

The Celts: an ancient exonym for a modern mind-set?

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Title	Page
	Abstract	5
1	Introduction	6
2	The Ancestral Land	9
3	Classical times	13
4	A Janus-faced mind-set: virtual world glory and real world misery	19
	History	19
	Language and Linguistics	22
	Literature	28
	Archaeology	32
	Genetics	39
5	Time, space and perception	43
6	Summary and conclusions	50
	Bibliography	62

Table of Illustrations

Figure	Title	Page
1	Boar-head carnyx Tintignac-Naves archaeological site Naves Municipality, Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, central France	59
2	Carnyx trumpeters Gundestrup Cauldron (National Museum of Denmark)	59
3	The Dying Gaul	60
4	Gaul committing suicide with his wife	60
5	UK one pound coin (2017)	61

Abstract

A deep rift in opinion exists concerning the evolution, if at all, of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* of prehistoric continental Western Europe into the Celts associated with the modern inhabitants of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany.

On the one hand, the peoples labelled as *Κελτοί/Celtae* by the Greeks and Romans did not suddenly appear in continental Western Europe in the first millennium BC but had lived and developed there over many generations. Much of what we know of them comes from the Greeks and Romans and from their weapons and ornaments they buried with their dead. Ancient authors never assigned the label *Κελτοί/Celtae* to the inhabitants of the British Isles

On the other hand, over twelve hundred years later, Lhuyd published his work in the field of comparative linguistics in 1707AD identifying similarities in the languages of his day in Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland and Wales with that of ancient Gaul, choosing the label Celtic for this group of languages. Other eighteenth century scholars concerned with early Europe and with a growing knowledge of prehistoric monuments and artefacts then created their vision of the past peopled with Celts and Druids.

This exposition examines relevant classical and present day texts concerning history, language and linguistics, literature, archaeology and genetics sources outlining essential arguments particular to both perspectives, collating interdisciplinary arguments where possible whilst demonstrating inherent and perhaps irreconcilable incongruities. A final discussion deliberates on possible time-line tracks or interconnections between the ancient *Κελτοί/Celtae* and the present day Celts.

1. Introduction

The existence of an entity known today as the Celts is still the focus of controversy and debate. A polarising dichotomy prevails from a glowing vision of an ancient Western European past crystallising into the modern inhabitants of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and Brittany to the meaningful existence of Celts in antiquity or at all. This split opinion is well documented by various authors such as Cunliffe, Green, Oppenheimer and Sims-Williams.¹ Consequently, using the term Celt and its associated forms indiscriminately may create a questionable credibility for such terms that may well not be warranted. There seems to be no definition universally acceptable to all accredited experts so that the use of such names can only be seen as “place holders” for a concept that has still to achieve a rationale acceptable to all interested parties.

Ensnared within the argumentation from both sides skulks disconcerting and uncorroborated claims that appear to sabotage their very purpose.² Collis summarises this predicament well by showing that any meaningful investigation surrounding the above issues has to range over a number of different disciplines – history, language and linguistics, literature, archaeology, genetics - and no one is master of all of them.³ Otherwise there are dangers that we will take as proven or given, the interpretations of one discipline, when in fact these interpretations may be highly contentious if not rejected by the majority of specialists in that field and that a continuous circular argument may be created in which we all assume other disciplines have clear answers to questions.⁴ This fallacy of circular argument, known as *petitio principii* (“begging the question”) and part of the formal study of fallacies being one of the oldest branches of logic

¹ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.19.

M.J. Green, *Who were the Celts?* in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.1-7.

S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British* (London: Constable & Robinson Lt., 2006), pp. 21-23.

P. Sims-Williams, *Celtomania and Celtoscepticism*, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (1998), pp. 1-2.

² P. Sims-Williams, *Celtomania and Celtoscepticism*, p. 1.

³ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2003), p.12.

⁴ *ibid.*

established by Aristotle occurs when a premise is used to prove a conclusion that in turn is used to prove the premise.⁵

To facilitate understanding, the following concept definitions will be used here.

Κελτοί/Celtae/Galli/Galatae (hereinafter designated *Κελτοί/Celtae* for ease of reference) are the four interchangeable umbrella names for those peoples and tribes perceived by the Greeks and Romans to be *Κελτοί/Celtae* from the early fifth century BC until 476 AD.⁶ Traditionally 476AD is considered the end of the Western Roman Empire.⁷

Celts/Celtic are present day labels whose origins emanate from the linguistic studies of Edward Lhuyd published in 1707 in his *Archaeologica Britannica*, Volume 1.⁸

Communication is not limited to language alone but includes all acts of identifying and imparting or conveying information i.e. art, music etc.

The Otherworld is not a physical location but a creative faculty of the mind forming both images and concepts of external objects not present to the senses and imaginary world(s) to the neglect of the present or real one.⁹

⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fallacy#ref1102387> <accessed 06.03.2018>

Strictly speaking, *petitio principii* is not a fallacy of reasoning but ineptitude in argumentation: thus the argument from “p” as a premise to “p” as conclusion is not deductively invalid but lacks any power of conviction, since no one who questioned the conclusion could concede the premise. A special form of the circular argument fallacy, called a vicious circle, or *circulus in probando* (“arguing in a circle”), occurs in a course of reasoning typified by the complex argument in which a premise p1 is used to prove p2; p2 is used to prove p3; and so on, until pn – 1 is used to prove pn; then pn is subsequently used in a proof of p1, and the whole series p1, p2, . . . , pn is taken as established.

⁶ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.2.

B. Cunliffe, *Celticization from the West: The Contribution of Archaeology* in B. Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012), p.13.

D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1987), pp. 1-2.

⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Odoacer> <accessed 24.04.2018>

In 476AD Odoacer, a German warrior and probably a member of the Sciri tribe, assumed power after leading his tribesmen to depose Romulus Augustulus, the last western Roman emperor

⁸ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 48-49.

J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, pp.49-52.

T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1958), pp. 12- 13.

D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, pp. 1-2.

⁹ J.B. Sykes (ed.) *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Writing is a system of recording language by visible or tactile marks.¹⁰

The recreation of the past is an indispensable part of any process when attempting to identify a people or group of peoples and thus occupies an important place in the provision of evidence to demonstrate, if possible, that the ancient peoples of Western Europe including Britain and Ireland were not only indigenous there, but that they had been living there if not for ever, at least longer than their neighbours.¹¹ To make sense of the past we need, therefore, to establish some sort of chronological order. However, the major interacting disciplines outlined above that may provide evidence for the ancient *Κελτοί/Celtae* do not necessarily correspond exactly but may overlap or correlate only in certain respects with each containing its own parameters specific to itself.¹² This perfectly acceptable situation unfortunately creates an adverse competitive environment when seeking mutually supporting evidence from sovereign sources whose data basis is to any extent incompatible with those of the remaining associated sources.

Within the above framework with its qualifications, it is proposed to attempt to trace (*follow or mark track or path of*)¹³ the evolution of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* (*appearance in due succession or development from earlier forms*)¹⁴. Significant sources that refer to the *Κελτοί/Celtae* will be critically analysed to ascertain any possible time-line track and/or any parallel developments, if any, in their presentation against the strict dictionary definition of evidence (*the provision of clear and obvious testimonies and facts in support of a conclusion*).¹⁵

¹⁰ F. Coulmas, What is writing? An excerpt from *Writing Systems: An Introduction to their Linguistic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.1. Available: http://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/82173/excerpt/9780521782173_excerpt.pdf <accessed 25.06.2018>

¹¹ P. Misha, Invention of a Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds. S.Schwander-Sievers and B. J. Fischer (London: Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2002), pp.41-42.

¹² M. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, pp.6-7

¹³ J.B. Sykes (ed.) *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

2. The Ancestral Land

Europe, although previously inhabited by Neanderthals and their human forebears, has only been occupied by our kind, *Homo Sapiens*, for perhaps 50,000 years.¹⁶ At the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) about 20,000 years ago, huge volumes of water were locked up in ice sheets with global sea level being about 120m lower than present thus exposing large expanses of continental shelf and creating land bridges that allowed humans, animals and plants to move between continents.¹⁷ The most extensive glaciation saw much of northern Europe covered in ice sheets greater than 1 km thick. In the British Isles glaciation extended as far south as the Thames Valley. South of the ice sheets, the landscape would have been an inhabitable polar desert and a treeless tundra steppe environment with tracts of permanently frozen ground.¹⁸ This means that whoever had lived there before the ice had now gone, leaving an empty landscape and only their bones and tools – and a blank genetic sheet. So we can be sure that colonisation began afresh after LGM.¹⁹

The climate warming trend following LGM was stalled abruptly by the Younger Dryas event which saw a decline in the human presence in northern Europe. Southern Europe contained zones (known as *refugia*) of high biodiversity even at LGM where species of plants and animals had survived throughout the ice age.²⁰ Northern Spain and southern France held the western refuge populations. Farther east in Europe, a much larger collection of refuge areas existed between the Balkans and the Ukraine.²¹ For the western refuge populations as climatic conditions improved, travel along the coast and major river routes formed an important role in the distribution of materials and in linking communities across very considerable distances. Cunliffe equates this with travel corridors along which large numbers of people were travelling but always on short haul journeys. Thus, although people may have undertaken

¹⁶ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p. 115.

¹⁷ J. Woodward, *The Ice Age: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 13.

¹⁸ S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd., 2003), pp. 248-253.

J. Woodward, *The Ice Age: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 15-17.

¹⁹ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p. 115.

²⁰ J. Woodward, *The Ice Age: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 130-139.

²¹ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, pp. 115-116.

journeys of only tens of kilometres, ideas, technology exchange and beliefs could pass quickly along such information highways.²² This would suggest that remodelling any specific society need not be asserted by large-scale invasions.

By the fourth millennium BC, after animal husbandry and crop cultivation had been introduced, the communication networks enabled both social interaction between communities by prestige goods exchange as well as transmission of belief concepts of the cosmos and attitudes towards death and ancestors. The third and second millennia saw increasing exploitation of raw materials such as gold, copper, tin, amber and ornamental stone. This intensified from the thirteenth to the seventh century BC as can be demonstrated by the large quantities of tools and weapons in circulation. For example, the Carp's Tongue sword type was manufactured in Brittany and was distributed along the Loire and Seine and across the Channel into south-eastern Britain. Marginally variant designs were made by local smiths in southern France and Spain signifying that the sword type was fittingly prestigious to warrant imitation indicating not only the exchange of artefacts but also a transmission of concept values.²³

Wells confirms that the peoples of Iron Age Europe exploited a wide range of resources, including different kinds of stone, timber, clays and mineral ores, as well as salt and graphite, jet, lignite and sapropelite.²⁴ Both Clark²⁵ and Jankuhn²⁶ state that most of the resources exploited had been utilized earlier and that links to the Bronze Age and Neolithic practices are always apparent. The above arguments together with Cunliffe's previously outlined concept of travel corridors / information highways suggest that complex but interrelated *Κελτοί/Celtae* societies could have developed over hundreds of generations as a result of kinship, trade and exchange systems. Collis confirms that continuity and change within these generations will have been invoked in many such ways but suggests that we rarely see total change; even if an earlier population

²² B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, p.25.

B. Sykes, *The Seven Daughters of Eve* (London: Bantam Press, 2001), p. 329.

²³ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, pp .20-24.

²⁴ P. Wells, Resources and Industry in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.213.

²⁵ J. Clark, *Prehistoric Europe: the economic basis* (London, 1952) cited in P. Wells, Resources and Industry in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.213.

²⁶ H. Jankuhn, *Vor- und Frühgeschichte vom Neolithikum bis zur Völkerwanderungszeit* (Stuttgart, 1969) cited in P. Wells, Resources and Industry in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.213.

completely disappeared, there is likely to be continuity in communication of some aspects of the human landscape as shown in the two examples below.²⁷

Although we have no firm evidence of storytelling before the advent of writing, we can assume that narratives have been central to human life for thousands of years. Prehistoric hunter/gatherers initially lived in bands of ten to fifty people in caves, surviving on hunted or scavenged meat, gathering wild harvests of seasonal fruits, nuts and roots whilst inventing tools essential to their survival. Why, then, did they come to caves such as at Altamira (discovered in 1868 in Northern Spain and designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985) and make paintings of animals not where they lived but in places that were dark and remote?²⁸ It is submitted that these were places of inauguration, when the secret dark was suddenly banished by torch flames probably accompanied by oral storytelling and chanting, such that the animals were perceived as magical, harbingering power that the hunters believed they gained from the paintings. For the power that we see expressed is that of anticipation: the forward looking imagination. The painter had frozen the moment of fear, and the hunter had entered it through the paintings that direct the mind from what is seen to what can be inferred or conjectured. Indeed, this is so for all artwork; for all its superb observation, the images only mean something to the eye because the mind fills it out with roundness and movement, a reality by inference, which is not actually seen but is imagined.²⁹

The *Κελτοί/Celtae* had never been without craftsmen – in fact the very narrowness of their society gives their ornamental art a peculiar concentration and vitality. The carnyx (Figure 1) an ancient war and ceremonial trumpet that flourished between 300 BC and AD 200 and inescapably associated with the *Κελτοί/Celtae* was once widespread, although only a dozen or so fragments are known to us. Bands of mercenaries took it on their travels; carnyces were present at the attack on the Greek sanctuary at Delphi in 279 BC; carnyces

²⁷ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p.156.

²⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <http://www.britannica.com/place/Altamira> <accessed 04.04.2016>

²⁹ J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1973), pp. 54-56.

K. Clark, *Civilisation* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), p. 2.

B. Sykes, *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, pp. 280-283.

defied Julius Caesar in Gaul.³⁰ Consequently, the widespread records for the carnyx rather demonstrate that aspects of art and technology were shared over wide areas among diverse cultures and do not necessarily represent a unique feature of a pan-European *Κελτοί/Celtae* culture. The artistic representation (Figure1) is taken from nature and depicts the wild boar admired by ancient peoples for its intelligence, speed and power – a totemic portrayal of the people’s soul and strength. The head was a technically complex structure with a moveable jaw, a wooden tongue mounted on a bronze leaf-spring in its throat and a soft ridged pallet. The centre line of the human pallet mirrors the joints of the bones (fontanelle leaves) forming the skull; all mammalian skulls have fontanelles allowing the compression of the skull at birth. The carnyx also has fontanelles formed from hammered bronze sheets of different grades to simulate the different weights of bone in a real mammalian skull. Inside the head above the soft pallet is a resonating chamber which is capable of radiating sound in all directions. The instrument was, therefore, very loud with a dynamic tonal range of almost five octaves - greater than any modern instrument. – creating strident battle cries to deep, sonorous tones suitable for ceremonial processions and rituals.³¹ The only playing position known is that depicted on the Gundestrup Cauldron (Figure 2) in the National Museum of Denmark.³² The artistic craftsmanship and the acoustics are works of genius demonstrating an advanced practical interrelated appreciation of physics, biology and materials science.

