

The Celts Origins to Modern Era Assignment 2 A Game of Nations

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The Celts Origins to Modern Era Assignment 2:

Write an essay of approximately 4000 words on ONE of the above which was not chosen for Assignment 1:

3. *Is there any basis on which it can be claimed that there is still such a thing as a 'Celtic nation' in the 21st century?*

A Game of Nations

The question of whether there is, or has ever been, a Celtic nation – and indeed even a European nation at that – has proven to be a problematic one over the years. I will explain the difficult academic background to this subject, elaborating upon the topics of nations, celtoscepticism, and genetic research, before bringing these concepts together to critically examine by what standards a Celtic nation should or could be identified, and coming to a conclusion.

Nation States

Today, identity is defined by citizenship, however, in the past it depended on matters of physical consequence, such as material culture and familial relations, the ability to mutually communicate by natural or traditional means, and moralities or thought processes defining unified metaphysical belief systems. The matter of whether there is such a thing as a modern Celtic people is rooted in scholarly disagreement surrounding the same question applied to ancient Celtic groups. To understand the nature of the ancient Celtic world, we must take into account that the concept of a country is relatively new and that it can be misleading to project our modern ideas of society and culture onto a specific geography as a state. Our conceptions of nation states today are derived from a long history of changing ideas and remain the product of it. In the time of the ancient Celts and all civilisations of the pre-industrial era, society was not defined by urbanised centres which represented the Nation State – the concepts of nations and states are touched upon by the Megaws (1996 and 1997, citing *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Smith, 1987).¹ A nation is a single, culturally defined people, or ethnic group, whereas a state is a geographically delineated area, and encompassed power structure, proper to a people.

¹ J. V. S. & M. R. Megaw, 'Ancient Celts and Modern Ethnicity' (*Antiquity*, 70, 1996), pp. 175–181

Whether there is a Celtic nation today is more a question of whether any nation can remain distinct in a globalist world, which can be debated. In short, today *where* you are is more significant to identity than *who* you are, so that the person becomes lost in the place.²

Celtoscepticism

The question of nationality, as it pertains to Celtic studies, remains intertwined with the concept of celtoscepticism, which is the notion that all attempt to wholistically link separate examples of Celtic tradition, archaeology, language and history must be treated with suspicion and deemed illegitimate, or academically untenable from a purely scholarly perspective (Collis cited in Trubshaw, 1994).³ Much of this sentiment can be attributed to the origins celtosceptic theory, which lie in a growing sense of late 20th century unease and lack of confidence in the integrity of Celtic as a cultural definer put into writing by John Collis in a 1993 Cardiff conference, *Celts in Europe*.⁴ In response, Ruth and Vincent Megaw, seemingly outraged, intuit that Collis suggests the Celts never existed at all. They consider the anthropological issue of otherness, and that the terms applied to those 'othered' may even be re-embraced. Ethnicity can become defined with these words, such as the Australian 'aboriginal'. They avoid parallels with African American reclaimed words, but they exemplify the same principles here, of reclaiming words, via reappropriation.⁵ This is the aspect of the word in question for them and they find its usage unproblematic.⁶ Collis holds that because he can demonstrate *Gallatae*, *Keltoi*, *Galli*, etc, as misused in the historical record, *Celtic* is misleading in archaeological nomenclature. Primarily he takes issue with methodology in archaeology which associates people, by *ethnicity*, with culture, though he clarifies that the people in question certainly did indeed exist and he does not mean to denigrate modern people claiming Celtic ethnicity⁷ – perhaps because he may consider it to be invented.

