the term was interpreted during the 'Celtomania' of the Celtic Revival period, and *how* this led to the establishment of a national identity in one so-called Celtic nation – Wales.

This will be done by firstly outlining the evolving ideas surrounding the image of the Celt during this period, which will be contrasted with contemporary philological, historical, and to a degree, archaeological classifications, with particular attention given to the image of the druid, and its later incarnation the bard.

Following this, an exploration of why and how these definitions came to be used in the Welsh nationalist movement, including an exploration of the cultural climate in Wales at the time, will then be outlined.

Finally, the question of whether Wales can properly be called a modern Celtic nation will be debated according to competing definitions. The value of the revivalist's notion of 'Celtic' will be discussed by employing the work of Dietler and his framing of 'Celticism'³, with the aim of this essay to make the case broadly in line with that of Sims-Williams in 1998 that Celtic identity as defined by various disciplines may nest within one another, each with their own proper value and usage⁴.

Foundation – establishing the link

Let us lay some groundwork then as to what elements classify a 'Celt' and 'Celticity' and how these terms came to be associated with the peoples of the western British Isles (Wales, Ireland Scotland, Cornwall etc.) by delving into some of the inter disciplinary crosscurrents.

The three disciplines which influence modern interpretations of what may or may not be considered Celtic are; history, specifically classical records; philology; and archaeology. Archaeology, as we will see has little directly pertaining to support Wales as a modern Celtic nation. However, that is not to say that certain elements did not appeal and become appropriated into the new Welsh-Celtic identity that emerged. Similarly, although it may appear the historical evidence from classical

¹ P. Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), pp. 1–35.

² J. Collis, 'The Origin and Spread of the Celts', *The Origin and Spread of the Celts*, 30 (1996), p. 17.

³ M. Dietler, 'Celticism, Celtitude, and Celticity: The Consumption of the Past in the Age of Globalization.', in *Celtes et Gaulois, l'Archeologie Face à l'histoire*, ed. by S Rieckhoff (Bibracte, 2006), p. 237.

⁴ Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania', pp. 33-34.

authors negates some of the argument that qualify the Welsh a Celtic label to modern scholars, many elements found in works like Pliny's account of the Druidic 'Oak and Mistletoe rite' became incorporated into the revivalist's reinvention of the druid/bardic Welsh identity by appropriating components of a Celtic one.⁵ On the other hand, philology may seem at first to be more straight forward in its support of a Welsh-Celtic relationship. This is to be expected as Wales had, and remains, the country with the world's highest number of speakers of a Celtic language, however, as with the other two there are nuances here too to be examined.

Language and history

The links between the languages spoken by the inhabitants of the British Isles, specifically the Goidelic speakers, was first cautiously proposed well before the revival period by George Buchanan in his *Rerum Scoticarum* published in 1582.⁶ He proposed the Celtic peoples of Western Iberia – first described as being populated by Celtic peoples by Herodotus in 450BC – as having migrated from north of the peninsula to Ireland and then to Scotland. Edward Lhuyd later expanded Buchanan's arguments after having conducted his own field work in the western areas of the British Isles, compiling his findings in his dense and technical book *Archaeologia Britannica*.⁷ The book was in part inspired by the French academic Paul-Yves Pezron who in 1703 wrote about the common origin of the Breton and Welsh languages.⁸ Pezron placed the classical origin and his at the root of his argument and wrote a compelling narrative about how the ancient Celtic culture had stretched across Europe, citing mythology and scripture claiming a biblical descent for the Celts via Gomer.⁹

Although of questionable scientific rigour, Pezron's work inspired an increased interest in native Gaulish culture in France and fed into the 'Celtomania' that was already developing in Britain and Ireland. Lhuyd hoped that Pezron and his own publication would motivate learned and upper-class Welsh to return to their traditions and customs, which were in decline. Meticulously researched and detailed, *Archaeologia Britannica* became key to the Celtic foundation of the new nationalist movements in the Celtic fringes of the British Isles that were emerging. Though not stated explicitly by Lhuyd himself, his work created an assumed association between language, culture, and ethnicity which was used by scholars, romantics and nationalists to legitimize the association between the Welsh and the Celts from the historical record.¹⁰

This was despite many Greek and Roman authors citing the inhabitants of the British Isles as not being populated by Celts. The earliest accounts of the Celts by Hecataeus in 517BCE locate them in southern Gaul, and later accounts by Herodotus place them somewhere between the straights of Gibraltar and the Alpine source of the Danube.¹¹ Concerning Britain directly, Pytheas described it as lying to the north of *Celtica*, and likewise Strabo references the British and the Irish as being similar in appearance and custom to the *Keltoi*, both implying that they were not Celts.¹² Nevertheless,

⁵ P. Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 61.