From a distance the carnyx looks like a head on a pole – recalling descriptions from classical texts invoking images of decapitated enemies killed in battle, displaying the heads as war trophies – a topic that will be discussed in detail later. At some time in the 2nd / 1st century BC, then, one could have seen the sun glinting from carnyx war trumpets, a sea of heads on poles navigating the undulating plains. Looked at today in the National Museums of Denmark or Scotland, they may communicate the marvels of a powerful work of art; but to a

³⁰ National Museum of Scotland. Available: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/deskford-carnyx/> <accessed 17.11.2017>

³¹ J. Kenny, (British Museum 09.10.2015) The Carnyx: The Mouthpiece of the Gods Available: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/zSLsTf2TH-Y> <accessed 22.01.2018>

³² National Museum of Denmark. Available: <http://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-early-iron-age/the-gundestrup-cauldron/> <accessed 17.11.2017>

mother of a family trying to settle down in her little hut, it would have seemed less agreeable – as menacing to her times as the periscope of a nuclear submarine today.³³

3. Classical times

MacCana writes that the perceived unity of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* of antiquity was one of culture as those peoples that the Greeks and Romans knew as *Κελτοί/Celtae* were from various ethnic origins, but in the view of their external observers shared sufficient characteristics – such as social and political institutions, and a general way of life- for them to be recognisably distinct.³⁴ The many attributes ascribed to the *Κελτοί/Celtae* (feasting and hard drinking, boasting, duelling, fearless and irascible predilection) suggest a spectre of a continual ferment of restlessness. The *Κελτοί/Celtae* peoples seemed to lack both a faculty for continuum and an aptitude for centralised structures manifesting a preference for a peripatetic lifestyle in a continual search for plunder, mercenary service or simply somewhere new to settle. Cunliffe documents the extent of this lifestyle which promoted the disintegration of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* with individual groups becoming a small minority in an indigenous population (such as Asia Minor and Egypt), whilst squandering their manpower on purely mercenary activities.³⁵ Eventually, the *Κελτοί/Celtae* became associated with Gaul, where they were able to maintain their identity until their conquest by Caesar and their demise at the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D.

Rankin states that visual evidence of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* in ancient art is scarce but striking drawing our attention to two Roman marble statues (Figure 3 & 4).³⁶ The sculptures show images of a vanquished enemy, embodying courage in defeat, self-possession in the face of death, and the recognition of nobility in an

³³ K. Clark, *Civilisation*, pp. 1-2.

³⁴ P. Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., 1970), p.11

³⁵ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp.168-182.

³⁶ D. Rankin, *The Celts through classical eyes* in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p .21.

Probably copies of lost Greek originals commissioned by Attalus, king of Pergamon, in honour of his victories over the Toistobogii, a *Κελτοί/Celtae* people and subgroup of the Galatians.

alien people. The public exhibition of these statues a double function; commemorating the defeat of a terrifying enemy but hinting at the victory of civilisation over barbarianism. The classical Greeks and Romans believed in an age of primeval innocence, now lost to them, but perhaps still surviving amongst barbarians such as the *Κελτοί/Celtae*. Greek sources are flavoured with philosophical and anthropological preconceptions, which tend to see elements of a universal philosophy in the customs and ideas of the *Κελτοί/Celtae*. The Romans, however, remained basically terrified by the prospect of them as the *Κελτοί/Celtae* were capable of spreading alarm amongst their ranks.

Allusion is first made to *Κελτοί* by name, for example, in the writings of the geographer Hecataeus of Miletus (550 – 476 BC) professing the presence of *Κελτοί* in southern Gaul in the late sixth century and the historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484 – 425 BC) in the early fifth century BC, making reference to the *Κελτοί* in his *Histories*, though he admits that his information about the west is imperfect.³⁷ Herodotus comments that:

For the Ister (Danube), beginning in the land of the *Κελτοί* and the city of Pyrene, flows through the middle of Europe. The *Κελτοί* live beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar) and border on the Cynetes, who are the westernmost inhabitants of Europe. The Ister then flows through all Europe and empties into the Euxine (Black Sea) at Istria, which colonists from Miletus inhabit.³⁸

Herodotus is clearly describing Iberia in south-west Europe, but mistakenly thinks that it held the source of the Danube in the land of the *Κελτοί*. A subconscious hook-up is thus evident from the fifth century BC between a *Κελτοί* homeland and the fountainhead of the Danube. Today we know that the source of the Danube is a karst spring, whose water rises up through strata of chalk and gravel in the city of Donaueschingen in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg in the south-west of Germany bordering Switzerland.³⁹

The “La Tène culture” discussed in more detail later, apparently fitted well with the Graeco-Roman portrait of *Κελτοί/Celtae*, notably the emphasis on weapons

³⁷ M. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p. 4.

³⁸ Herodotus of Halicarnassus, *History* 2.33, trans. by J. Koch, *The Celtic Heroic Age* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2003), p. 5.

³⁹ Stadt Donaueschingen. Amt Tourismus und Marketing, 78166 Donaueschingen. Available: <https://www.donaueschingen.de/en/Culture+Tourism/Experience-Donaueschingen/The-Source-of-the-Danube> <accessed 30.03.2018>

of war, wheeled vehicles interpreted as chariots, splendid jewellery, and equipment for drinking and feasting. This, together with the dating of the artefacts to the fifth and fourth centuries BC and their close geographical location to the correct source of the Danube with its subconscious fifth century BC hook-up to the *Κελτοί*/Celtae homeland caused the “La Tène culture” with its stylistic traits, artefacts and site characteristics to be seen as an ethnic signifier. Eastern France and the Rhine basin became thought of as the “Celtic homelands” and any “La Tène”-type artefacts or traces were presumed to represent the presence of Celts.⁴⁰ These assumptions unwittingly sired the nineteenth-century myth of Celtic origins in Iron Age Central Europe.⁴¹

Powell states that the Greeks wrote down the name *Κελτοί* having received it from the native pronunciation.⁴² How accurate this transcription from a most probably unknown local native language into Greek cannot now be determined. Cunliffe observes that most first century BC writers realised that the Greek *Κελτοί* and the Latin Galli were interchangeable and that *Κελτοί*/Celtae was the general umbrella name by which a broad sweep of peoples stretching from north of the Alps to Iberia were known to the classical world.⁴³ However, there appears to be no indisputable evidence that this “broad sweep of peoples” ever called or perceived themselves as *Κελτοί*/Celtae, an argument supported by Champion, Renfrew and others.⁴⁴ Green points out that we cannot tell whether a *Κελτοί*/Celtae consciousness ever existed.⁴⁵ Considering the wide geographical spread and the many different tribes comprising this “broad sweep of peoples”, inhabitants of a specific area would feel a much stronger sense of belonging to their immediate local community than to any unknown and at the

⁴⁰ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), p. 57.

⁴¹ S. Oppenheimer, *Origins of the British*, pp. 31-33.

⁴² T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 15.

⁴³ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p. 2.

J. Fife, *Typological Aspects of the Celtic Languages* in M. J. Ball (Ed.), *The Celtic Languages* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.

D. Miles, *The Tribes of Britain* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 2005), pp. 105-106.

⁴⁴ S. Champion, *Jewellery and Adornment in The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.411.

B. Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 354.

J. Leerssen, *Celticism*, *Celticism*, ed. T. Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) p. 4 cited in K.

McCone, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2008), p. 7.

T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 15.

C. Renfrew, *Early Celtic in the West: The Indo-European Context in Celtic from the West 2*, eds. J. Koch and B. Cunliffe (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), p. 208.

⁴⁵ M. Green, *Who were the Celts?* in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p. 3.

best nebulous encompassing greater geographical *Κελτοί/Celtae* entity. We are not in a position to know how these “immediate local communities” might have called themselves as, being peoples using oral communications leaving no documentation to this effect, there is nobody now we can ask for clarification. The sole source for the names, existence and location of these peoples would seem to be Greek and Roman writers. Even here, as Collis indicates, there are varying perceptions of the term *Κελτοί/Celtae* over time: for the historian Ephorus (405–330 BC) writing in the 3rd century BC it is a general term for all barbarians living in Western Europe, but for Caesar (100-44 BC) a specific group in Gaul, living in a well-defined territory defined by the sea and by rivers.⁴⁶

Champion notes that it is also not currently possible to prove that any of the Iron Age people who lived in central and Western Europe in the first millennium BC spoke a Celtic language.⁴⁷ On this point Caesar writes that “Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, those who in their own language are called *Κελτοί/Celtae*, in our Gauls, the third”.⁴⁸ However, this observation must be treated with caution as it is not corroborated by direct evidence from a *Κελτοί/Celtae* or from any other contemporary author.⁴⁹ A further caveat is that Caesar had his own hidden agenda aimed at self-justification to his Roman audience as claimed by the Roman historian, Gaius Asinius Pollio.⁵⁰ Aristotle argues that the spoken word precedes the written word.⁵¹ If this premise is accepted then inscriptions in ancient languages such as Latin, Greek, Etruscan, Gaulish, etc. are the visible or tactile marks of

⁴⁶ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, pp.105-107.

⁴⁷ S. Champion, Jewellery and Adornment in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.411.
B. Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 354.
J. Leerssen, Celticism, *Celticism*, ed. T. Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) p. 4 cited in K. McCone, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities*, p. 7.
T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 15.

C. Renfrew, Early Celtic in the West: The Indo-European Context in *Celtic from the West 2*, eds. J. Koch and B. Cunliffe (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), p. 208.

⁴⁸ C. Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, trans. W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn, 1st edn (New York: Harper & Brothers. 1869), I.1.1 Available:

<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0448.phi001.perseus-eng1:1.1>
<accessed 16.03.2018>

⁴⁹ B. Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, p. 358.

T. Champion, Power, Politics and Status in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.86.

S. Oppenheimer, *Origins of the British*, p. 48.

⁵⁰ For further information regarding Gaius Asinius Pollio see text page 47 and footnote 208

⁵¹ A fuller discussion of this premise is given on page 22 and footnote 77

the spoken words and concepts that preceded them thus providing indirect, circumstantial evidence of their existence but not necessarily, especially for extinct languages, of their pronunciation. Consequently, Coulmas advises that Aristotle's definition of writing is secondary to and dependent on speech and, therefore, deserves to be investigated only as a means of analysing speech.⁵²

According to Frey, the wave of immigration by numerous tribes into Italy in classical times was reported on by various historians such as Polybius and Livy, who both enumerate in the same sequence the various tribes, which from west to east successfully settled the land as far as the Adriatic Sea. There is no indication of an overall (*Κελτοί/Celtae*) ethnic group.⁵³ Cunliffe notes that the population mobility that gripped Europe from the fifth to the second centuries BC is also evident in Iberia with a confederation of separately named tribes, occupying a large part of the peninsula centre eventually expanding south into Andalucía and north and west into what is now Portugal.⁵⁴ In all these regions names such as Celtici, Celti, Galli and Gallaeci are apparent, derived again as general umbrella designations rather than specific tribal names implying the movement of mixed groups made up from a number of different tribes.⁵⁵ In Asia Minor the various groups that would later collectively be known as the Galatians of the New Testament, comprised three separate tribes, the Tolistobogii, the Tectosages and the Trocmi.⁵⁶ Fife confirms that the ancients did not fully recognize the ethnic unity of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* (Caesar states that even the three parts of Gaul were linguistically disparate). Thus they were referred to by individual tribal designations (the Aedui, the Belgæ, the Helvetii, the Boii) sharing certain cultural traits (religious institutions and a warrior aristocracy). This would suggest that *Κελτοί/Celtae* were more a branch of a particular cultural heritage rather than an explicit recognition of linguistic affiliation.⁵⁷ In all of the above there is no indication that any tribe in mainland Western Europe

⁵² F. Coulmas, What is writing? An excerpt from *Writing Systems: An Introduction to their Linguistic Analysis*, p.1.

⁵³ O - H. Frey, The Celts in Italy in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, pp. 515-519.

⁵⁴ B. Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, p. 362.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 362.

⁵⁶ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp.83-85.

⁵⁷ J. Fife, Typological Aspects of the Celtic Languages in M. J. Ball (Ed.), *The Celtic Languages*, pp. 3-4.

was known as the *Κελτοί/Celtae*. Finally, classical writers never described the inhabitants of Ireland and Britain as *Κελτοί/Celtae*.⁵⁸

The written testimonies and facts provided by the classical observers offer only very scanty information as the peoples they labelled as *Κελτοί/Celtae* had a lasting prejudice against putting important matters in writing. Cunliffe states that knowledge of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* grew slowly before the fourth century BC with one of the earliest references, which may contain material going back to the sixth century, being provided by the poem "Ora Maritima" written by Avienus at the end of the fourth century AD.⁵⁹ Avienus makes only one direct reference to the *Κελτοί/Celtae* but the vague nature of the reference and the lack of geographical or chronological precision rob it of much significance except the existence of the name at a supposedly early date.⁶⁰ Collis is particularly critical of classical sources and observes that many major manuscripts do not survive directly or have been completely lost. Many are in fact of medieval date, and had been copied, and recopied by scribes who often did not fully understand what they were copying. The texts are almost universally corrupt.⁶¹ Not until the eight century AD, approximately three centuries after the epoch under investigation, do we see scribes of Britain and Ireland, not romanised, but influenced by Rome through Christianity, beginning to set down in writing a literature which was not predominantly Classical in form and content.⁶²

⁵⁸ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p.180.

S. James, *The Atlantic Celts* (London: British Museum Press, 1999), p. 33.

S. Oppenheimer, A reanalysis of multiple prehistoric immigrations to Britain and Ireland aimed at identifying the Celtic contributions in B.Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West*, p.146.

D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ R.F. Avienus, Ora Maritima from the edition A. Schulten in *Fontes Hispaniae Antiquae*, Vol. I. (Barcelona 1922), Line 132. Available: <http://thelatinlibrary.com/avienus.ora.html> <accessed 21.06.2018>

⁶⁰ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp.2-3.

⁶¹ J.Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p. 13.

⁶² D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, p. 1.