² J. V. S. & M. R. Megaw, 'Do the Ancient Celts Still Live? An Essay on Identity and Contextuality' (*Studia Celtica*, 31, 1997), pp. 107–123

³ B. Trubshaw, 'The Celtic Fallacy' (*Mercian Mysteries*, 20, 1994), Archived and available at: <http://www.indigogroup.co.uk/edge/celtic.htm>. Accessed 24/04/2021

⁴ John Collis, 'Celtic Myths' (*Antiquity*, 71, 1997), pp. 175–185

⁵ Robin Brontsema, 'A Queer Revolution: Reconceptualizing the Debate Over Linguistic Reclamation' (*Colorado Research in Linguistics*. 17 (1), 2004)

⁶ Megaw & Megaw, 1996, 175–181

⁷ Collis, 1997, 195–201

The Megaws respond to Collis (somewhat ineffectually), not addressing the archaeological questions but relating some history of English oppression of Celtic identity, and perhaps hiding behind *otherness* again. They identify that even quotation marks around the term ‘Celtic’ results in *othering* the Celtic people, whomever they may have been or might be, perpetuating their categorisation as ‘outside’ of ‘civilisation’. They describe an ‘ethnocide’ of Celts, describing that part of the process of *othering* people is to force them to identify with the model imposed upon them.⁸ They also characterise this Celtosceptic approach as mainly English in origin, which Simon James opposes.⁹ Patrick Sims-Williams addresses James critically and defends the Megaws, agreeing with their estimations that attacking Celtic identity could severely affect modern populations and noting the suspicious proclivity among English scholars to show, ‘*extraordinary sympathy for Greek, Roman, Egyptian or Aztec culture*’, but at the expense of, ‘*the Celts on their doorstep*’.¹⁰ He also exposes the unfortunate truth that members of the general population can and do use the 1993 statements made by Collis, as an academic, to justify aggressive, post-modern and deconstructionist trends, to claim that ‘the Celts did not even exist’.¹¹ It is even touted because of Collis that, since the ‘new’ science of radiocarbon dating ‘blows away’ diffusionist approaches in archaeology and apparently all hint of National Socialist ideology – here meaning the concept of modern Celtic nations –, any and all Celtic identity is nothing but ‘Celtic Fallacy’.¹² As a consequence, the consensus at the time became frustratingly laboured with post-modernism; there cannot be any certainty about Celts, because different disciplines, linguistics, archaeology, etc, will not agree. Such is a righteous veil of politically correct immunity worn when remaining on the fence. It is easy to understand the support from Sims-Williams for the Megaws as well as their reaction, because the opposition Collis finds to his arguments is do[redacted] due to the insensitivity he displays for this subject. He furthermore rejects Celto-Mania and all literature from the 19th century as irrelevant to the discussion,¹³ a typical mistake made in scholarship, which the devaluing of popular culture and its generating of interest for subjects, producing conversation, inspiring people to begin careers in the fields which ‘mania’ idealises.

⁸ Megaw & Megaw, 1997, 107-23

⁹ Simon James, ‘Celts, Politics and Motivation in Archaeology’ (*Antiquity*, 72, 1998), pp. 200–209

¹⁰ Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘How Are You Finding It Here?’ (*London Review of Books*, 21 (21), 1999), pp. 30–31

¹¹ *Ibidem*

¹² Trubshaw, 1994

¹³ Collis, 1997, 195-201

The potential consequence of such negativity is a slump in morale, lessening the popularity of Celtic Studies, and running the field into the ground.¹⁴ It would be wise, and human, to respect an emotional force which encourages people to investigate the facts; however correct, it achieves results, causes *something* to happen. Whether or not the term *barditus*, for instance (concerning the war chants of Germanic Celts, described by the Roman Tacitus), has anything to do with 'Bards' at all¹⁵, any form of battle song will always rally the troops. Motivation ensures that people persist and do not give up in their endeavours. This sentiment has always been essential in the face of adversity, for such is the nature of ambition to depend upon dreams. And the alternative is inaction or silence from lack of confidence. Surely, misuse of a term can be corrected but to completely stop using the word, the name, *Celts*, is disheartening and could easily simply stop discourse on the Celts in general. That is why Celtoscepticism has generated such controversy. Panglossian lies and 'fantasies' are not necessary to encourage insightful research, but a degree of basic respect for national identities might at least be a common ^{courtesy} ~~courtesy~~, as modern scholars seem to relish the denigrating national identity in a sort of perverse masochist exercise of progressivist thought. In any sense, they have proven to be desperately out of touch, with the modern Celts in a particular.