⁶ G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland; or Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (Lulu Press, Inc, 2015).

⁷ A. Coward, 'Exiled Trojans or the Sons of Gomer: Wales's Origins in the Long Eighteenth Century', in *The Roots of Nationalism*, ed. by Lotte Jensen, National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815 (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), p. 169.

⁸ Coward, 'Exiled Trojans', p. 169.

⁹ Ibid. p. 170.

¹⁰ Morgan, 'From a Death', p. 67.

¹¹ J. Wooding, 'The Idea of the Celt', in *Celts and Christians*, ed. by M. Atherton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 41.

¹² Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania', p. 26.

though this at first seems like conclusive evidence, it must be noted equally the classical sources do not allow us to deduce comfortably that the ancient inhabitants of Britain and Ireland did *not* see themselves as at least related to the Celts on the continent. After all there is evidence for tribal names such as *Parisii* on both sides of the channel and commentators such as Caesar and Tacitus refer to the linguistic, cultural and political links between Britain and the continent.¹³ However, there is one line of evidence that seemed to provide a more robust link with the continental Celts that Welsh revivalist and nationalists used to legitimise their Celtic heritage. Those being the sources detailing the druids.

During the late eighteenth century there was a desire, in English literary circles in particular, to find a native British school of philosophy and learning deriving from the ancient inhabitants of Britain that could compare with the Classical world. This was primarily to do with movements within British nationalist and Imperialist sentiments at the time.¹⁴ The spotlight was shone on classical depictions of Gaulish and Brittonic druids, descriptions of which were scant and conflicting but nevertheless attractive to the growing readership of the romantic period. Greco-Roman scholars had left two very different accounts of druidry and of the Gallo-British cultures they were part of.¹⁵ To authors like Caesar and Diodorus, they were philosophers, scholars, and advisers to Celtic leaders on behalf of the gods. To others like Posidonius they were ruthless barbarians to be conquered and civilized.¹⁶ The accounts were often explicit in noting that the Celts lived only on mainland Europe, however, druid culture *did* appear to be shared between the Gauls of France and the Britons. Some references even suggested that the druids even had their headquarters in Britain on the Island of *Mona* (Anglesey/Ynys Môn) and noble Gauls would send their youths to be trained lasting a period of up to twenty years.¹⁷ Here seemed to be a proof of a more substantial link between the ancient Britons and the continental Celts that implied some level of shared cultural identity.¹⁸

The revivalists, as Hutton outlines, created a modern druidic figure by mixing selected parts of Greek, Roman accounts supported by some Irish and Welsh Medieval texts, and backed up with a smattering of archaeological data, in a selection process determined by the instincts, attitudes and loyalties of the person engaged in.¹⁹ Much of the historical components did not meet objective standards of textual evidence as many of the authors have their own particular agendas when describing the druids, or the Celts more broadly.

Turning now to linguist arguments for the existence of British Celts, let us first note that of the main aims of philology is to explore how language changes and disperses over time, in part done by tracing back extant and extinct languages to branching periods in history. In this case Celtic languages can be traced back to a theoretical proto-Celtic language in the Indo-European family group.²⁰ What philology does not investigate is the perceived link between language and ethnicity. By equating language with ethnicity, in this case that the Welsh spoke a Celtic language and

¹³ Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania', p. 26.

¹⁴ S. Prescott, "'Gray's Pale Spectre': Evan Evans, Thomas Gray, and the Rise of Welsh Bardic Nationalism', *Modern Philology*, 104.1 (2006), p. 72.

¹⁵ R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 9.