4. A Janus-faced mind-set: virtual world glory and real world misery

Green stresses that any appraisal of prehistoric Europe is based upon information which is both fragmentary and ambiguous.⁶³ The far reaching implications of this statement can only be fully appreciated by initially evaluating the various previously identified disciplines separately in a neutral but objective fashion for their own take on the question of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* and Celt/Celtic identity. A pen-portrait for each major discipline will be developed below in a non-weighted order outlining essential arguments particular to its own mind-set, collating interdisciplinary arguments where possible whilst demonstrating inherent and perhaps irreconcilable incongruities.

History

History, fundamental to our identity, is not “what happened in the past” as the past is totally inaccessible to us. History is not inherited from generation to generation, a ready-made account unaltered thereafter, as surviving verbal or written accounts (whether folk-tales or state histories) were subject to people with their own prejudices and communicated by others, perhaps equally biased. History is not discovered as an unambiguous truth as it is subject to both habits of people, who may or may not bury their dead, and decay, which preserves pottery but not textiles. History is what we think, say and write about the evidence of the past and is the construction of modern minds of imagined pasts from fragmentary surviving debris of past societies. Indeed, authors such as Coe and Green have recognised a synchronising and synthetic history fusing sources for its own political ends and involved in the creation of a full national pseudo-history, a process which was closely allied with the historicising of legend.⁶⁴ History is, therefore, created although within the framework of any such evidence as may exist.⁶⁵ Questions about origins are perfectly valid

⁶³ M. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.3.

⁶⁴ J.B.Coe and S. Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend*, Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1995), p. 6.

T. Green, The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur (1998) [online]. Available: <http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/historicity/arthur.htm> <accessed 06 October 2016> p.5.

O.J. Padel, The Nature of Arthur, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27: (Summer 1994), pp.1-31., p.23.

⁶⁵ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p.33.

historical questions, even if the full range of evidence needed to supply a conclusive answer may not always be available.⁶⁶

The above qualifying limitations are typified in the evaluation of the “*Annales Cambriae*” (10th century), which is the oldest surviving chronicle of Welsh affairs but whose first entries are dated approximately four to five centuries earlier and coincide with the demise of last western Roman emperor.⁶⁷ Charles-Edwards has discussed the primary issues of structure, dating and credence surrounding the entries in the Annals highlighting the dilemma that exist from a periods in which there is no secure evidence of any annalistic source.⁶⁸ Alcock notes that accurate dating of events is rarely, if ever, possible for the early medieval era for technical chronological reasons and concludes that in the case of pagan kingdoms, we can have no confidence whatsoever in the chronology of events.⁶⁹ Padel endorses this viewpoint in demonstrating that in even the earliest entries to “*Annales Cambriae*” several seem to have been made retrospectively (births of St. Brigid, St. David and St. Columba) whilst others seem legendary (death of Bishop Ebur at 350 years of age).⁷⁰

According to Bergqvist, the modern understanding of the functions and raisons d’être of history and literature and the clear cut boundary between them in 20th century writing is what has impeded understanding of the much more complex interrelationship between history and literature (which cannot entirely be differentiated one from another) as literacy slowly evolves within preliterate peoples.⁷¹ The general historical consciousness of this period was very much focused on that which the living can remember or have been told by their fathers or grandfathers and, for a reliable memory, can be seen as a hundred years. Anything beyond this time limit would slowly evolve into legends and myths. We should not forget the ancient authors role in accounting their past,

⁶⁶ N. Malcolm, Myths of Albanian National Identity in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds. S.Schwander-Sievers and B. J. Fischer, p.73.

⁶⁷ J. B. Coe and S. Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend*, p. 12.

⁶⁸ T. Charles-Edwards, The Arthur of History, in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, eds.R. Bromwich et al. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp.25-28.

⁶⁹ L. Alcock, *Arthur’s Britain* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), pp.17- 20.

⁷⁰ O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).p.9.

⁷¹ K. Bergqvist, Truth and Invention in Medieval Texts: Remarks on the Historiography and Theoretical Frameworks of Conceptions of History and Literature, and Considerations for Future Research, *Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiquidade e Medievo* 2(2): 2013, 221-242. Available: www.revistarodadafortuna.com <Accessed 07.08.2018>

which not only reveals how they experienced history but what experience of the past (also a fabricated or imaginary one) their audience would have. So long as the narrative was plausible, the audience would accept it. History was what was commonly held to be true. The gradual rise and expansion of literacy and documentation, the keeping of records and archives meant that the collective memories of peoples (or its ruling classes) would be written down in chronicles whilst literature is best seen as a textual form of collective imagination of the same groups.

To try and read the above and similar works as linear history is completely false to the methods and assumptions with which they were composed.⁷² Contrary to our modern mind-set of differentiating between fact and fiction, this approach to history was of course selective: just as it was important to awaken parts of history, it was also important to leave other parts out or, if this was not possible, to remake them. Consequently, the dividing line between myth and history was often blurred and not easily discernible.⁷³ An example of the manipulation of myths and symbols to create history was shown by Edward I, king of England (1272-1307), who visited Caernarfon in 1284 with the pregnant queen Eleanor. According to Welsh tradition, a thousand years and more beforehand, the Romans had come to this part of Wales and built their legionary fort Segontium in the time of Magnus Maximus, a Roman emperor who had seen it in a dream and had journeyed to Wales to discover it was a reality.⁷⁴ Therefore, Edward's new castle in Caernarfon was to be built with polygonal towers and different coloured bands of masonry. Other symbolic events had already been contrived. The year before, Edward had "discovered" the body of Emperor Maximus; it was reburied in the local church. Edward was presented with a coronet that had once belonged to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the only Welsh ruler to be recognised as Prince of Wales.⁷⁵ On 25th April 1284, Eleanor gave birth to a son, who was baptised Edward after his father. It can hardly be

⁷² T. Green, *The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur*, p. 5.

⁷³ P. Misha, Invention of a Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds. S.Schwander-Sievers and B. J. Fischer, pp.41-42.

⁷⁴ S. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 103-110, 106. The "Dream of the Emperor Maxen" is one of the eleven tales of the Mabinogion and tells a legendary version of Magnus Maximus's rise to power in which the emperor's messengers "saw a great castle in the city with great towers of different colours"

⁷⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Llywelyn-ap-Gruffudd> <accessed 14.08.2018>

doubted that the child's birth at Caernarfon was intentional. In the person of the new Edward, invested as the Prince of Wales in 1301, Wales' distant imperial past and its future as an English dominion were deliberately linked.⁷⁶

Language and Linguistics

Aristotle (384-322BC) discusses how linguistic entities relate to ideas and things of the material world.

Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.⁷⁷

Coulmas stresses that Aristotle's main concern was not with writing but with the relationship between things, ideas and words as a prerequisite of developing logical thinking because words manifest themselves in two different forms: as sounds produced by the human voice and as letters.⁷⁸ The relationship is a matter of systematic rigour and terminological orderliness – the phenomenal world precedes cognition which precedes language which in turn precedes literacy.

Plato in his *Phaedrus* dialogue has Socrates say, 'Written words are unnecessary, except to remind him who knows the matter about which they are written'.⁷⁹ This would seem to indicate the literacy practice of Greek antiquity, that writing is not only preceded by, but is also subordinate to, vocal speech and that, therefore, both individuals and societies used speech before writing. Furthermore, it can be reasoned that writing was just a memory aid, but could not substitute for speech, which was always bound to a speaker who could be asked for a clarification. In contrast, written words were silent, they lacked the

⁷⁶ M. Morris, *A Great and Terrible King* (London: The Random House Group Ltd., 2008), pp. 191-193.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *On Interpretation* translated by H.P. Cooke, H. Tredennick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938) p. 115 Available: https://www.loebclassics.com/view/aristotle-interpretation/1938/pb_LCL325.115.xml <accessed 25.06.2018>

⁷⁸ F. Coulmas, What is writing? An excerpt from *Writing Systems: An Introduction to their Linguistic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.3.

⁷⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus* (from *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9) translated by H. N. Fowler (London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1925), 275d. Available: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> <accessed 25.06.2018>

immediacy of speech, they were dead. For the *Κελτοί/Celtae* knowledge and knower were not separated which might explain why the druids were reluctant to use the written word.

Continental Celtic is the generic modern-day name for a geographic group of languages spoken by the people known to classical writers as *Κελτοί/Celtae*; at various times during a period of roughly 1,000 years (approximately 500 BC–AD 500), they occupied an area that stretched from Gaul to Iberia in the south and Galatia in the east. The great bulk of evidence for Continental Celtic consists of the names of persons, tribes, and places recorded by Greek and Latin writers. Only in Gaul and in northern Italy are inscriptions found, and the interpretation of these is in most cases doubtful. Given the nature of the evidence, knowledge of these languages is confined largely to the sound system and a small part of the vocabulary and no certain conclusions can be reached as to their historical development or the differences between them.⁸⁰

Evans states that when we consider in what way and to what extent the linguistic evidence of the ancient world can play a role in our understanding of linguistic structures patterns among peoples, we have to be ruthlessly restrained when tracing the spread and mix of peoples probably over several millennia and that the quest for the ultimate origin of a particular language or particular groups of families is futile if we have to delve far into prehistory for our tentative answers. At best the earliest linguistic evidence concerning the *Κελτοί/Celtae* reflects fragmentary languages.⁸¹ Lejeune warns that in speaking of Celtiberian, Gaulish and Lepontic (these being the three dominant identifying tags) we can only speak very generally of language and dialects of particular groups of people who used in various sites or areas various alphabets (forms of Iberian, Etruscan, Greek and Latin alphabets in continental Europe) in their inscriptions and that we really cannot speak (even for the *Κελτοί/Celtae* of the Iberian peninsula or of ancient Gaul) of people constituting “groups d’une

⁸⁰ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Celtic-languages> <accessed 08.05.2018>

⁸¹ D. Ellis Evans, The Early Celts: The Evidence of Language in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, pp. 9-10.

complète unite linguistique'.⁸² These implications for Celtiberian, Gaulish and Lepontic are briefly considered in the following paragraphs.

Celtiberian is the modern name for a q-Celtic language spoken by the ancient people in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula. The language was written mainly in the Celtiberian variant of the north-eastern Iberian script, a semi-syllabic system of 28 syllabic and alphabetic characters, some derived from Greek and Phoenician systems but most of unknown origin, but also in the Latin alphabet. It is known from some two hundred inscriptions and coins mainly produced between 133 – 70BC within the context of culturally Romanized urban centres. Pre-Roman types of inscriptions (painted vessels) are negligibly rare.⁸³ Recently, there has been much written concerning the Tartessian language for which Koch states that there are now 98 inscriptions from south Portugal and south-west Spain. They are hard to date and most were discovered without archaeological context.⁸⁴ Koch further represents that much of the corpus of said inscriptions can be interpreted specifically as Celtic whose forms are of sufficient density to warrant the conclusion that Tartessian is a Celtic language.⁸⁵ Opponents of this theory, such as Eska, Prósper and Valério, put forward a series of counter arguments: very small number of texts; every symbol of its writing, arguably based on the Phoenician alphabet, has not been convincingly deciphered; scientific literature has been ignored; opinions of like-minded scholars subtly interwoven (cf. Bayesian statistics above); rather than being allowed to provide its own evidence, Tartessian is being forced to fit the proposed concept structure.⁸⁶ Stifter bluntly states that the linguistic position of

⁸² M. Lejeune, *Les Belles Lettres, Lepontica*, (1971), pp 122f. / Celtibère et lépontique in *Homenaje a Antonio Tovar* (1972), pp. 265-271. / Un problème de nomenclature: lépontiens et lépontique, *Studi Etruschi*, 40: (1972), pp 259-269 cited in D. Ellis Evans, *The Early Celts: The Evidence of Language in The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.10.

⁸³ D. Stifter, *Old Celtic Languages*, pp. 37-53. Available: http://rootsofeurope.ku.dk/kalender/arkiv_2012/celtic_spring/Keltiberisch_1_WS_2010.pdf/ <accessed 09.05.2018>

⁸⁴ J. Koch, Tartessian as Celtic and Celtic from the West: both, only the first, only the second, neither in Le Bris, D. (Ed.), *Aires linguistiques - Aires culturelles Etudes de concordances en Europe occidentale: zones Manche et Atlantique* (Brest : Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 2012), pp. 77-92.

⁸⁵ J. Koch, Paradigm Shift? Interpreting Tartessian as Celtic in *Celtic from the West*, pp.185 – 301.

⁸⁶ J. F. Eska, Comments on John T. Koch's Tartessian-as-Celtic Enterprise, *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 42(3): (2014), 428 – 438.
A. Guerra, Newly discovered inscriptions from the south-west of the Iberian Peninsula in *Celtic from the West*, p.78.

Tartessian is unclear, but despite recent attempts to prove it, it is unlikely to be Celtic.⁸⁷ The issues involved are still ongoing, restricting any further investigations here.

We now move on to Gaulish that in the strict sense is the *Κελτοί/Celtae* language that was spoken in the area of modern France, ancient Gaul. In a wider sense all those *Κελτοί/Celtae* parts of the European Continent may be said to belong to the Gaulish language area which do not belong to the Celtiberian or Lepontic (although for some scholars Lepontic is only an archaic dialect of Gaulish) language areas. This takes in a far stretch of lands from Gaul across Central Europe (Switzerland, South Germany, Bohemia, Austria), partly across Pannonia and the Balkans until Asia Minor (Galatia).⁸⁸ Lepontic is a fragmentary attested language which was spoken in a restricted area ca. 100km in diameter centred on the alpine town of Lugano, Switzerland. It is known from around 140 mostly short inscriptions written in the alphabet of Lugano derived from the Etruscan alphabet. Many of them can be dated into two primary groups on the basis of epigraphic and archaeological grounds: a smaller one from the sixth and fifth centuries BC during the zenith of the Golasecca culture, and a larger one from the second and first centuries BC before the arrival of the Roman Republic. Few inscriptions can be reliably dated to the fourth and third centuries BC. From the present state of knowledge Lepontic is not a discrete Continental Celtic language but a Gaulish dialect further supporting the existence of a Gaulish language as outlined by accredited authors such as Eska, Kruta and Stifter.⁸⁹

B. M. Prósper, Some Observations on the Classification of Tartessian as a Celtic Language, *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 42(3): (2014), 468 – 486.

M. Valério, The Interpretative Limits of the Southwestern Script, *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 42(3): (2014), 439 – 467.