Y-Chromosome DNA & Genetics

The haplogroup R1b-L21 (subclade R1b1a1a2, SNP marker M269) has been correlated with peoples ancient and modern living in what is now termed 'the Celtic fringe', and this genetic mapping is surprisingly accurate to what we can call today modern Celtic nations; these are the usual suspects, Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, even Asturias, Cantabria and Galicia, (although to a less of an extent) feature the highest frequency of R1b-L21 and this proves that however difficult a genetic relationship is to define given the variables, there is definitely something there.¹⁶ This haplogroup descends from the R1b subclade R-L151, more broadly associated with all of Western Europe in general, but most mostly in areas of Celtic nations.¹⁷

¹⁴ T. O. Clancy, 'How being Celtic got a bad name – and why you should care', *The Conversation*, 2015), Available at: <http://theconversation.com/how-being-celtic-got-a-bad-name-and-why-you-should-care-44540>. Accessed 21/04/2021

¹⁵ S. Bartera, 'THE GERMANIA. KREBS (C.B.) A Most Dangerous Book. Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich', *The Classical Review*. 62 (1), 2012), p. 187

¹⁶ L. M. Cassidy, R. Martiniano, Et al., 'Neolithic and Bronze Age migration to Ireland and establishment of the insular Atlantic genome' (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113 (2), 2016), pp. 368–373

¹⁷ R. Martiniano, Et al., 'Genomic signals of migration and continuity in Britain before the Anglo-Saxons' (*Nature Communications*, 7, 2016), p. 10326

This genomic fingerprint is also proven to derive from the Bell Beaker archaeological culture, in 'Northwest Europe',¹⁸ clarifying Invasion Theory. Linguistics and genetics are being connected to archaeology in the 21st century.

The passage of R1b through Britain into Ireland from Central Europe expands on the newly reinforced narrative of Proto-Indo-European languages, being first associated with the Yamnaya Culture and originating with the Pontic Steppe in the East — as first suggested by Marija Gimbutas in the Kurgan Hypothesis.¹⁹

We can presently relate the Yamnaya culture with genetics and linguistics, because of a link between the origin of the ancestral haplogroups R1a and R1b²⁰ and a linguistic relation to PIE.²¹ Since R1b and subclades are both cross-European, and because some of them are specifically connected with Celtic groups, even the archaeology associated with these haplogroups can be collated to form a conception of Celtic Material Culture and refute Collis's statements. We can await more on-going research, but modern data will clarify on this issue.

Collis could not have had access to any such information in 1997, a decade before Dr Volker Heyd and his colleagues even posited the suggestion that we might see a Bell Beaker connection to PIE²² and we would not be in so enlightened a position ourselves were it not for a promising series of breakthroughs on this very subject in the mid-2010s. Rodway (2010) was correct that, eleven years ago, Genetic Celticity may have seemed like a dead end, but this may not be the case going forward.²³

¹⁸ Iñigo Olalde, Allentoft, Et al., 'The Beaker phenomenon and the genomic transformation of northwest Europe' (*Nature*, 555, 2018), pp. 190–196

¹⁹ Allentoft et al, 2015, 207-211

²⁰ W. Haak, Et al., 'Massive migration from the steppe was a source for Indo-European languages in Europe' (*Nature*, 522 (7555), 2015), pp. 207–211.

²¹ David W. Anthony, *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 42–47

²² Volker Heyd, R. J. Harrison, 'The Transformation of Europe in the Third Millennium BC: The Example of 'Le Petit Chasseur I+III' (Sion, Valais, Switzerland)' (*Praehistorische Zeitschrift*. 82 (2), 2007), pp. 129–214

²³ Simon Rodway, 'Celtic – Definitions, Problems and Controversies', in Lyudmil Vagalinski (Ed.), *In Search of Celtic Tyllis in Thrace (III C BC)* (Sofia: NOUS Publishers, 2010), pp. 27-43

Controversies in Celtic Studies

It should not need to be argued, and yet it must be stressed, that these simple facts are not racist. The irony cannot be lost here in observing the villainous framing made of Collis made by the Megaws in the late 90s when they placed his name with an accusing reference close to that of National Socialist archaeologist Gustaf Kossina, because these findings are, coincidentally, the 'Kossina's Smile' event, an uncomfortable confirmation of theories previously too hastily discredited for political reasons.²⁴ This is the fact of the matter, finally exposing quite how dogmatic we remain as our academics descend into implying each other's proximity to National Socialist ideas, but not outright saying so, via allusion.