¹⁶ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 28-30.

¹⁷ Hutton, 'Blood', p. 95.

¹⁸ Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania', p. 26.

¹⁹ Hutton 'Blood', p. 82.

²⁰ P. Sims-Williams, 'An Alternative to "Celtic from the East" and "Celtic from the West"', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 30.3 (2020), p. 511.

therefore must be descendants of the Celts, the revivalists and nationalists created a falsely sound line of biological descent from the Celts found in history, to the modern Welsh population.

Regardless, by using the linguistic and druidic connection to seemingly prove the Celtic heritage of the Wales allowed the creation for the Welsh, as Prys Morgan says, for the first time in two hundred years a history of Wales that was autonomous and separate from that of England.²¹ Not only that but it also credited them as the original inhabitants of Britain. The Celts represented a blank canvas which the fantasies of the age could be projected onto, primarily a general anxiety in Wales, and the other Celtic nations of English cultural domination, and a desire to provide a respectable and rich past to support their own cultural distinctiveness.

A culture revived

This anxiety was not misplaced, at the same time that interest in all things Celtic was on the upswing, Welsh antiquarians, historians, poets, and general scholarly class were worried at what they saw as the last gasps of traditional Welsh folk life in the face of increasing anglicisation. As Morgan writes as much of the demise had not seemed severe up until the eighteenth century as much of the traditional customs and celebrations had been continuously observed by the Gwerin (common folk).²² However, it became ^{apparent} apart to antiquarians and nationalists that a large part of Welsh cultural heritage may be about to be lost within a generation or two. Edward Lhyud himself noted and grieved for the dull uniformity that was beginning to cover the country as much of the seasonal festivities fell out of common use within just a few decades.²³ The binding religious community culture Catholicism had provided, and which had carried on far longer in Wales after being eliminated in other parts of Britain had mostly disappeared in the sixteenth century without a suitable Welsh Protestant culture coming in to fill the void.²⁴ At the same time greater integration with the English state and the scrapping of the Welsh legal system under Henry VIII eroded the conventions of Welsh civil society. This was happening as the Welsh upper classes began to anglicize, casting off old styles and customs and often leaving their ancestral estates in favour of relocating in England or the continent.²⁵ The major casualty of this was the native tradition of bardic patronage through which the proliferation of Welsh poetry, music, song, and storytelling to remain at healthy levels. This loss severely impacted the cultural strength of Welsh civil society as a bard's function in the community included that of historian, copyist, librarian and musician amongst others, and thus formed an integral part of the social network that helped the Welsh maintain a connection with their history, culture and kinsmen.²⁶ As Morgan writes, a strong cultural break could be seen across nearly all aspects of Welsh cultural life as traditional culture began to be seen as uncivilized and backward in favour of modern Anglo culture penetrating deeper across the border.²⁷ It was at this time too that the Welsh language began to lose ground to English as the dominant lingua franca in the east of the country.²⁸

In this climate of combined grievances, the Celts provided an attractive means of reinvigorating Welsh Identity and cultural pride amongst the literati of the London Welsh societies. Philological evidence instigated by Lhyud who himself was a borders man, highlighted the linguistic and

²¹ Morgan, 'From a Death', p. 68.

²² Ibid. p. 68.

²³ Ibid. p. 52.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 44.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 49.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 50.

²⁸ Hutton 'Blood', p. 121.

supposed blood connection the Welsh had with the people wrote about in the Roman texts.²⁹ Not only that but these people were the supposedly original inhabitants of the Britain.³⁰ From as early as the sixteenth century Leland and Bale had suggested that the Welsh bards had been the successors to the druids, and famous works by the likes of Milton, and later Thomas Grey, and Evan Evans accelerated the blending of characteristics of both in the popular imagination.³¹ Adding fuel to the proverbial fire was the beginnings of the links between the La Tène cultural events of the southern German alps and the same ancient Celtic people, with their princely tombs and vast graves including ornate chariots.³² As the *Celtic from the East* hypothesis began to take shape helped along with historical accounts of the Celts attack on Delphi and Rome, the Welsh suddenly found themselves inheriting the mantle of a people who had conquered their way across Europe and included a distinguished priestly caste that was respected even by Caesar himself.³³ Perhaps most importantly though, this was a glorious history separate from their attachment to England.³⁴