⁸⁷ D. Stifter, *Old Celtic Languages*, pp. 37-53. Available: http://rootsofeurope.ku.dk/kalender/arkiv_2012/celtic_spring/Keltiberisch_1_WS_2010.pdf/ <accessed 09.05.2018>

⁸⁸ D. Stifter, *Old Celtic Languages*, pp. 107-131. Available: http://rootsofeurope.ku.dk/kalender/arkiv_2012/celtic_spring/Gallisch_1_WS_2010.pdf <accessed 09.05.2018>

⁸⁹ J.F. Eska, The Linguistic Position of Lepontic, *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: Special Session on Indo-European Subgrouping and Internal Relations* (1998), pp. 2-11. [Online: <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/isa-publications/elanguage>] <accessed 08.05.2018>

V. Kruta, *Celts History and Civilisation* (London: Octopus Publishing Group Ltd., 2004), pp. 30-31.

Powell also states that primary evidence of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* can be obtained from place names. These are often river or other topographical names as those of actual settlements or strongholds.⁹⁰ Perhaps the greatest concern with place-name evidence is the lack of chronological depth, even when a particular language is identified.⁹¹ Place-names are liable to outlive the language which created them as we do not know how much older they may be than the date of the document that first records them.⁹² There is thus an implication that a given language may have existed there at some point in time but, as previously noted in the discussion on the “*Annales Cambriae*”, we are left with a similar dilemma that we can have little or no confidence in the chronological language development. River-names are even more resistant to change and can tell of older linguistic affiliations making it sometimes impossible to tell when such names were given, especially if foreign names are adopted that do not reflect the indigenous language.⁹³

Powell asserts that throughout the four centuries from Herodotus to Julius Caesar, the *Κελτοί/Celtae* were recognisable to their southern literate neighbours by their characteristic way of life, their political organisations, and their appearances.⁹⁴ Although oral communication of laws, myths/legends, poetry and general popular story-telling was the attributed method of their propagation within *Κελτοί/Celtae* people(s), the very nature of oral societies that have not reached the state of literacy precludes for practical reasons any significant or accurate evaluation of such traditional material notwithstanding its brilliance and richness. The term *Κελτοί/Celtae* is therefore justifiable in a

D. Stifter, *Old Celtic Languages*, pp. 23-36. Available:
http://rootsofeurope.ku.dk/kalender/arkiv_2012/celtic_spring/Lepontisch_WS_2010.pdf/
<accessed 09.05.2018>

⁹⁰ T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 16.

⁹¹ D. Parsons and P. Sims-Williams, (eds), *Ptolemy: Towards a Linguistic Atlas of the Earliest Celtic Place-names of Europe* (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2000), p.174 cited in S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, pp. 328-329.

⁹² S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, pp. 320-321.

D. Parsons, Tracking the Course of the Savage Tongue Place-names and Linguistic Diffusion in Early Britain in *Celtic from the West*, pp. 170-183.

B. M. Prósper, Some Observations on the Classification of Tartessian as a Celtic Language, *The Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 42(3): (2014), 468 – 486, p.469.

⁹³ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p. 321.

P. Sims-Williams, Celtomania and Celtoscepticism, p. 19.

⁹⁴ T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, pp. 15.

cultural identification sense (i.e. with what people say and do when they meet other people), and should not necessarily be restricted to mean modern day “Celtic-speaking”. Oppenheimer writes that for the anthropologist’s softer concepts of perception, affiliation and self-identification a common mother-tongue is not a prerequisite.⁹⁵

A substantial part of English that is not Germanic comes from French that was imported by a very small number of Norman nobles after 1066 AD – an occurrence called language borrowing.⁹⁶ During the last three centuries BC, the expanding Roman Empire subjugated all of continental Europe except for areas north of the Rhine and Danube. All these lands came to speak Latin dialects, ancestral to the Romance languages of today (Spanish, French, Portuguese, Catalan, etc.) - an occurrence called language shift.⁹⁷ Both these phenomenon demonstrate mechanisms emanating from centralised but powerful, minority elites with superior military, political and administrative structures that enable a community to internally change its language overtime independently of other aspects of its cultural self-identification that do not necessitate concurrent medium to large scale migrations of people across the European continent.⁹⁸ James observes that *Κελτοί/Celtae* languages need not have spread from one small area at all; they could have evolved gradually and simultaneously over a large area, hand in hand with shared social, political and religious practices. This sort of common heritage may help to explain the spread of culture over central and Western Europe: close links of outlook and kinship already existed, which would predispose people to adopt new concept values. The theory fits much more plausibly with the archaeological evidence, which provides little support for westward migration of *Κελτοί/Celtae* peoples matching the historically known movements south and east.⁹⁹

Finally, the term Celtic is a concept of academic thought of quite modern times deriving from the pioneer linguistic studies of George Buchanan (1506 – 82)

⁹⁵ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p. 25.

⁹⁶ S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*, p. 295.

⁹⁷ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, pp. 29-30.

⁹⁸ S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*, p. 295.

⁹⁹ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p.81.

S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*, p. 295.

⁹⁹ S. James, *Exploring the World of the Celts* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1993), p. 21

and Edward Lhuyd (1660 – 1709).¹⁰⁰ Lhuyd had identified similarities in the languages of his day in Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland and Wales with that of ancient Gaul in France, choosing the English language label Celtic that implied an umbrella term for this group of languages.¹⁰¹ Cunliffe notes that the term “Atlantian” for instance might be used as a device to describe language growth in Western Europe thus confirming the nature of such terminology as arbitrary labels rather than a reference to a people and its cultural expressions.¹⁰² However, once Lhuyd had promoted his idea of Celtic speakers past and present, the label was also rapidly used by others to portray cultural and national identities ancient and modern. Stukeley (1687-1765) associated monuments of prehistoric Britain firmly with the druids, not as an interesting possibility but as a dominant and orthodox belief.¹⁰³ Davies and Williams (both 1746-1826) may be considered the founders of the modern Welsh Bardic tradition.¹⁰⁴ James notes that in just a century the Celts became established popular fact, the circumstances and recent date of their appearance generally forgotten.¹⁰⁵ This modern popularisation with its alternative facts led to the peoples of Britain and Ireland and the ancient *Κελτοί/Celtae* all becoming erroneously labelled as Celts by implication.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, it is this pseudo-ethnic misrepresentation of the terms Celts/Celtic and their flawed links to the Central European Iron Age synonymous with the La Tène period that is the root of the confusion still with us today.

Literature

Prehistory nomads, hunter/gatherers and migrant mercenaries/invasers were in a continual state of flux requiring little forethought beyond the next march, voyage or battle. Consequently, it did not occur to them to build stone houses or

¹⁰⁰ T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰¹ K. McCone, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2008), p. 27.

¹⁰² B. Cunliffe, *Britain Begins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 246-248.

¹⁰³ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 101.

¹⁰⁴ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, pp. 196-198.

B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, p. 46

S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, pp. 44-51.

K. McCone, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities*, pp. 27-28.

S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, pp. 8-9.

to write books.¹⁰⁷ Their culture, which was, for the most part, oral, comes to us second hand as allusions and references in poems and stories (perhaps written down by third parties centuries later). It is from this wealth of tribal memory that traditional history, traditions and legends originated.¹⁰⁸ It was observers from the lands of Greece and Rome who called their northern neighbours *Κελτοί/Celtae* thus mooring the premise that they existed in some manner, whether self-defined or as a group of peoples who were classified as such by communities who belonged to a separate but literate tradition.¹⁰⁹

Texts are cultural products. What Herodotus tells us about *Κελτοί* and Caesar says about *Celtae* are creations of those particular writers, based on their perceptions, the historical circumstances under which they were observing and writing, their purpose in communicating with their audiences and other culturally determined factors. Like archaeological sites, texts are static representations of historically specific times in dynamic relationships. Peoples about whom texts are written change continuously, but texts often do not reflect such changes.¹¹⁰ Welsh emphasises some of the elements of prose fiction belong to the large and ancient stock of migrating story-elements of traditional storytelling (for example - type M223 blind promise; type Z72.1 a year and a day; type Z310 unique vulnerability).¹¹¹ Consequently, as Padel stresses, we may not rely on all details, even though meaningful within context, as some may rely on floating themes and plots, which could be attached to characters as an author might please.¹¹²

Nagy stresses that Celtic scholars do not doubt that there was an active oral narrative tradition functioning in pre-Christian and medieval Christian society.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ K. Clark, *Civilisation*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ B.F. Roberts, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Welsh Historical Tradition, *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 20 (1976), p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ M.J. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.3. B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁰ P. S. Wells, *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians* (London: Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2001), p.9.

¹¹¹ A. Aarne and S. Thompson, The Types of the Folktale Folklore Fellows Communications, 184: (Helsinki 1961) in A. Welsh, The Traditional Narrative Motifs of The Four Branches of the Mabinogi, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 15: (1988), pp.58-59.

¹¹² O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature*, pp. 27-28.

¹¹³ J.Nagy, Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative: An Overview, *Oral Tradition* 1/2 (1986): 272-301, 272 Available: http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/1ii/4_nagy.pdf. Accessed <07.08.2018>

The pre-Christian storytellers, singers and poets relied on their memory for oral transmission of their narratives containing examples of social behaviour and ideological world views that were interlaced with legendary, genealogical, place names and legal lore that it was their responsibility to disseminate. However, with the advent of Christianity and the Latin alphabet, began the gradual integration of the Christian monastic scribes with the native narrators so that it became inescapable for the once purely verbal performers to eventually express their expertise in terms of book-learning and literacy. Slotkin draws our attention to the danger that literacy here is connected with Latin learning, not native scholarship.¹¹⁴ Consequently, there has been lively debate as to what extent the oral tradition is reflected in substance and style in extant medieval texts. Carney was of the opinion that there was a reluctance to see the written texts which we possess as being consciously wrought artistic works by medieval authors, but instead, to see them as more or less accurate representations of previously existing oral compositions, implied to be of great antiquity.

It is sometimes not remembered by scholars that the written material of a literate society and the oral material of a society that has not yet been seriously affected by literacy are on different planes of existence—hence the transmission of material on each plane is governed by rules appropriate to its own special nature. There has of course been transference of material from the oral plane to the written. But the transmission was necessarily made in the first place by people whose minds had been opened to the great world of classical and Christian literature.¹¹⁵

Nagy qualifies this position when he states that Carney disputes the notion of oral tradition as a static repository for “authored” texts, and the image of the literary tradition as a museum for enclosing and preserving these static texts.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ E. Slotkin, *Medieval Irish Scribes and Fixed Texts*, *Éigse*, 17: (1977-79), 437-450. Cited in J.Nagy, *Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative: An Overview*, *Oral Tradition* 1/2 (1986): 272-301, 296. Available: http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/1ii/4_nagy.pdf Accessed <07.08.2018>

¹¹⁵ J. Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History*. (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1955), pp. 276-277. Cited in J.Nagy, *Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative: An Overview*, *Oral Tradition* 1/2 (1986): 272-301, 277. Available: http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/1ii/4_nagy.pdf Accessed <07.08.2018>

¹¹⁶ J.Nagy, *Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative: An Overview*, *Oral Tradition* 1/2 (1986): 272-301, 277 Available: http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/1ii/4_nagy.pdf Accessed <07.08.2018>

British and Irish texts were all written down after the islands had become Christianized, and referred to a vanished system of belief to which their authors themselves were perhaps hostile.¹¹⁷ Considering one example in more detail, the texts of the Welsh poems and stories are mostly to be found in one or more of five manuscript volumes containing Welsh literary material. These volumes can only be approximately dated, and not one of them is older than the thirteenth century. But most of the contents of all five have been shown to be copies of very much earlier prototypes and frequently these contents have evidently been transmitted through more than one intermediary version. It is the more unfortunate that all these manuscripts lack a number of reams and/or separate sheets.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the lack of numerous contemporary copies of the texts, with some surviving in a very few copies, makes it difficult to gauge their popularity and thus their relevance to contemporary audiences.¹¹⁹ Accounts of events are rarely sustained for very long, never throughout a poem, and allusion to events is far more common than recounting. Because so much of the background has been lost to us we tend to underestimate the charm of a bare allusion, whether a battle fought last month or one from the past known in legend. The audience could be relied upon to fill in the details from memory, and also to unite around a shared experience or knowledge.¹²⁰ Brander notes that such communications were passed down the generations with no two recitations being exactly the same due to different body language, dramatic pauses and tonal dynamics. The essential weaknesses of being “written down” are that the necessity to learn them no longer exists and, more important, their essential impact oral impact lost: documented for posterity but bereft of life.¹²¹ The poets and story-tellers also had the task of conserving the genealogies of the powerful families, the tribal lore, and the stories of conquest or migration. Communities and elites, it seems, define their present identity and political

¹¹⁷ R. Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), p.146.

¹¹⁸ R. Bromwich, et al. (eds.), *The Arthur of the Welsh*, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ J. Rowland, Genres in *Early Welsh Poetry Studies in the Book of Aneirin*, ed. B.F. Roberts (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1988), 179-208, pp.184-185.

¹²¹ M. Brander, *Scottish and Border Battles and Ballads* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1993), pp. 11-13.

awareness by choosing their past, for the constituents of the past and the past itself are not “found” or “uncovered”, but constructed.¹²²

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of the human past through the recovery and study of the physical traces that people leave behind them. The usual focus on the physical structure and spatial arrangement of material on archaeological sites can obscure our understanding of the processes of which the sites are the static representations of single moments in the actions of human agents.¹²³ However, excavations, artefacts and graves are unable to speak for themselves, dependent on subjective interpretations for their associated philosophy of being and knowing from acknowledged experts. Similar limitations also apply to more modern archaeological techniques such as aerial photography (six concentric post hole rings Woodhenge 1926-7) or geophysical surveying (ditch and post hole ring Stanton Drew 1997).¹²⁴

Perhaps, most peoples, regardless of historical context, believed in a continuation of existence and revered their ancestors as indicated in the cross-cultural studies of Steadman et al.¹²⁵ Pitts has advanced the concept that archaeology depends on analogies between different societies.¹²⁶ Häussler has commented that archaeology provides a good insight into funerary rituals.¹²⁷ Consequently, funeral rituals may tell us in part about how people related to their ancestors and perceived the afterlife/Otherworld and enable more probabilistic statements derived from consideration of different human societies to be made. Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina made such an analogy between standing stones and associated rites involving ancestors in Madagascar and Stonehenge (c 5000 BC). Stone is hard, dry, durable and solid, a material analogy for the timelessness and permanence of the ancestors that contrast with the soft, perishable wood of houses for the living and memorials for the

¹²² D. O’Corrain, *Legend as Critic*, *Cork University Press Historical Studies* 16 (1987), p.25.