The Megaws use *otherness* as an intimation for *racial science*, and 'Rassen kunde':

[...] consider Nazi Germany where an externally created definition of 'Jewishness' was applied to the often totally integrated Jewish communities of Germany or the Netherlands.²⁵

Collis uses *trans-cultural diffusion* for *settlement archaeology*, and 'Siedlungs archäologie':

[...] the correlation between art, language and ancient ethnic groups is not simple. A methodology of unqualified equation is dangerous - the same as that which underlay the Nazi propaganda claims for territorial expansion. False then, it is false now, laying archaeology open to misuse in land claims or rights over territory.²⁶

Both parties are characterising one another as National Socialists by a forced perspective, framing each other in their theories or methodologies, whilst ultimately it was a theory favoured by a National Socialist which was eventually proven to be correct in the end; and yet, the PIE homeland may be in the Pontic-Caspian Steppe, and in no Northern European *urheimat*²⁷. That any idea conforming with National Socialist ideology should be correct is so anathema to the post-war politics which the previous generation of scholars were raised surrounded by that they cannot accept any research even hinting at this, producing a climate of intolerance for ideas (reminiscent of Orwell's wrongthink), hyper-criticism of any interest in any national identity, and condemning any notion of a Celtic nation – effectively making such scholars bigots.

²⁴ Volker Heyd, 'Kossinna's smile' (*Antiquity*, 91, (356), 2017), pp. 348–359

²⁵ Megaw & Megaw, 1996, 175–185

²⁶ Collis, 1997, 195–201

So dire is the situation that someone can be othered as a National Socialist without even being one, simply for publishing something which merely confirms some of their ideas, with the researcher David Reich being called a National Socialist after sharing his findings in genetics, and who is, in fact, Jewish.²⁸ Thus, his detractors were very quick to attack with rhetoric and abstruse academese but did not even conceive of considering his national identity. Notwithstanding, if WW2 cognitive fallout did indeed result in a division among Celtic Studies scholars, with the shadow of ‘the enemy’ still causing paranoia and dissent, hopefully we can finally break free from such phobias. A ‘possible reconciliation of 20th and 21st century approaches to archaeology’,²⁹ now lies before us. Let this reconciliation become their legacy for the next generations.

Unfortunately, this may not be possible for Collis, as in 2017 he, predictably, laboured once again at this dead ended back-and-forth with the same tired trappings, now even alluding that it is ‘Nazi prehistoric archaeology’ to believe that Celtic peoples can be unified with Celtic Languages and a common archaeologically-determined art style – thus, modern Celtic nations should, still, claim no relation to Ancient Celtic culture and identity, because this would be evil somehow. This was a missed opportunity at reconciliation, because his title ‘*Celts Ancient and Modern*’, suggested that, perhaps in light of Ruth Megaw’s passing in 2013, some understanding may have been expressed on his part. He also tries to render taboo any discussion of ‘blood’ by the same duplicitous allusions to National Socialism but hiding this idea with a tirade about using the word *race* in academia.³⁰

As a consequence, it must be enumerated; genetic studies are not racist. Race is resistant to definition, and though it is not merely a ‘social construct’,³¹ it cannot be allotted to only haplogroups, as it encompasses too many factors. However, Celtic haplogroups can be associated with Celtic ethnicity³² – and linguistics³³ – because they determine shared Celtic ancestry.