Most famous, and successful amongst the Welsh antiquarians to make use of the new Welsh authority over Celticity in Britain was historian, poet and able man of letters Edward Williams better known by his bardic pseudonym Iolo Morganwg. After unsuccessful attempts at being a poet in London and a ^{former} farmer in his native Glamorgan and inspired by the spirituality of William Stukeley and the Ossian forgeries of James Macpherson, Morganwg created a fantasy tradition – the *Gorsedd y Beirdd Ynys Prydain*.³⁵ The sense at the time amongst the London Welsh was that if the Welsh were the heirs of the Celts, at least through language, then there was a real possibility that the Celtic druids of the historical sources could be found, once properly collected, edited, and analysed, in the medieval literature of the bards.³⁶ Morganwg produced medieval forged documents to support his claims about the druidic-bardic Gorsedd and also a series of rituals and rites that were supposedly written and performed by the bards themselves. These were hugely popular and several Gorseddau were created around Wales, following the ‘traditions’ provided by Morganwg.³⁷ In 1819 the Gorsedd ^{was} were invited to conduct a ritual to open the Carmarthen eisteddfod, the general consensus being that the Gorsedd represented an ‘genuine’ Celtic tradition rediscovered through scholarly effort and that provided a historic nod to the ancient roots of the bardic eisteddfod, itself a ^{revived} medieval tradition.³⁸

Although the Gorsedd was not a real revived tradition, its use of the historical sources, and linguistic heritage to imply an authentic foundation upon which the romantic interpretations of Celticity were projected on could be used by individuals to create a long-lasting Welsh cultural movement. The popularity of the eisteddfod increased exponentially once the Gorsedd of the bards became a permanent fixture.³⁹ It also encouraged far more interest in the history of the eisteddfod and the bards and by extension its hypothesised Celtic links.⁴⁰ This helped to sow the idea of a Celtic heritage

²⁹ Morgan, ‘From a Death’, p. 60.

³⁰ Morgan, ‘From a Death’, p. 60.

³¹ Ibid. p. 62.

³² Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania’, pp. 29-33.

³³ Morgan, ‘From a Death’, p. 69.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 68.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 64.

³⁶ Hutton ‘Blood’, p. 216.

³⁷ Morgan, ‘From a Death’, pp. 61-62.

³⁸ Ibid. p.60.

³⁹ Ibid. p.61.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

beyond the academic world in Wales fed into the emerging Welsh sense of cultural identity and the national movement, the effects of which are evident today.

'Celtic' or 'Celticism'

Since the Romantic period, the notion of Celtic heritage and particular Celtic characteristics have become embedded in perceptions of 'Welshness'. Distinguishing features and stereotypes – both positive and negative – that invoke 'Celtic-ness' are made at all levels of society, from sporting events to government. Being a 'Celt' has become so entrenched in the Welsh psyche that it is impossible to separate from the main, and if a scholar were to pursue such a punishing venture, there would not be much left that would be identifiable. However, for this essay it is necessary to consider two points: i) One is whether the Celtic mantle which modern Wales wears proudly is an honest reflection of what the scholarship tells us about the ancient Celts or whether the appropriation of the revivalists has obscured the term beyond recognition and effective usage; ii) and the second sub point is to question how much this actually matters when framing Wales in a modern context.

Turning to the first point, the main crux of why Wales qualifies for the 'Celtic' as we have seen is mostly based around ideas of ethno-nationalism drawing legitimacy from selected interpretations of the classical texts. This was backed up by linguistic heritage and the assumption that language equals culture, which equals ethnicity. Seen above, the classical sources themselves provide incomplete and often contradictory accounts. The ancient ethnographers' map of the Keltoi, Galatai, Galli, etc is a map of classical terms, not a map of how ethnic groups perceived their relationships with their neighbours in early Iron Age northern Europe.⁴¹ As Sims-Williams asserts, this presents a problem for ethnologists (and nationalists) when using an ethnonym such as Celt as a keystone for an ethnic identity. Evidence suggests that the people of Ireland and Britain never called themselves Celts. Collis and James claim that this favours their claim that Celt as a term has too many meanings for too many people and call for throwing out the term altogether.⁴²⁴³ However, it must again be stressed that there is no objective evidence that the ancient inhabitants of Britain and Ireland did *not* see themselves as related to the Celts on the continent. The same Celtic tribal names were reported on both sides of the Channel and classical reports cite linguistic, cultural and political links between Britain and the continent.⁴⁴ The druids of Gaul of course were claimed to have spent time in Britain for further study of their craft,⁴⁵ and were used to help prove the revivalist's Celtic link especially when fused with the image of the Welsh Medieval bard.