¹²³ P. S. Wells, *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians*, p. 9.

¹²⁴ M. Pitts, *Hengeworld* (London: Random House Group Limited, 2000) pp. 16, 34-36.

¹²⁵ J. Steadman, C. Palmer, C. Tilley, The universality of ancestor worship, *Ethnology* 35 (1996), pp. 63-75.

¹²⁶ M. Pitts, *Hengeworld*, p. 257.

¹²⁷ R. Häussler, *Manipulating the Past. Re-thinking Graeco-Roman accounts on ‘Celtic’ religion in Fraud, Lies and Deception in the Ancient World (Fraude, Mentiras y Engaños en el Mundo Antiguo)* ed. F. M. Simón (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2014), pp.35-54.

recent dead.¹²⁸ Conceptually, the bones in stone tombs are not so much groups of people as collective ancestry.¹²⁹ A concept that is quite common, that life in living beings resides in their bones, not their flesh.¹³⁰ Pryor describes the Stonehenge ritual landscape as comprising the domain of the living (timber circles at Durrington Walls and Woodhenge) connected by a processional, liminal corridor (The Avenue) to the domain of the ancestors (stone circle Stonehenge).¹³¹ Later construction phases (Phase 3: c 2300 BC) re-orientated the site onto an alignment with the rising midsummer sun. Other features, not necessarily added at the same time, emphasise this alignment.¹³²

Similar structures are represented throughout ancient Western Europe. Maes Howe (c 2600 BC) is a large stone chambered tomb in Orkney. On the shortest day, the sun shines down the tomb passage when it sets.¹³³ The stone structure (c 5200 BC) at New Grange passage tomb, Ireland, was designed to allow sunbeams at sunrise at the time of the winter solstice to shine down the passage and eventually illuminate the cloud-spirals carved into the dome of the central chamber.¹³⁴ Recent excavations at Glauberg, Germany, uncovered a grave of early La Tène date (c. 500 BC) inside a wooden chamber with a stone covering. The main tumulus is surrounded by a wide ditch and was part of an elaborately structured landscape comprising a 350m long “avenue” defined by parallel ditches.¹³⁵ It is striking that the tumulus and course of the avenue (the domain of the ancestors) are separated by the deep trenches from the actual settlement area (the domain of the living) following the burial rites of the early La Tène period.¹³⁶ The trench-post system around the burial mounds is essentially aligned with astronomical fixed points and landmarks inscribing both

¹²⁸ M. Pitts, *Hengeworld*, p. 257.

¹²⁹ J. Mack, *Madagascar Island of the Ancestors* (London: British Museum, 1986), cited in M. Pitt, *Hengeworld*, p. 258.

¹³⁰ M. Pitts, *Hengeworld*, pp. 233-234.

¹³¹ F. Pryor, *Britain B.C.* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), pp.233-245.

¹³² M. Pitts, *Hengeworld* p. 229.

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 225.

¹³⁴ A. Eliot, *The Timeless Myths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Limited, 1997), pp. 204-206.

¹³⁵ P. S. Wells, *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians* (London: Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2001), pp. 63-67.

¹³⁶ A. Posluschny, Archäologie ohne Spaten – Computergestützte Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des Glaubergs in seinem Umfeld in B. Pinsker und A. Zeeb (eds), *Der Glauber in Keltischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Hessen, 2006), pp. 259-277. My translation.

the annual sun phases and a 19 year moon generation cycle.¹³⁷ The above structural complexes suggest the transmission of belief concepts of the cosmos and attitudes towards death and ancestors between different societies and that the peoples of ancient Western Europe had a good practical understanding of astronomy and building construction that may have been promulgated utilising the previously discussed travel corridors / information highways.

Archaeologists have long been recovering high quality artefacts of the Iron Age, especially decorated jewellery of gold and bronze, often found in elaborate graves, and have taken these as symbols of social distinction. Such use of prestige goods is a well-documented strategy in many societies with differences in social ranking, and the flourishing of craftsmanship in the prehistoric world must owe much to the demand for such symbols.¹³⁸ Cunliffe writes that the society elites enforced their sole rights to benefit from the economic interaction of the consuming Mediterranean and the resource rich peoples of Western Europe. This is vividly demonstrated not only by the distribution of Mediterranean imports but by the extensive use and deposition of gold. Some of these luxury and valuable goods generated were handed down the various levels of the hierarchy as gifts from patrons to clients in return for services.¹³⁹ Archaeological cemetery excavations within mainland Europe where the burial tradition widely practiced was inhumation have shown that the dead person was provided with food, drink and equipment appropriate to his or her status. This may indicate a belief in an afterlife within the *Κελτοί/Celtae* world; an opportunity for ruling families to publically display its prestige or simply parting gifts from grieving loved ones. We shall never know. There is practically an absence of any form of burial in the British Isles over much of the country before the first century BC.¹⁴⁰

One type of artefact that may provide direct information on the *Κελτοί/Celtae* in the past is the written word inscribed on stones and coins.¹⁴¹ Powell points

¹³⁷ B. Deiss, Zur Struktur und Orientierung der Grabensysteme um die Fürstengrabenhügel am Glauberg in B. Pinsker und A. Zeeb (eds), *Der Glauber in Keltischer Zeit*, pp. 279-294. My translation.

¹³⁸ T. Champion, Power, Politics and Status in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.87.

¹³⁹ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, pp 30-33.

¹⁴⁰ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* pp.208-209.

¹⁴¹ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, p. 329.

out that some inscriptions incorporated *Κελτοί/Celtae* words and names, but were mainly written in Latin, or more rarely in Greek. These were found on altars and monuments incorporated within the Roman Empire.¹⁴² The dominance of Latin in stone inscriptions may reflect a bias towards them having been set up by the Roman military.¹⁴³ Coins provide information on group identities during the second and first centuries BC and bear legends in Latin or Greek characters being minted by the leaders of communities, with images and names that identified those individuals and motifs significant to the group. The non-literate groups/peoples have borrowed a means of communicating identity from the literate Mediterranean societies.¹⁴⁴ One thing that makes the absolute dating of *Κελτοί/Celtae* coinages difficult is that they were almost certainly never issued on a regular annual basis, but were produced in discontinuous batches as and when needed for special occasions e.g. alliance gifts or soldier's pay.¹⁴⁵ A modern day take on the importance of identity communication is evidenced on the latest (2017) UK one pound coin (Figure 3) that carries on the obverse the portrait of the Queen with the inscription "Elizabeth II · D · G · REG · F · D" utilising the Latin abbreviations for DEI GRATIA REGINA FIDEI DEFENSOR. This is not to confuse scholars 2000 years hence that the United Kingdom still speaks Latin but because British coins reflect a nation with a very long history and traditions that take a long time to die. Using Latin inscriptions on coins is not anachronistic but a statement of who we, the British, are - reinforced by the effigy of Queen or King on the obverse and emblems of greatness, like Britannia, on the reverse.¹⁴⁶

Archaeology cannot hope to chart the detail, but it can begin to untangle the main threads of the story.¹⁴⁷ Crucial to producing a narrative is the ability to assign accurate dates to events as even with radiocarbon dating, it has not been possible to do this with any kind of precision. It has been mooted that more precise scientific methods and the analysis of dated sequences using

¹⁴² T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 16.

¹⁴³ P. Sims-Williams, The five languages of Wales in the pre-Norman inscriptions, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 44: pp. 1-36 cited in S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British* p. 335.

¹⁴⁴ P. S. Wells, *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁵ D. Nash Briggs, Coinage in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p. 249.

¹⁴⁶ The Royal Mint, *The New Pound Coin* Available: <https://www.thenewpoundcoin.com/> <accessed 23.01.2018>

¹⁴⁷ B. Cunliffe, *Britain Begins*, p. 134.

Bayesian statistics have all combined to provide a series of precise dates enabling a real history to be compiled, accurate to within a generation or two.¹⁴⁸ Bayesian statistics, a currently controversial viewpoint concerning statistical inference, is based on a definition of probability as a particular measure of the opinions of ideally consistent people. Statistical inference is modification of these opinions in the light of evidence, and Bayes' theorem specifies how such modifications should be made. The tools of Bayesian statistics include the theory of specific distributions and the principle of stable estimation, which specifies when actual prior opinions may be satisfactorily approximated by a uniform distribution. A common feature of many classical significance tests is that a sharp null hypothesis is compared with a diffuse alternative hypothesis. Often evidence which, for a Bayesian statistician, strikingly supports the null hypothesis leads to rejection of that hypothesis by standard classical procedures. The likelihood principle emphasized in Bayesian statistics implies, among other things, that the rules governing when data collection stops are irrelevant to data interpretation. It is entirely appropriate to collect data until a point has been proven or disproven, or until the data collector runs out of time, money, or patience.¹⁴⁹ Bronk Ramsey supports this scepticism stating that despite recent refinements in Bayesian statistics, the chronology for example of Stonehenge, and even more so of other monuments in the Stonehenge landscape, remains imprecise.¹⁵⁰ Bayesian chronologies are not absolute, but fundamentally interpretative meaning that it is essential to explore and compare alternative models to investigate the reliability of suggested chronologies.¹⁵¹ Consequently, Cunliffe's earlier viewpoint that for archaeology the greatest difficulties concern chronological and regional variation and that to imply that any generalized description has universal application is evident nonsense would appear to be still valid.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.134.

¹⁴⁹ W. Edwards et al., Bayesian statistical inference for psychological research, *Psychological Review*, 70(3): (1963), 193-242.

¹⁵⁰ C. Bronk Ramsey, Bayesian analysis of radiocarbon date, *Radiocarbon* 51(1): (2009), 337-360 cited in M. Bowden et al. *The Stonehenge Landscape* (Swindon: Historic England, 2015), p. ix.

D. Miles, *The Tale of the Axe* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2016), p. 340.

¹⁵¹ García Sanjuán, L., Vargas Jiménez, J.M., Cáceres Puro, L.M. et al., Assembling the Dead, Gathering the Living: Radiocarbon Dating and Bayesian Modelling for Copper Age Valencia de la Concepción (Seville, Spain), *J World Prehist.* (2018), 1-135 Available: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10963-018-9114-2> <accessed 28.05.2018>

¹⁵² B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p. 92.

During Victorian times, as scientific excavation began to develop, major discoveries in mainland Europe were ascribed to the continental *Κελτοί*/Celtae of the classical texts.¹⁵³ Of particular importance were the finds at Hallstatt in Austria and in particular La Tène in Switzerland. The characteristic items found at La Tène were related to objects recovered from burials, especially in eastern France and the Rhine basin, which could be dated to the fifth and fourth centuries BC by the vessels of well-known and well-dated types buried with them. This collection of artefacts became known to archaeologists as the “La Tène culture” and was typified by the strange, swirling, largely abstract decoration with which they were covered.¹⁵⁴ Maier states that in contrast to the rigid geometric pattern of the late Hallstatt culture, the early La Tène period preferred soft and flowing forms. These included plant motifs and representations of animals, mythical creatures and human faces within the ornamentation.¹⁵⁵ The nature of La Tène art according to Ruth and Vincent Megaw is also elusive, curvilinear, ambiguous, shape-changing, miniaturist, often abstract and minimalist, symbolic and non-narrative.¹⁵⁶

Cunliffe observes that when excavation began at an extensive cemetery at Hallstatt in Austria in 1846, convention was followed as discussed below by calling the graves found “Celtic”.¹⁵⁷ Megaw and Megaw were more direct when asserting that since art styles can be universally accepted as clear evidence of self-image or cultural (though not necessarily ethnic) identity, “Celtic” is a term which is just as valid as the no less conventional – and arguably equally inapposite – archaeological labels “Hallstatt” and “La Tène” for, respectively, the earlier and later phases of the European pre-Roman Iron Age but that “Celtic art” is synonymous with La Tène art of the period c. 500BC to 100AD.¹⁵⁸ The Megaw’s exchange of “La Tène” for “Celtic” masks two hidden implications. Firstly that “La Tène” and “Celtic” are interchangeable and thus are only convenience labels with

¹⁵³ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁴ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁵⁵ B. Maier, *Die Kelten* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck oHG, 2000), p. 41. My translation.

¹⁵⁶ R. and V. Megaw, The Nature and Function of Celtic Art in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 345.

¹⁵⁷ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ R. and V. Megaw, The Nature and Function of Celtic Art in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p. 345.

no deeper meaning. Secondly, the La Tène label signifying simply the location of the finds, is both neutral and nonpartisan providing a non-controversial nomenclature whilst the Megaw's subtle use of the label "Celtic", despite their disclaimer to the contrary, insinuates an ethnic dimension presupposing people who create these weapons, chariots and jewellery.

The ethnic characteristics usurped in this manner create a questionable new premise which is then used to purport a street credibility for their "La Tène" means "Celtic" conclusion. For it has previously been established that the cultures of the ancient peoples of Western Europe including the British Isles were rich enough to import and export essential and luxury goods throughout the classical world. It is important to stress that the movement of ideas and skills can be more rapid and comprehensive than the movement of the people themselves.¹⁵⁹ Hence, the presence of archaeological artefacts at any site does not necessarily mean that they had been manufactured there. Care must be exercised in identifying possible import / exports and fads of fashion between separate but interlinked peoples and cultural characteristics. Büchenschütz even notes that La Tène culture was not archaeologically visible in France for considerable periods.¹⁶⁰

Recent research has devised a technique for analysing images produced spontaneously in the brain, by a variety of processes including trance, hallucinogenic intoxication, flickering lights, migraine or epilepsy demonstrating that "subjective" images were irregular or chaotic, while non-subjective designs were simple and geometric.¹⁶¹ Green confirms that cannabis was found in the Hallstatt tomb at Hochdorf (Germany) commenting on surreal images possibly being executed by artists while in a drug-induced trance.¹⁶² This indicates for the virtually non-literate groups of peoples who lived in central and Western Europe in the first millennium BC a possible shamanic background to their beliefs and their Otherworld. This would suggest that their idea of the Otherworld allowed remarkable imaginative fluidity with the natural and

¹⁵⁹ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, p. 26

S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁰ O. Büchenschütz, The Celts In France in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.555.

¹⁶¹ J. Dronfield, The vision thing: diagnosis of endogenous derivation in abstract arts, *Current Anthropology* 37 (1996), pp. 373-391 in M. Pitt, *Hengeworld*, p. 234.