²⁸ E. Callaway, ‘Divided by DNA: The uneasy relationship between archaeology and ancient genomics’ (*Nature*, 555 (559), 2018), pp. 573–576

²⁹ Heyd, 2017, pp. 348–359

³⁰ Collis, 2017, 58–70

³¹ H. Nyborg, ‘Race as Social Construct’ (*Psych*. 1 (1), 2019), pp. 139–165

³² A. Helgason, Et al., ‘Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic Ancestry in the Male Settlers of Iceland’ (*American Journal of Human Genetics*, 67 (3), 2000), pp. 697–717

³³ S. Mirabel, Et al., ‘Y-Chromosome distribution within the geo-linguistic landscape of Northwestern Russia’ (*European Journal of Human Genetics*, 17 (10), 2009), pp. 1260–73.

They do not give phenotypic information, they describe distant ancestry but not physical appearance, i.e., no *functional* genes³⁴; they are a signature and not a description, meaning people can have similar phenotypic genetic relationships and look nothing alike, so **this is not a racial issue**. It would be preferable to not need to mention this, but our academics have made this into a discussion about race when it should only be about ethnicity, and they have failed to acknowledge the subtlety in the differences which lie therein.

Therefore, it is a fallacious over-simplification to deem the equation of genetic data with a given people, or 'blood', racist. Modern academics seem still hampered by a post-modern, post-war mindset, and condemn each other, cannibalistically. In these dire straits, flesh is immaterial if the ideas are anathema.

Ethnonymic Categorisation

Collis argues through Herodotus's statements as to the location of the Keltoi that ancient sources are not reliable for using Celt as an ethnonym and cannot be relied upon for elucidating the ancient world.³⁵ However, Herodotus also gives a famous explanation on the ethnicity Greeks/Hellens, and states that that it relies upon:

[...] the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life.³⁶

The ancient way of viewing the world relayed by Herodotus is closer to the ethnic worldview of ancient Celts than any modern perspective we might take today, if people shared heritage and language, along with religion and customs, they shared an ethnicity. Would ancient Celts view modern Celts as a related nation? We must establish a methodology for attributing this based on definitions and the degree to which modern people satisfy them. According to Herodotus, if we use his ancient perspective as a guide for establishing these rubrics of what a Celtic nation might be, we must look for:

³⁴ D. Arora, Et al, 'Hgs Db: Haplogroups Database to understand migration and molecular risk assessment' (*Bioinformation*, 11 (6), 2015), pp. 272–275

³⁵ Collis, 1997, 195-201

³⁶ B. J. Broome, *Exploring the Greek Mosaic: A Guide to Intercultural Communication in Greece* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1996), pp 22–27

- ὁμαίμων, or 'homaimon'; **shared 'blood'**, ancestry or descent,³⁷ or what is called in the modern day an ethno-national definition³⁸
- ὁμόγλωσσον, 'homoglōsson'; **shared language**, thus an ethnolinguistic link³⁹
- θεῶν ἱδρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι, 'theōn hidrumata [...] thusiai'; **shared religion**,⁴⁰ and so equated to a modern ethnoreligious grouping⁴¹
- ἥθεα ὁμότροπα, 'āēthea homotropa', **shared customs**⁴²

What Herodotus refers to lastly here is in anthropology called 'Habitus', and it refers to living practices. It is the collection of physical and methodological traditions which make up a cultural way of life, a self-perpetuating set of practices which keep themselves alive by their continued usage in their respective communities and which define said peoples' lifestyles. This may come under an ethno-regional definition, but it overlaps with ethno-national.⁴³

There was no single strictly defined Celtic State that we know of, but if that means there were no Celts then there were equally no Greeks. The system operating in the lands where ancient Celts lived by appears to be a trade-network of post-agrarian tribal chiefdoms (comparable to federalism or regionalism,) and most essentially, there was no centralised government; but this does not equate to *no relation of government*.⁴⁴ These ancient Celts shared in a way of life, but modern Celts have a modern lifestyle,⁴⁵ and so do not share habitus with ancient Celts, only retaining some unusual but distinctly Celtic traditions attested in literature, folklore and poetry.