Setting the complexities of the historical record aside for a moment, is it possible that philology provides a more direct answer? As stated, philology is the pursuit of mapping a language's evolution and divergence to a theoretical common dialect. It does not make any claims over the relationship language has over culture or ethnicity. By this logic we can deduce that Wales *is* a Celtic nation in linguistic terms. Sims Williams in his famous dissection of 'Celtomania and Celtioscepticism' suggests that those who seek to discredit the label 'Celt' by citing flaws in the historical and archaeological sources underestimate the evidence provided by language.⁴⁶ The ancient authors were interested in making valid distinctions along the lines of language and there is sufficient evidence in the

⁴¹ Sims-Williams 'Celtomania', p. 25.

⁴² Collis, 'The Origin', p. 21.

⁴³ S. James, 'Celts, Politics and Motivation in Archaeology', *Antiquity*, 72.275 (1998), pp 202-204.

⁴⁴ Sims-Williams 'Celtomania', p.26.

⁴⁵ Sims-Williams 'Celtomania', p. 26.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 29.

archaeological record from Celtic-language inscriptions to show that people across Europe who were called 'Celts' *did* speak a language that we would call Celtic.⁴⁷

Regarding how much authority scholarly notion of 'Celtis' has on the vision of Celtic-ness in modern Wales, Michael Dietler provides a useful framework regarding the classification of more modern Celtic identities. He outlines three terms *Celticism*, *Celticity* and *Celtitude*.⁴⁸ *Celticity* and *Celtitude* refer to the modern phenomena of a Celtic global diaspora decoupled from ethnic notions of Celtic connection. *Celticism* however is defined as an attempt to construct an ethicized form of collective memory and communal identity that is territorially bound and embedded in overt political projects and ideologies.⁴⁹ I argue that this definition succinctly describes the Celtic identity that was created in and for Wales during the eighteenth century and constitutes a valid use of the label Celtic when used in context. To deny the Celtic label here would be to deny effect of the Welsh cultural renaissance that occurred during this time, as well as the reasons it came about. This more modern use of the term arguably fits in with a history of competing definitions across disciplines, with its most recent incarnation simply the newest expression of this.

Different disciplines provide ^{different} answers regarding whether Wales constitutes a Celtic country. A philologist would say yes due to language. A historian may suggest that there was some validity to the claim but that there is equal weight against it, and an archaeologist would say that Wales is not a Celtic county as it does not show evidence of Hallstatt or La Tène archaeology. As all these perspectives have weight and it is right that they are used as appropriate for each subject.

However, with new definitions emerging in the modern era, and with the work of Deitler in mind it seems that to question whether Wales is a Celtic country ^{based} on scholarly notions of the Celts should be done with due diligence and allowing for multiple Celtic Identities to exist simultaneously.

Conclusion

We have seen that the Wales of the mid to late twentieth century was suffering from a cultural crisis as ^{previous} social and cultural mechanisms that held communities together began to break down. In order to avoid anglicization, ideas surrounding the character of 'the Celt' were adopted and adapted by antiquarians, poets, and nationalists in order to fill the developing cultural vacuum. Philology played a large part in identification of the Welsh with the Celts, and a renewed interest in ancient native British culture saw classical sources used to create a sense of grand Welsh history populated with fierce warriors and powerful druids. The new Celtic identity that emerged was extremely relaxed in terms of the scholastic rigor of the sources it drew from and encouraged artistic interpretation of what a Celt *could* be. Interestingly, this is a criticism that could be levelled at the classical authors of many of the earliest accounts of the *Keltoi* - that of a romanticisation (or demonisation) of a people on the periphery, which rather than being an accurate recording of a discrete population, provides commentary on the centre. The difference here being that the revivalists were often made up of people who came from that periphery themselves and so were active in the creation of their own Celtic label. This new interpretation of Celt and Celticism provides a useful framework from which to understand the identity of contemporary Wales, as its application describes how living Celts in Wales understand and perceive themselves and their relationships with other populations across the globe. As for the question of whether it is accurate to describe Wales as a Celtic nation, this essay comes to a similar conclusion as many Celtic studies scholars before. That