¹⁶² M. J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1997), p. 33.

Otherworld seeming continually to merge and commingle in an almost free variation, and it is perhaps in this light that one should view the regular and easy interchange of animal and human images – phenomena previously discussed for the ancient carnyx trumpet and the Unesco World Heritage site.¹⁶³

Miles writes that experiments with sound have found that deep voices reverberate within tombs and that chanting by priests could create trance states and that abstract designs are the entoptic images generated by the human brain while people are in a state of trance or influenced by psychotropic drugs as evidenced above in the Hochdorf tomb.¹⁶⁴ As entoptic images are caused by phenomena within the observer's own eye, they cannot share a direct and specific view of the phenomenon with others but they can actively interpret externally such visual sensory stimulations within the basis of their own specific cultures. The monks and scribes of the early church are still remembered for their illuminated gospel books with their complex borders and elaborated initial letters, the knot-work and stylized animals or human faces which spill in brilliant colours across the pages.¹⁶⁵ The human head is frequently depicted enmeshed in the swirl of other motifs. Once the eye knows what to look for, the heads jump out from their background of scrolls and tendrils. It is very much the art of dreams, where things are not quite what they should be and where shapes transform themselves without warning. Shape shifting of this kind is an often recurring feature.¹⁶⁶ Deathless works of art embellish and exercise human imagination. Their mythography preserves and lends earthly, material, and time-bound existence to matters which are essentially spiritual and timeless. They may enable truth to reveal something of itself; they make visible the invisible, not in public but deep in our own private Otherworld with a momentary flash shock of recognition.¹⁶⁷

Genetics

Extensive forest cover during the Mesolithic colonisation of north-west Europe reduced grassland hunting and forced increased coastal exploration. The

¹⁶³ P. Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology*, p.55.

¹⁶⁴ D. Miles, *The Tale of the Axe*, pp. 317-318.

¹⁶⁵ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁶⁶ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts - A very short Introduction*, pp. 67-70.

¹⁶⁷ A. Eliot, *The Timeless Myths*, pp. 115-116.

Balkan and Iberian refuges as addressed earlier both acted as gene pools for re-expansion after the Younger Dryas, leading to two different sources of gene flow into central Europe and eastern Britain, while the British Isles still received the bulk from the south-west.¹⁶⁸ Sykes summarises his major results for direct maternal descendants from the ancient population “*refugia*” to Europe as follows: 47% from the “*Dordogne*” throughout modern Europe; 17% from “*Syria*” to Spain, Portugal, Cornwall, Wales and western Scotland; 11% from “*Greece*” to western Britain and Scandinavia; 9% from “*Tuscany*” distributed along the western edge of Europe particularly in western Britain and Ireland.¹⁶⁹

These findings are to be seen as indications of general trends for whilst genetics may present opportunities for understanding our past, there are limiting constraints when attempting to underpin history from genes. Small populations are more likely to become genetically distinct; rare genetic varieties are more likely to survive in large populations but can become dominant in small gene pools; people mainly exchange genes with their near neighbours unless there is a strong cultural barrier (religion); genetic differences are more likely in populations isolated by distance or substantial physical barriers such as deserts or mountain chains.¹⁷⁰ Thus, if major genetic changes are to be justified, large samples of the population must be investigated especially as the genetic difference between populations is likely to be small.¹⁷¹

However, large numbers of burials covering long periods of time are not easily obtainable especially where the burial rite was cremation or environmental factors such as acidic soils are not favourable to the preservation of human remains.¹⁷² Furthermore, although every human has ancestors, it does not automatically follow that every human fossil had descendants – it might belong to a species now extinct.¹⁷³ Technical difficulties, such as degradation and

¹⁶⁸ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, 2006, p. 159.

¹⁶⁹ B. Sykes, *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, pp. 251-330.

¹⁷⁰ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, pp.218-221.

D. Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷¹ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p. 221.

S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden*, p. 357.

E. Røyrvik, Western Celts? A genetic impression of Britain in Atlantic Europe in B. Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West*, p.78.

¹⁷² J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, p. 221.

¹⁷³ B. Sykes, *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, pp. 140-141.

contamination, have yet to be overcome if sample sizes are not to remain too small to be reliable. Geneticists have tried to use modern populations arguing that the modern gene pool would mirror past populations living in the same areas. Given a large enough sample, generalisations might be made about different population groups represented although the chronology of their arrival has to remain approximate since it rests on untested hypotheses.¹⁷⁴

When Lewin in 1987 dubbed the common maternal ancestor of all people living today as “Mitochondrial Eve”, he evoked a creation story – that of a woman who was the mother of all of us and whose descendants dispersed throughout the earth.¹⁷⁵ But the name has been more misleading than helpful. It has fostered the mistaken impression that our entire DNA comes from just two ancestors and that to learn about our history it would be sufficient to simply track the purely maternal line represented by mitochondrial DNA and the purely paternal line represented by the Y-chromosome. The truth is that the genome contains the stories of many diverse ancestors – tens of thousands of independent genealogical lineages, not just the two whose stories can be traced by the Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA. To appreciate this, one needs to realise that beyond mitochondrial DNA, the genome is not one continuous sequence from a single ancestor but is instead a mosaic. Forty six of the mosaic tiles, as it were, are chromosomes – long stretches of DNA that are physically separated in a cell. The human genome consists of twenty-three chromosomes pairs, one pair from each parent.¹⁷⁶ But the chromosomes themselves are mosaics of even smaller tiles. Females produce an average of forty-five new splices when producing eggs, whilst men produce on average twenty-six new splices when producing sperm, for a total of about seventy-one new splices per generation.¹⁷⁷ Thus, as we trace each generation back further

¹⁷⁴ B. Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ R. Lewin, “The Unmasking of Mitochondrial Eve”, *Science*: (1987), 24-26 cited in D. Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the new science of the human past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ D. Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, pp. 63-64.

D. Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the new science of the human past*, p. 10-11.

¹⁷⁷ A. Kong et al., “A High-Resolution Recombination Map of the Human Genome”, *Nature Genetics* 31: (2002), 241-47 cited in D. Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the new science of the human past*, p. 11.

into the past, a person's genome is derived from an ever-increasing number of spliced-together ancestral fragments.

This means that our genomes hold within them a multitude of ancestors. Any person's genome is derived from 47 stretches of DNA corresponding to the chromosomes transmitted from mother and father plus mitochondrial DNA. One generation back, a person's genome is derived from about 118 (47 + 71) stretches of DNA transmitted by his or her parents. Two generations back, the number of ancestral stretches of DNA has increased to 189 (47 + 71 + 71) transmitted by four grandparents. Look even further back in time and the additional increase in the number of ancestral stretches of DNA in each generation is rapidly overtaken by the doubling of ancestors. This means that if you go back eight or more generations it is almost certain that you will have some ancestors whose DNA was not passed down to you. Go back fifteen generations and the probability that any one ancestor contributed directly to your DNA becomes exceedingly small. This indicates that a person's genealogy, as constructed from historical records, is not the same as his or her genetic inheritance.¹⁷⁸

A recent DNA study has shown that there is no single genetic group to support the tradition of a western United Kingdom Celtic fringe. According to the data, those professing genetic Celtic ancestry in Scotland and Cornwall are more similar to the English than they are to the Welsh; people in North and South Wales are more different from each other than the English are from the Scots; people in the north of England are genetically more similar to people in Scotland than they are to those in the south of England; that there are two genetic groupings in Northern Ireland. Leslie and Donnelly state that the finding is the first genetic evidence to confirm what some archaeologists have long been arguing: that Celts represent a tradition or culture rather than a genetic

¹⁷⁸ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, pp. 81-85.

D. Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the new science of the human past*, p. 11-12.

grouping.¹⁷⁹ Also history may not be as simple as the story of a dominant group that was immediately successful wherever it went.¹⁸⁰

5. Time, space and perception

References to the *Κελτοί/Celtae* in the classical authors are sketchy and none of them is concerned primarily with a discussion of *Κελτοί/Celtae* society.¹⁸¹ An example would be the ethnographic work of Posidonius, a Syrian born Greek philosopher whose work only survives in the literature of later writers.¹⁸² Of these, Caesar, Strabo and Diodorus – all writing in the first century BC – are the most important. Sometimes they specifically acknowledge Posidonius; in other writings his influence can be identified. All three of these writers present a mixed image of the *Κελτοί/Celtae*, though the emphasis is on their barbarism. Caesar clearly had respect for the power of the druids, whilst both Diodorus and Strabo allude to their philosophical activities and their association with the barbarous practice of human sacrifice. The Roman authors Pliny, Lucan and Tacitus wrote over 100 years later than Caesar and are unsympathetic to the *Κελτοί/Celtae*. Their testimony is influenced by the image of barbarism. Among Greek scholars of the Alexandria school – Christian Hippolytus (AD 170 – c. 236), Clement of Alexandria (AD 150 – c. 212) and Cyril of Alexandria (Archbishop AD 412 – 444) – arose the idealised notion of the pure and natural wisdom of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* as an example of the “Noble Savage” untainted by civilisation’s restraints.¹⁸³

The view professed both by classical scholars and historiographers over the centuries is that the great literary achievement of ancient Greek culture - Homer’s epic – represents a kind of watershed between one “archaic”,

¹⁷⁹S. Leslie, et al., The fine-scale genetic structure of the British population, *Nature*, 519: (2015) 309–314.

¹⁸⁰B. McEvoy and D. Bradley, Irish Genetics and Celts in B. Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West*, p.118.

D. Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the new science of the human past*, p. 13-15.

¹⁸¹D. Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, p.106.

¹⁸²T. Champion, Power, Politics and Status in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.86.

¹⁸³M. J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, pp. 40-41.

“barbarous” or “primitive” state of society (all of these characteristics being rooted in oral culture) and the “civilized” one, identified as the triumph of literacy.¹⁸⁴ Even so, Homer seems to hint at a previous “barbarous” period of Greek society with an allusion to the champion’s portion as King Agamemnon paid Ajax the honour of helping him to the long chine of the beast.¹⁸⁵ In contrast, an important factor in the victories of the Roman republican army must have been the brutality of its soldiers that may be explained by the constant wars in which Rome became involved; but these wars only aggravated an already deeply rooted propensity for violence. The institutionalization of violence, even in the gladiatorial leisure pursuits of Roman society, promoted a hunger for violence in all forms of social activity, and especially the desire for war. Brutality and carnage were the hallmarks of Roman war methods, and the conquest of a city was usually followed by mass rape and massacres in which even the dogs were not spared. The prospect of rape, violence and looting in a foreign land has always been a powerful recruiting weapon but in the militarized society of the Roman Republic, the persuasion of sex and violence helped effectively to divert the attention of the poor from the unbearable injustices of the Roman political system. Therefore, brutality was not a malevolent excrescence of the Roman social system; it was rather the lubricant that held it together, crippling the ability of Rome’s enemies to effectively defy it.¹⁸⁶ Vestiges of Roman brutality are still part of modern English in the verb “to decimate” (L. *decimare*).¹⁸⁷

Häussler draws our attention to imaginative accounts of classical authors, in particular when they were deliberately distorted to justify subjugation and cultural domination.¹⁸⁸ Although human sacrifice is one popular theme for ancient authors, Cunliffe states that convincing evidence of human sacrifice is surprisingly rare in the archaeology record.¹⁸⁹ The major problem in

¹⁸⁴ G. Valtchinova, The H-file and the making of the Homeric verse in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds. S.Schwander-Sievers and B. J. Fischer, p.110.

¹⁸⁵ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by E.V. Rieu, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1950), p. 140.

¹⁸⁶ J. Penrose, *Rome und seine Feinde* (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag GmbH,2007), p. 36. My translation.

¹⁸⁷ J.B. Sykes (ed.) *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁸⁸ R. Häussler, Manipulating the Past. Re-thinking Graeco-Roman accounts on ‘Celtic’ religion in *Fraud, Lies and Deception in the Ancient World (Fraude, Mentiras y Engaños en el Mundo Antiguo)* ed. F. M. Simón, pp.35-54.

¹⁸⁹ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.192.

archaeological identification, as indicated by Häussler, is that it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between human sacrifice from other forms of violent death for individuals that have in some way jeopardized society stability, such as capital punishment for criminals and war hostages.¹⁹⁰ Some may even have gone to their deaths willingly stimulated by a particular crisis to society, such as famine, drought or invasion – a possible example being the peat bog body Lindow II.¹⁹¹ The stories of human sacrifice appear to derive from a single source, Posidonius, whose claims are unsupported as his writings are lost. Cunliffe writes that Strabo (Geog. 4.4.6), quoting Posidonius on the issue of the Wicker Man, says: “They used to make a large statue of straw and wood, throw into it cattle and all sorts of wild animals and human beings and thus make a burnt offering” and that as Strabo uses the past tense, it might suggest that this practice had died out in Gaul by the first century BC.¹⁹² This view is supported by Häussler who notes that human sacrifices belonged to a period that was long gone by the time of the Roman conquest, perhaps even prior to Posidonius’ expedition to Gaul.¹⁹³

It is common knowledge that Western European peoples decapitated enemies killed in battle, displaying the heads as war trophies by the warrior class attached to the necks of their horses, on posts outside their villages or on the walls of their houses. The cult of the human head is forcefully apparent in the pillars of the Roquepertuse temple portico where niches were carved to hold human skulls. At Entremont the same concept was transposed into stone and stylized. Both temples were destroyed by the Romans in the late second century BC.¹⁹⁴ Recent research on the cultural meaning of the head in ancient society suggests that it was the centre of the emotions and of life itself, to be venerated above all else as the seat of the soul, a magic talisman of inestimable

¹⁹⁰ R. Häussler, *Manipulating the Past. Re-thinking Graeco-Roman accounts on ‘Celtic’ religion in Fraud, Lies and Deception in the Ancient World (Fraude, Mentiras y Engaños en el Mundo Antiguo)* ed. F. M. Simón, pp.35-54.

¹⁹¹ British Museum. Available:

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_prb/l/lindow_man.aspx <accessed 29.05.2018>

¹⁹² B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp.191-192.

¹⁹³ R. Häussler, *Manipulating the Past. Re-thinking Graeco-Roman accounts on ‘Celtic’ religion in Fraud, Lies and Deception in the Ancient World (Fraude, Mentiras y Engaños en el Mundo Antiguo)* ed. F. M. Simón, pp.35-54.