³⁷ Ibidem

³⁸ Lars-Erik Cederman, *Emergent Actors in World Politics: How States and Nations Develop and Dissolve* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 19

³⁹ Joshua A. Fishman, Ofelia García, *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 12

⁴⁰ I. Polinskaya, 'Shared sanctuaries and the gods of others: On the meaning Of 'common' in Herodotus 8.144', in R. Rosen & I. Sluiter (Eds.), *Valuing others in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 43–70.

⁴¹ Marion Müller, Darius Zifonun, *Ethnowissen: Soziologische Beiträge zu ethnischer Differenzierung und Migration* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2010), pp. 102–103

⁴² Athena S. Leoussi & Steven Grosby, *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture, and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 115

⁴³ Michael Pike, Et al. 'Habitus: a Social Anthropology of the Contemporary Dublin House Extension.' (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 111 (C), 2011), pp. 311–336

⁴⁴ J. J. Tierney, 'The Celtic Ethnography of Posidonius' (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 60, 1959), pp. 189–275.

⁴⁵ Pike, 2011, 311–336

In regards then to habitus, modern Celts could only hope for a 0.25 points out of 1, going towards the ultimate ^{tally} tally of 4.

If the Gods of Britain are cognate with the Gods of Gaul, and the Gauls were called Celts, we can say that both the inhabitants of Britain and Gauls can be called Celts, ethno-religiously, in the same respect that both Australians and Austrians are Christians. The spread of those Gods' theonyms is in actuality quite broad. By intending to say, as Collis does, that the Celts are not united in religion, one may fail to discover that religion could prove to indicate a stronger similarity than language, since the languages diverge into subfamilies, but many gods are superregional. We would do just as well to compare similar gods and tribe names. As a matter of fact, so many linguistic familial relationships between these people in spoken vernaculars and religions over such a great geographical expanse is most exceptional. Living in tribal societies, these ancient Celtic peoples knew many different and sometimes specific gods for their respective communities, with some suggested overlap⁴⁶, again and most importantly, there was no centralised religion; but this does not equate to *no relation in religion*. The ancient Celts shared in similar religions, but polytheism has been functionally inert in Europe for over 1500 years, and so modern Celts could not share in religion with their ancestors, though this is changing today as paganism grows and Christianity struggles to maintain the cultural identities of globalised peoples. They are mostly Christians, save for a few idiosyncratic practices which nonetheless remain Celtic in origin, and so they again retain only a 0.25 out of 1 degree conformity with the rubric of 'shared religion'.

By the aforementioned and attested Celtic proximity of *homaimon*, (shared blood) and *homoglōsson* (shared tongue) we can recognise that shared language becomes paired with shared ancestry, or blood, and this connection may be attested even philologically in Celtic linguistics, by Middle-Welsh *iaith*.⁴⁷ Thus, modern Celts do share ancestry and in some cases languages which can trace descent from the ancient Celts, giving us a final 2 points. This would be a generous estimate, only holding if said countries fully apply their Celtic languages, which is officially tenable on paper but not so easily achieved in practice, though the administrative languages do stand, so we might say modern Celtic countries 'have' their languages and possess them more than they use them.

⁴⁶ Rodway, 2010, 34

⁴⁷ Rodway, 2010, 36

Ancient Greeks formed ethnic groups without being a single state, with no centralised government. They were a nation, or related nations, without a singular state, and we should think of the Celts in the same way – after all, these groups do share a common Indo-European origin. Going by ancient perspective on ethnicity as relayed by Herodotus and modern genetic research, we could say that some modern Celts may have up to 2.5/4 affinity with ancient Celts, or 62.5 % *Celticity*, at the most. This is the view of antiquity; in the modern day, no one should be able to tell a Celt what makes them a Celt or not – this would be their own prerogative.

Conclusion

Celtic can be used to describe a nation with comparable accuracy to the term 'Greek', if not more, and with new scientific evidence, we now have a better idea of 'where the Celts came from'. Like all Europeans, they are descended from a people originating in the Lepontic-Caspian Steppe. The next exciting question to ask is when precisely the Proto-Celtic language may have developed, and this was likely post-Bell Beaker⁴⁸. Thus, there may have existed a Celtic nation, now, for over 4000 years.