⁴⁷ Sims-Williams 'Celtomania', p. 29.

⁴⁸ Dietler, 'Celticism', p. 237.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the correct usage of Celt all depends on context. To an archaeologist Wales was never Celtic, to a historian it's possible that Wales maybe was Celtic, but it remains unclear whether they would have called themselves that. For a linguist Wales is still Celtic, whereas in a modern sense, the Celts only just arrived by eighteenth century! As Sims-Williams concludes, a course must be steered between Celtomania and Celtoscepticism, so as not to dismiss evidence and argument over lexical differences.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Sims-Williams 'Celtomania', pp. 33-34.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

64/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This is an interesting essay with a novel take on the "Celtic Revival", however it does contain rather too many typographical or grammatical errors, the former of which at least suggest the need for greater focus when proofreading, and prior to submission of the final version.

Regarding the point on page 3 about Wales having been, and remaining, the country with the highest number of speakers of a Celtic language, only half of this is true. Wales has more speakers of a Celtic language than any other country today. However, a century ago, that honour would have gone to the Breton language in Brittany, with well over a million speakers (a feat yet to be equalled by Welsh).

As far as any link between language, culture and ethnicity is concerned, there has been an *"assumed association"* between these since long before Lhuyd (p. 3). Greek and Roman authors would often describe the language, physical appearance, tools, religion, dress, temperament etc of a people as if they were all interconnected parts of a whole (to such an extent that trying to argue that they are independent and capable of separate distribution can be really hard work).

The crediting of the Welsh as *"the original inhabitants of Britain"* (p. 5) was achieved long before the period in question here. Indeed, for many centuries *Welsh* and *British* were largely synonymous terms. In the 8th century, Bede noted that the island was named after the Britons and originally had no inhabitants but them, with *Welsh* being simply the Anglo-Saxons' name for them. The inclusion of Brittonic under the Celtic banner did, however, ally them within a wider circle of "friends" (who had often previously been enemies), as suggested on page 6.

It could be argued that "*the main crux of why Wales qualifies for the Celtic*" (p. 7) is *not* based around ideas of ethno-nationalism, but simply because Wales is home to a language which can conclusively be shown to share a common origin with Gaulish etc. It is more than possible that someone from Gwynedd, who self-identifies as Welsh and speaks the language, may have English ancestry (take the MP Liz Saville-Roberts as an example) while a German-speaker from Austria may be directly descended from a Hallstatt prince but hold no Celtic identity at all.

A glance at today's "Celtic nations" suggests that the primary criterion for labelling territories as Celtic is the survival into the modern era of a Celtic language (as acknowledged later on page 7). That is not to suggest, of course, that linguistic continuity of this kind has not been "embellished" to produce a wider romantic image, nor does it imply that *Celtic* is necessarily the best word for this linguistic group. However, language is frequently used (with far less controversy than in the Celtic case) as an identifier for nations across the world. The 22 member-states of the Arab League are united by their speaking of Arabic. Russia, Poland and Bulgaria (and many others) are all known as Slavic countries. Latin America is so called because countries from Mexico to Chile all speak Romance languages (with no implication that their indigenous populations are descended from Romans). Wider problems arise, however, largely as a result of the *assumed association* between language and ethnicity noted above.

The essay has made a genuine attempt at tackling an old topic in a new way, but not always taken into account that many of the issues raised are in fact much older than the Celtic Revival, and some of the claims made should have been checked for factual accuracy. That said, there is also plenty of potential on display for future development.

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