¹⁹⁴ B. Cunliffe, *The Celtic World* (London: Constable & Co, Ltd., 1992), p. 82.

worth.¹⁹⁵ Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century AD, states that when a great man died, be he enemy or ally, his head was embalmed in cedar oil and carefully preserved in a chest. These heads would not be sold for their weight in gold, for they were said to possess powers of prophecy, healing, speech and fertility.¹⁹⁶ Ross contends a more devout attitude towards the head in that it was regarded as the essence of being, the seat of the soul, the symbol of evil-averting divine power.¹⁹⁷ Davies comments on the passage in The Second Branch of the Mabinogi “Then Bendigeidfran ordered his head to be cut off, it to be carried to London and buried with its face towards France” that the head should serve as a talisman which will keep away invaders.¹⁹⁸ For Bronowski, the head is more than a symbolic image of man; it is the seat of foresight and, in that respect, the spring which drives cultural evolution.¹⁹⁹

The druids may well have been the most prominent magico-religious specialists of some peoples of north-western Europe just over two thousand years ago; and that is all we can say of them with reasonable certainty.²⁰⁰ Only literary evidence from the classical world or from the vernacular mythic tradition can give us direct evidence of the druids. These documents alone mention them by name: we have no inscriptions or images which can certainly be identified as druidic. Thus, any attempt to use archaeological material as evidence for the druids must be made with awareness that we are dealing with supposition and inference rather than fact and our interpretation of such is coloured by our modern mind-set.²⁰¹ Caesar and his contemporaries portray druids as enjoying extremely high status within Gallic society that accepted druids as administrators of justice in all disputes.²⁰² Caesar wrote that it is believed that their (druid) rule of life was discovered in Britain and transferred thence to Gaul; and today those who would study the subject more accurately journey, as a rule, to Britain to learn it.²⁰³ This infers the existence of a common language

¹⁹⁵ K. Laidler, *The Head of God* (London: Orion Publishing Group, 1998), pp. 51-52.

¹⁹⁶ *Diodorus Siculus*, ed. C.H.Oldfather in K. Laidler, *The Head of God*, p. 52

¹⁹⁷ A .Ross et al., *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince* in K. Laidler, *The Head of God*, p. 52.

¹⁹⁸ S. Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 236.

¹⁹⁹ J. Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*, p.36.

²⁰⁰ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, p. 1.

²⁰¹ M. J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p. 8.

²⁰² *ibid.*, p.10.

²⁰³ Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 13. In T.D. Kendrick, *The Druids* (London: Methuen & Co. Limited, 1927), p. 78.

enabling the communication of druidic knowledge. Caesar's sources informed him "that the greater part of the Belgae were sprung, from the Germans, and that having crossed the Rhine at an early period, they had settled there, on account of the fertility of the country, and had driven out the Gauls who inhabited those regions".²⁰⁴ Cunliffe and Rankin state that the Belgae were a mixture of *Germani* and *Κελτοί/Celtae*.²⁰⁵ The presence in Britain of the Belgae, who seem to have arrived in Britain decades before Caesar's landings, is indicated by their distinctive pottery and their custom of cremating the dead.²⁰⁶ This opens the conjecture of a Germanic language being spoken in Britain centuries before the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Powell writes that an actual tradition of Belgic royal genealogy survived in Wales throughout the Roman occupation into medieval times.²⁰⁷ However, on the factual integrity of Caesar's writings Suetonius reports the assertion made by the Roman historian, Gaius Asinius Pollio that they were put together somewhat carelessly and without strict regard for truth; since in many cases Caesar was too ready to believe the accounts which others gave of their actions, and gave a perverted account of his own, either designedly or perhaps from forgetfulness; and he thinks that he intended to rewrite and revise them.²⁰⁸ Consequently, Caesar's observations must be treated with caution as, given the importance that he attributed to the druids and their apparent centrality in Gallic society, they do not feature in his long and detailed description of his conquest of the region.²⁰⁹

Kendrick argues that there is no sign whatsoever of a corporate body of druids in the British Isles but suggests that the peoples of old were ruled by kings and chieftains invested with a spiritual as well as a temporal authority: they performed the ordinary functions of priests such as sacrifice and communion with the gods, assisted by tribal leaders/elders, who had designated themselves

J. Koch, *The Celtic Heroic Age* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2003), p.21.

²⁰⁴ C. Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, trans. W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn, 1st edn (New York: Harper & Brothers. 1869), 2.4

²⁰⁵ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, p.237.

D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, p.19.

²⁰⁶ D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical*, p.214.

²⁰⁷ T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 55.

²⁰⁸ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions* p. 14.

G. Suetonius Tranquillus, *De vita Caesarum* trans. by J.C. Rolfe, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press - Loeb Classical Library edition (1913-1914) Julius Caesar 56.4 Available: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/home.html> <accessed 12.03.2018>

²⁰⁹ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, p.4.

the special repositories of the prized native lore.²¹⁰ Rankin purports Caesar's accounts of druidic power and their degree of organization to be embellished.²¹¹ Maier is more direct suggesting that Caesar described the Gallic priests as a counterpart of the Roman priesthood, in order to duly underscore the capacity for the acculturation of the Gauls.²¹² Finally, Ross dismisses the eighteenth-century druidic "cult" as completely irrelevant to the pagan religious beliefs and states that we are then left with an extremely insubstantial evidence for a druidic priesthood, the validity of which decreases with critical study.²¹³ Chadwick denies that the druids were priests at all and stresses their political role.²¹⁴ However, the greatest handicap is surely that the druids, themselves, never committed any of their knowledge to writing.

James states that the *Κελτοί/Celtae* were extremely superstitious peoples and their lives were regimented by rituals and taboos with even the landscape being suffused with ritual enclosures and natural shrines.²¹⁵ Posidonius provided little information on *Κελτοί/Celtae* beliefs and it was left to Caesar who correlated available information into his familiar Greco-Roman system.²¹⁶ Collis maintains that this is not *Κελτοί/Celtae* religion; it is religion as practiced by the *Κελτοί/Celtae* of that period later readily changing to monotheistic male-dominated religions of Near Eastern origin such as Christianity. He is sceptical that there is anything we can label as *Κελτοί/Celtae* religion.²¹⁷ Following the Roman invasions of Gaul and Britain, the druid orders were suppressed by the Roman government under the first century AD emperors Tiberius and Claudius, and with their ruinous defeat on Isle of Anglesey (Mona) in 60AD by Suetonius Paulinus, slowly disappeared from the written record.²¹⁸

²¹⁰ T.D. Kendrick, *The Druids*, pp.197-209.

²¹¹ D. Rankin, The Celts through classical eyes in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p .29.

²¹² B. Maier, *Die Kelten*, p. 78. My translation.

²¹³ A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge (1967) cited in M. Pitt, *Hengeworld*, p. 314.

²¹⁴ N. Chadwick, *The Druids* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press (1966) cited in M. J. Green, *Exploring the World of the Druids*, p.31.

²¹⁵ S. James, *Exploring the World of the Celts*, p.87.

T.G.E. Powell, *The Celts*, p. 14.

²¹⁶ P. Freeman, *The Philosopher and the Druids* (London: Souvenir Press Ltd., 2006) pp. 145-156.

²¹⁷ J.Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions* p. 214.

²¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Druid> <accessed 04.09.2018>

Cunliffe states that by the beginning of the 18th century scholars concerned with early Europe had access to principal classical texts and a growing knowledge of prehistoric monuments and artefacts of their countries. These elements combined, particularly in France and Britain, to create a vision of the past peopled with Celts and Druids based on a mixture of facts and fantasies that still linger with us today.²¹⁹ Hutton notes that the period between 1800 and 1870 represented the pinnacle of druid dominance in the English perception of ancient Britain which meant that they received a wide range of literary assessments from authors of the age that presented a variety of attitudes towards them. Despite this huge elevation in the druid public profile, no consensus could be reached on how they should be regarded among the intellectual elite as well as the general public.²²⁰ As the historic nations within Britain had been constructed in medieval times largely in opposition to each other, it is necessary to revert back to the ancient world to find any shared heritage: the druids - the only impressive native figures despite the fact two traditional sources for ancient history, the Bible and Greek and Roman classics, more or less ignored them.²²¹ Mid-nineteenth-century expressions of English chauvinism against Welsh speech and culture caused an angry reaction, leading to a Welsh cultural revival and reinvigoration of the National Eisteddfod.²²² Today, whilst the druids continue to be central symbolic figures within Welsh culture, they have almost disappeared from Scottish imagination. The English recognize the importance of druids to their past but have a general negative attitude to them such that they have become a symbol of distinctly countercultural groups within society promoting harmony, connection, and reverence for the natural world including the environment itself.²²³ Modern technology provides role-playing computer games that have imaginary “ranger” or “druid” characters that live out in nature, or on the fringes of society, surviving by their own skills and living by their own rules – transcending the limits of civilization. In some cases, they also have spiritual or magical abilities that allow

²¹⁹ B. Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, pp.11-12.

²²⁰ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, p. 240.

²²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 418-420.

²²² S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 129.

²²³ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, p. 421.

them to eclipse the ordinary, physical world. Druidry was officially recognised as a religion in Britain in 2010.²²⁴

6. Summary and conclusions

The foregoing pen-portraits have shown that there are wide ranging and even diametrically opposed opinions between accredited experts. The difficulties arise purely from the fact that *Κελτοί/Celtae* are terms which mean different things to different people. The archaeological approach to the situation is different from that of linguists and perhaps also from that of anthropologists. So the varied types of evidence at our disposal themselves cause problems of determination. The only way to deal with this conflict of approaches is to recognize that they are, to an extent, irreconcilable. The lack of congruence prevents direct correlations being made between the evidence for the distribution of language and that of archaeological indicators. It is equally impossible to make precise links between these categories of evidence and actual peoples. Ethnic boundaries are fluid, blurred and mutable; language cannot be used to define populations with any precision; specific artefacts and settlement types can spread through channels other than those of their use by ethnically definable groups. The main categories of evidence for *Κελτοί/Celtae* overlap or correlate in certain respects, but each category contains its own parameters specific to itself.²²⁵ Headaches arise when trying to marry these independent categories to each other.

Green states that it does not make sense to think of the *Κελτοί/Celtae* as suddenly appearing on the European stage in the mid-first millennium BC.²²⁶ We have shown that the peoples labelled as *Κελτοί/Celtae* by the Greeks and

²²⁴ M. Beckford, Druidry recognised as religion in Britain for first time. Available: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/8036952/Druidry-recognised-as-religion-in-Britain-for-first-time.html> <accessed 14.05.2018>.

R. Pigott, Druidry to be classed as religion by Charity Commission. Available: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-11457795> <accessed 14.05.2018>.

²²⁵ M. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green pp.6-7
J. Koch, *Celts, Britons, and Gaels – Names, Peoples, and Identities*. Available: http://www.academia.edu/7142081/Celts_Britons_and_Gaels_Names_Peoples_and_Identities <accessed 30.05.2017>, p.3.

²²⁶ M. Green, Who were the Celts? in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green pp.3-4.

Romans had lived and developed in Western Europe since LGM. The Κελτοί/Celtae had no voice because they left no written records. Much of what we know of them comes from the Greeks and their enemies the Romans, who finally crushed them, and from the weapons and ornaments they buried with their dead. Classical writers refer to marauding bands of Κελτοί/Celtae sacking Rome in the early fourth century BC, Delphi in the third century and to the marauding and mercenary activities of the Galatians in Asia Minor.²²⁷ The Greeks and Romans identified the marauding bands through the communication agency of the descriptive portrayals of ancient times formed from their imagined stereotype expectations based on the characteristics from fragmentary documentation, some of a dubious nature. So with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476AD, the umbrella name of Κελτοί/Celtae for these peoples faded into ancient memory.²²⁸ Over twelve hundred years later, following the publication of Lhuyd's work in the field of comparative Celtic linguistics in 1707AD, others, such as Stukeley and Williams (Iolo Morgannwg), utilised the opportunity to attach and popularize their visions for cultural and national identities ancient and modern so that the Greek and Roman Κελτοί/Celtae then became Celts/Celtic by association. In just a century the Celts became established popular fact, the circumstances and recent date of their appearance generally forgotten.²²⁹ It is this latter vision that has remained with us over the centuries becoming so assimilated to become self-evident.²³⁰

Champion notes that the enormous differences in settlement and economy shown by archaeology for Iron Age Europe suggest that the scale of social organisation and its degree of complexity must equally have varied and although there may have been some features which recurred from time to time throughout this large geographical and chronological range, and may have been derived from a common origin, we should not start out with the expectation of a

²²⁷ K. Clark, *Civilisation*, pp. 1-31.

S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 7.

T. Livy, *The History of Rome, Book 5* trans. by D. Spillan (London: H.G. Bohn, 1857), V.35.3.

Available: <http://data.perseus.org/texts/urn:cts:latinLit:phi0914.phi0015.perseus-eng2>

<accessed 23.03.2018> It is Livy who informs us that the conquest of Rome was carried out by the Senones.

²²⁸ The peoples concerned remained, developing into the nation states that we know today.

²²⁹ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 47.

²³⁰ R. Karl, *The Celts from Everywhere and Nowhere: A Re-evaluation of the Origins of the Celts and the Emergence of Celtic Cultures* in B. Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West*, pp 42-43.

uniform pattern of *Κελτοί/Celtae* society and a common set of social practices.²³¹ Miles, however, writes that in terms of language, religious beliefs, technology, art styles and their inherent symbolism, the late peoples of Western Europe had much in common.²³² A dichotomy in opinion apparently exists as to whether or not individual elements of social organisation scattered over time and place must form a homogenous whole before we can categorise them as a society. It would appear propitious to examine why this perceived need for a uniform situation might be causing a mental block.

Karl states straight-out that much of the problem depends on who or what we think the Celts are (or the *Κελτοί/Celtae* were) as general behaviour suggests it were self-evident that they were a culturally, politically and linguistically unified people whose power and authority spread across Europe and beyond, explaining why a universally acceptable definition to said problem is still conspicuously absent or perceived as superfluous.²³³ This situation was further exacerbated by Lhuyd's inference of Celtic speakers past and present, allowing others to jump on the bandwagon to rapidly popularize their visions of the Celt cultural and national identities ancient and modern. Renfrew's linguistic approach is to define as Celts those who spoke or still speak a language of the Celtic language family in the linguistic sense of Lhuyd and that on this basis the designation Celtic can only be applied to cultures or to artefacts whose users may be inferred to have spoken a Celtic language.²³⁴ But this would be an unsatisfactory definition as the precise linguistic relationships among the Continental Celtic languages, as well as between them and the present day Celtic countries are uncertain and a matter of ongoing debate as summarized earlier. Linguistics is the science of language especially as regards nature and structure.²³⁵ When linguistics is being informed by archaeology, as Renfrew would seem to suggest, then we have moved beyond linguistics into the cultural context of language of which linguistics is only one component. It, therefore,

²³¹ T. Champion, Power, Politics and Status in *The Celtic World*, ed. M. J. Green, p.85.