Words: 4000 | Bibliography:

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The Celts Origins to Modern Era Assignment 2 A Game of Nations

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

58/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This essay has some unusually interesting aspects to it, although it also has a tendency to descend into a tirade in parts.

Working from the beginning, it is questionable whether *"identity is defined by citizenship"* (p. 1) today. This can be borne out by the numerous movements of people across the world who do not conform to their allocated citizenship and in some cases refuse to accept it. The claims about identity in the past here would also benefit from some references.

With regard to the definition of "nation" by the Megaws (p. 1), there are several words within it which have uncertain definitions of their own to rival that of the word "Celt", including "culturally defined" and "ethnic group". Such terms allow for different interpretations by those holding different opinions.

As for *Celtoscepticism*, in the interest of balance, if *"it would be wise, and human, to respect an emotional force which encourages people to investigate the facts"* (p. 4) then should Collis not also be respected for doing this, whether we agree with his point of view or not? He, no doubt quite sincerely, thinks that Celticist academics have produced a misleading narrative *"that members of the general population can and do use"* (p. 3).

The section on genetics links haplogroup R1b-L21 to *"the Celtic fringe"* (p. 4). There is therefore an implication here that membership of this haplogroup is an element of the Celtic identity package (possibly even if the holder does not accept it). Heredity, in the form of biological inheritance, does of course pass on traits from parents to offspring, and as such represents *continuity*, and there is no suggestion here that genetic studies are *"racist"* (p. 7).

However, under *Ethnonymic Categorisation* we are told that, in the ancient world "... if people shared heritage and language, along with religion and customs, they shared an ethnicity" (p. 8). As can be seen, and, indeed, as stated on page 9, we here have *four* component parts. These four elements are then divided equally (at 1.0 points each) by a rather interesting methodology which allows us to calculate given identities and "*the degree to which modern people satisfy them*" (p. 8) by allocating proportions indicating how much ancient Celtic identity a modern Celt may have. Page 11, for example, informs us that "*some modern Celts may have up to 2.5/4 affinity with ancient Celts, or 62.5% Celticity at the most*"

This categorisation of "components of ethnicity" bears many similarities (with the exception of the genetic aspect) to Edward Tylor's "complex whole" definition of culture. One problem which arises with both is that these components may, and often do, disseminate *independently* of each other (despite academics of various hues wishing, or possibly pretending, that they do not), resulting in people (or peoples) who may, for example, be genetically Celtic, linguistically Germanic and Roman by religion.

Some of the points made in the essay are perfectly valid, such as, "...if that means there were no Celts then there were equally no Greeks" (p. 9) and an indication of possible double standards at work. However, it also contains generalisations of its own, such as "*both Australians and Austrians are Christians*" (p. 10) when 48% of Australians are not, and the Celticity score in one case is allocated on the condition that "*said countries fully apply their Celtic languages*" (p. 10) even though this is highly unlikely to happen (and possibly also not within their gift).

Towards the end of the essay (p. 11) certain affiliations are given without noting whether these apply solely to linguistic connections or to the wider shared ethnicity above, such as, "*after all, these groups do share a common Indo-European origin*". Does this mean Indo-European solely in linguistic terms or are shared customs, genetic inheritance and religion also necessary?

A similar question could be asked of the *Conclusion* (p. 11) when noting that *"the next exciting question to ask is when precisely the Proto-Celtic language may have developed"* and that *"there may have existed a Celtic nation, now, for over 4000 years."*

Does the possible existence of a Celtic nation for over 4000 years depend only upon the development of the Proto-Celtic language (in which case it is a purely linguistic definition of *Celtic nation*) or would the Proto Celts additionally have to have shared the other three components of ethnicity? It is also not apparent why a modern Celt is free to choose what makes them a Celt, but an ancient one not so (p. 11)

The essay is in certain respects a brave attempt at answering a question with no single correct answer. However, some of the assertions in it lean too much towards certainty on occasion.

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