²³² D. Miles, *The Tribes of Britain*, p. 106.

²³³ R. Karl, The Celts from Everywhere and Nowhere: A Re-evaluation of the Origins of the Celts and the Emergence of Celtic Cultures in B. Cunliffe and J. Koch (Eds.), *Celtic from the West*, pp. 42-43.

²³⁴ C. Renfrew, Early Celtic in the West: The Indo-European Context in *Celtic from the West 2*, eds. J. Koch and B. Cunliffe (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), p. 208.

²³⁵ J.B. Sykes (ed.) *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

seems incongruous to base a definition on an idealization of linguistics with no attention to the cultural norms they are situated in. Language is an object which gives rise to all kinds of mirages.²³⁶ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the majority of the inhabitants of today's Celtic counties (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany) are not Celts even if they consider themselves to be so. Artefacts are not able to speak for themselves, may have been manufactured in a non-Celtic country and cannot, therefore, be mapped against words. It has also been previously argued that the term *Κελτοί/Celtae* is justifiable in a cultural identification sense and should not necessarily be restricted to mean modern day "Celtic-speaking. Sims-Williams is of the opinion that we should be more permissive and use the term Celt/Celtic - with all due vigilance – in the way appropriate to each discipline. There is no problem if we do not use the concept Celt/Celtic unthinkingly as a short-cut from one discipline to another, or from one region to another, or from one millennium to the next.²³⁷ Thus, if each academic field insists on their version of Celt/Celtic being the only representation of Celtic essence and feels obliged to relentlessly defend their own expressed theories come what may, then there will always be a permanent stand-off. A continual declaration of opinion inferring an absolute certainty is surely incongruous.

An ethnonym (from the Greek: ἔθνος, *éthnos*, "nation" and ὄνομα, *ónoma*, "name") is the name applied to a given ethnic group. Ethnonyms can be divided into two categories: exonyms (where the name of the ethnic group has been created by another group of people) and autonyms or endonyms (self-designation; where the name is created and used by the ethnic group itself).²³⁸ The perception of the modern day term Celt/Celtic and the ancient term *Κελτοί/Celtae* have meant many things to many people over the centuries: in ancient times (500BC – 476AD) as peoples whom the Greeks and Romans designated by the name *Κελτοί/Celtae* as fearless warriors/mercenaries; in modern times (1707 – today) in an explicit linguistic sense by Lhuyd; as a designation of archaeological culture-types (such as Hallstatt (800-500 BC) and La Tène (500-100 BC); in association with an Iron Age art style (La Tène); by

²³⁶ F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye trans. W.Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1959), p. 7.

²³⁷ P. Sims-Williams, *Celtomania and Celtoscepticism*, p. 33.

²³⁸ Dictionary.com, Available: <http://www.dictionary.com> <accessed 14.09.2017>

eighteenth century scholars creating a vision of the past peopled with Celts and Druids based on a mixture of facts and fantasies; by “Celtic heritage” that not only includes the transformed and adapted above terms within our contemporary society but also music, song, dance, literature and spirituality. It has been noted earlier that there is no reason to think that the exonym *Κελτοί/Celtae* was used by the peoples themselves which the Greeks and Romans so termed and, in particular, there is no evidence that inhabitants of the British Isles were ever called *Κελτοί/Celtae*. The implications are important to elucidate how distant, uncertain and shadowy perceived interconnections between today and prehistoric times are. As Collis points out, much of the information we have from classical authors has been recycled, repeated and plagiarised from a small number of sources and that much of the writing is retrospective.²³⁹ All texts were written in Greek or Latin from the perspective of civilised upper-class Greeks and Romans about uncivilised barbarians with some authors having *Κελτοί/Celtae* connections, if not ancestry.²⁴⁰ Classical authors wrote for a purpose that was often political or philosophical – Caesar’s *De bello gallico* was a justification of his wars in Gaul and to promote his political interests in Rome.²⁴¹

From the above and applying a modern mind-set based on our strict dictionary definition of evidence being the provision of clear and obvious testimonies and facts in support of a conclusion, are we able to chronologically track the *Κελτοί/Celtae* through space and time and determine a successive development from earlier forms? The answer to this question must be “no” for the following reasons: earlier deliberations have indicated that to try and read classical authors as linear history is completely false to the methods and assumptions with which they were composed; although there are sufficient references to *Κελτοί/Celtae*, we have already argued that we can have no confidence whatsoever in the chronology of events for pagan times so that we have no idea when the *Κελτοί/Celtae* might have come into existence, if at all, and thus searching for their origin is meaningless.

²³⁹ J. Collis, *The Celts Origins, Myths & Inventions*, pp. 13-26.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

If the “ancient Celts” of Western Europe including Britain and Ireland are an essentially bogus recent invention, what does this mean for modern people who regard themselves as Celts? Such claims and assumptions must be open to critical examination for history is a field of interpretation and opinion, although, as has been demonstrated, not one of absolute relativism.²⁴² Maier notes that irrespective of the grave differences in academic predilections already discussed, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany, without distinction, are referred to as Celtic countries, no doubt less due to the overpowering legacy of their common cultural past than to the efficacy of modern Celtic ideologies, as a result of which the adjective Celtic has become so vague and dazzling in the consciousness of a broad public that it can be filled with almost any content.²⁴³ Academically the present day Celtic countries are so named because evolved versions of Continental Celtic are adjudged to be spoken there even if only by a minority of their populations.²⁴⁴ However, for the broad public with little or no access to the intricacies of the academic linguistic world, it is submitted that their cognizance of Celt/Celtic is that of the “Celtic heritage”: the images fashioned in antiquity by Greek and Roman authors to describe their continental neighbours misappropriated after 1707 by populists such as Stukeley with his obsession with Druidism and, later in the nineteenth century, by romantic authors such as Walter Scott being the precursors of the present day traditional arts and culture festival - song, dance, drama, and music on a wide range of instruments – of a Feis (Ireland) or a Mòd (Scotland) both comparable to the Welsh eisteddfod, but without the ancient roots or the fanciful nineteenth-century “druidic” pageantry of the National Eisteddfod of Wales. So if the term the “Celts” is not an ancient exonym for a modern mind-set, what do we understand when we speak of the “Celts” and does the term describe anything useful at all?

Returning to the question posed in the title to this paper, the Celts are not an ancient but modern exonym for a modern mind-set. As Sims-Williams affirms

²⁴² S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 11.

²⁴³ B. Maier, *Die Kelten*, p. 251. My translation.

²⁴⁴ Continental Celtic is the modern-day name for a geographic group of languages spoken by the people known to classical writers as *Κελτοί/Celtae*; at various times during a period of roughly 1,000 years (ca. 500 BC–AD 500) although the precise linguistic relationships among them, as well as between them and the present day Celtic countries are uncertain and a matter of ongoing debate because of their sparse attestation.

that whatever its strengths be today, a Celtic link cannot be traced back beyond the modern period.²⁴⁵ The *Κελτοί/Celtae* were a pre-literary broad sweep of peoples that were technically competent within the limitations of their time. They were oral based communities that were not prone to central organisation being finally destroyed by the innate brutality of the Roman Empire. Classical observers, who were contemporaries of the tribes and peoples they called *Κελτοί/Celtae*, not being modern linguists, gave detailed but broad-based descriptive accounts of regional *Κελτοί/Celtae* populations that paid little attention to what language they spoke so that they were not specific or consistent about whom they meant by *Κελτοί/Celtae*. Oppenheimer suggests that there is a potential doubt as to whether modern Celtic languages have any connection at all with classical *Κελτοί/Celtae* and certainly not with the modern identity of the majority of those who perceive themselves as Celts in the present day.²⁴⁶ In contrast, the labels Celt/Celtic are a modern day concept stemming from the written works of Lhuyd published in 1707. We live in an advanced technological era with central governments and statutory laws with a majority of people being able to write. As Coulmas succinctly points out, mastering the written word in its electronic guise has become essential.²⁴⁷ Consequently the *Κελτοί/Celtae* and the Celt/Celtic are not only separated by time but also by writing such that the ancient perception of “being”, that will certainly not be ours, fades with the advance of literacy to be replaced by our informed speculations to the best of our present day available knowledge of what we think they were.

Parker maintains that a contemporary approach to medieval literature is to put aside the question of origins or constituent parts, and focus instead on the characteristics of the surviving texts as a functioning whole.²⁴⁸ Consequently, assessing all communicative documentation available as an integrated complex rather than isolated, individual snippets, there is no archetype 'standard' *Κελτοί/Celtae* figure that underwent a logical sequenced development from prehistory; but rather a consolidation of the conventions forming the society

²⁴⁵ P. Sims-Williams, *Celtomania and Celtoscepticism*, p. 11.

²⁴⁶ S. Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British* (London: Constable & Robinson Lt., 2006), p. 23.

²⁴⁷ F. Coulmas, *What is writing? An excerpt from Writing Systems: An Introduction to their Linguistic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.1. Available: http://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/82173/excerpt/9780521782173_excerpt.pdf <accessed 25.06.2018>

²⁴⁸ W. Parker, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Dublin: Bardic Press, 2005), p. 15.

consciousness, laws and tradition fashioned as required throughout the centuries by persons of letters supported by alternative facts and back-projections from 1707AD that has resulted in an eclectic “Celt”, who has been imbued with a collage of wishful thinking and chimerical conceptions by the selective use of deeds, characteristics, word ancestry and, in some cases, transparent political motivation. Green notes that anyone at all familiar with medieval literature in general will know that the historicisation of non-historical/mythical personages - often through association with some important event of the past - is not in any way an unusual occurrence.²⁴⁹ Padel endorses this view stating that the process of historicizing legends was a widespread feature of literary activity in the Middle Ages.²⁵⁰

The classical “otherworld” of The Odyssey, The Iliad or The Aeneid or that of the Christian Church (Heaven and Hell), both of which deal with realms of the dead beyond the world of mankind is not that of the peoples of ancient Western Europe (if not for all ancient peoples) who experienced “otherness” in a variety of locations. There were many Otherworlds which could take a variety of forms as illustrated in the medieval Irish “*The Voyage of Mael Duin*”.²⁵¹ This prescience could be projected onto even geographically real places such as Ireland and Spain.²⁵² The Second Branch of the Mabinogi names Gwales in Penfro as a sojourn in the quest to carry the head of Bendigeidfran to London that would suggest that the Otherworld and mortal space exist in parallel but separated by a liminal boundary (in this example the “the door towards Aber Henfelen”) either side of which the passage of time could be differently experienced.²⁵³ Ralls-MacLeod states that liminal times and spaces are those in which the normal boundaries or borders between our usual everyday perceptions are crossed.²⁵⁴ Examples for liminal space boundary lines are caves, hilltops, doorways, fords and crossroads, whilst liminal times would be sunrise, sunset, midnight etc. Throughout the centuries, then, from the

²⁴⁹ T. Green, *The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur*, p.1.

²⁵⁰ O.J. Padel, *The Nature of Arthur*, p.23.

²⁵¹ Unknown, *The Voyage of Mael Duin*, ed. and trans. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique* Volume 9: (1888), 447–495.

²⁵² W. Parker, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, pp. 126-127.

²⁵³ S. Davies, *The Mabinogion* pp. 236 Davies states that this is the Island of Grassholm in Pembroke.

²⁵⁴ K. Ralls-MacLeod, *Music and the Celtic Otherworld* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) p.148.

prehistory hunter/gatherer peoples of Altamira Northern Spain to the present day international gamer the communication of the “otherness” of the Otherworld was and is in the eye of the beholder.

It is, therefore, submitted that Celts are legendary/mythological characters associated with each individuals own Otherworld being an amorphous, continually changing concept/culture appreciation. The Celts will always be figures standing in the mists beyond material perception and are in the remarkable position of appearing 'only not to appear'.²⁵⁵ They are imagined as once heroic warriors, feasting and hard drinking, boasting, duelling, fearless with a love of adornment and eloquence, involved in pagan cults, especially druidism, with spurious further associations with standing stones of a much earlier period.²⁵⁶ For whether the Celts are real or imaginary, modern generations of people have believed in them. Their charisma remains as shadows of imagination in the minds of each one of us; tragic but undying heroes that deep in our own Otherworld we may all need to create a virtual world glory enabling us to brave real world miseries.

²⁵⁵ O.J. Padel, *The Nature of Arthur*, p.14.

²⁵⁶ S. James, *The Atlantic Celts*, p. 21.



Figure 1: Boar-head carnyx Tintignac-Naves archaeological site Naves Municipality, Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, central France.²⁵⁷



Figure 2: Carnyx trumpeters Gundestrup Cauldron (National Museum of Denmark)²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Site archéologique de Tintignac-Naves. Available: <http://tintignac.wixsite.com/tintignac-naves> <accessed 18.11.2017>

²⁵⁸ National Museum of Denmark Available: <http://en.natmus.dk/historical-knowledge/denmark/prehistoric-period-until-1050-ad/the-early-iron-age/the-gundestrup-cauldron/> <accessed 17.11.2017>



Figure 3: The Dying Gaul (Capitoline Museum Rome)²⁵⁹



Figure 4: Gaul committing suicide with his wife (Museo Nazionale Romano)²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Capitoline Museum Rome, Available: https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/exhibitions/pdfs/2013/DyingGaul_brochureforweb.pdf < Accessed <accessed 21.08.2018>

The dying Gaul; a warrior in his final moments, his face contorted in pain just before he collapses from the mortal wound to his chest.

²⁶⁰ Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Altemps), Available: https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/exhibitions/pdfs/2013/DyingGaul_brochureforweb.pdf <Accessed <accessed 21.08.2018>

The Gaul committing suicide with his wife: a man in the act of killing himself whilst supporting his wife who is sinking in death, for he has killed her most probably so that she may avoid capture and defilement



Queen Elizabeth the Second
By the Grace of God, Queen
Defender of the Faith

Figure 5: UK one pound coin (2017)²⁶¹

²⁶¹ The Royal Mint, *The New Pound Coin* Available: <https://www.thenewpoundcoin.com/>
<accessed 23.01.2018>

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