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« L'AGE DU BRONZE ATLANTIQUE »
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L'AGE DU BRONZE ATLANTIQUE

SES FACIÈS, DE L'ÉCOSSE A L'ANDALOUSIE
ET LEURS RELATIONS AVEC LE BRONZE CONTINENTAL
ET LA MÉDITERRANÉE

sous la direction de
Christian CHEVILLOT et André COFFYN

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THE CELTICIZATION OF THE WEST : *AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE.*

John WADDELL

La question des mouvements des Celtes, qu'il s'agisse de données archéologiques ou historiques, constitue l'un des thèmes les plus durables parmi les spécialistes de la protohistoire. Cependant, s'il est vrai que ce thème n'est plus aussi en vogue qu'il l'a été jadis, expliquer comment les habitants des îles britanniques ont pu être celtophones met à l'épreuve toute notre science linguistique et archéologique.

L'Irlande pose le problème sous sa forme la plus aiguë parce qu'elle ne fournit pas de traces archéologiques permettant de conclure aux migrations celtiques postulées par les linguistes.

Selon certains spécialistes c'est dans l'Europe occidentale de l'Âge du Bronze Final qu'on peut identifier les circonstances sociales et économiques aptes à créer des zones monolingues d'une grande étendue. Dans cette période l'Irlande a joué son rôle dans l'échange des objets de prestige au niveau des élites et c'est vraisemblablement à cette époque que la langue "Goidelle" s'est définie parmi ces élites. Les linguistes s'accordent maintenant pour dire que c'était une langue archaïque de la périphérie.

On peut objecter que l'interaction des élites sociales ne suffit pas pour créer des zones monolingues et que leur comportement linguistique ne reflète pas forcément l'activité linguistique générale. Ainsi pour pouvoir opérer de grands changements linguistiques, une hiérarchie sociale doit présenter un continuum vertical caractérisé par l'interaction entre les diverses couches qui la constituent. Justement cette communication verticale est présente dans la société irlandaise du début de la période historique, et des relations de ce type ont été notées par Polybe et Jules César dans leurs observations sur les Gaulois.

The subject of the migrations of the Celts is an enduring theme in many archaeological and linguistic studies, though less popular now than it once was. It is still a challenge, however, to archaeologists and linguists alike, to explain how Ireland, and Britain, became Celtic speaking.

The island of Ireland poses the problem in its most acute form because its archaeological record offers no clear evidence for the Celtic settlements so often postulated by linguists.

It is suggested that the social and economic circumstances which might create large monolingual communities are to be found in the Late Bronze Age in Western Europe. In this period Ireland participated in the exchange of prestige goods at an elite level and it is possible that the Goidelic language developed among these elites at this time. There is a measure of linguistic agreement that it is an archaic peripheral form of Celtic.

Interaction between elites may seem to be a less than adequate mechanism for initiating major linguistic change but, if this process is coupled with a vertical continuum characterised by interaction between the various hierarchical levels, then these factors might well produce large single speech areas. It may be significant that formal reciprocal relationships between different social levels are a noteworthy feature of early Irish society and were recorded by Polybius and Caesar among the Gauls.

The subject of the migrations of the Celts is one of the more enduring themes of archaeological and linguistic studies. However, it is not quite as popular a subject as it once was. In 1932, for instance, Henri Hubert devoted half a volume to the subject of the

peregrinations of Celtic peoples and in the 1950s Bosch-Gimpera wrote several papers on the same theme ; but today studies of aspects of the Celtic world more often than not concentrate on trade, exchange, social organisation or art. To some extent

this is because there is now in archaeology a disinclination to interpret cultural change merely in terms of the movement of peoples, yet, as is well known, history records several instances of the migration of Celtic-speaking peoples in Continental Europe (Champion, 1980). The written record is of little help as far as Britain and Ireland are concerned and to explain how, at the dawn of history, these two islands became Celtic-speaking is still an archaeological and linguistic challenge. Indeed it is a challenge in more ways than one: in prehistoric archaeology any attempt to equate material culture and language is at best a speculative exercise and, at worst, as some would see it, a futile venture. Moreover, any detailed consideration of Celtic problems necessarily involves attempts to unravel a horribly complicated maze of ethnic, historical, linguistic, archaeological and artistic perceptions. Evans' comments (1988, p. 210) are well taken.

Nonetheless, the challenge to explain how these two islands became Celtic-speaking remains, and Ireland poses the problem in its most acute form. Furthest from a putative Celtic homeland and indubitably once, and some extent still, a country populated by speakers of a Celtic language, its archaeological record offers no clear evidence for the Celtic settlements so often postulated. As already mentioned, insular history is of little help, apart that is from Caesar's brief reference to those civilized inhabitants of Kent who were *ex Belgio*. Early Irish pseudo-history was compiled by the synthetic historians, as MacNeill (1921) called them, who fused native tradition with the learning of the monastic schools. Their concern was to accommodate Irish mythology and genealogy to a Christian world-history (McCone, 1990). Thus the famous eleventh-century *Lebor Gabala Erenn*, "The Book of the Taking of Ireland", is essentially a product of Latin learning (Dillon, 1956). It consists of a collection of prose and poems which purport to tell the story of the settlement of Ireland from the Flood to the arrival of the Goidelic Celts who are said to have come from Scythia via Spain.

They are preceded by a series of other invasions including the Fir Bolg from Greece. It was MacNeill (1919) who demonstrated how much these tales owe to the universal histories of Eusebius and Orosius. To what extent some elements — such as the Fir Bolg — may echo an indigenous historical tradition is uncertain.

The derivation of the Irish Celts from the East and not from Continental Europe remained part of native learning for centuries. It was not until the sixteenth century that the kinship of the Irish, Scots and Britons with the Continental Celts was recognised and the Scottish historian George Buchanan has been credited with the re-discovery of this relationship (MacNeill, 1913). Buchanan's *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* was first published in 1589 and in it he rejected the legendary origins of the Celts be they Gaels from Scythia or Greece, or Britons from Troy. By comparing Gaelic and Welsh words with Celtic

names (from Latin and Greek texts) he concluded: "...these two nations appear to me to be sprung from the Gauls". He argued that since the Continental Celts had spread over so many lands, they were likely to have occupied Britain too and as far as Ireland was concerned the Gauls could have come from Spain conforming at least in part with Gaelic tradition. Some later writers such as Camden, who in 1607 saw an affinity between Welsh and Gaulish, and Roderic O'Flaherty, who, in 1685, thought the Fir Bolg to be Belgae, also recognised some linguistic connection with the early historical Celts. By and large, however, wilder notions still prevailed and as Stuart Pigott (1966) has shown Biblical origins continued to be favoured — as in the delightful case of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty who in 1652 derived himself and his family not only from Ionian Princes but eventually from "Adam, surnamed the Protoplast". Buchanan's work did eventually bear fruit over a hundred years later in the studies of the famous Welsh polymath and antiquary Edward Lhuyd.

Lhuyd's *Archaeologia Britannica* was published in 1707 and included the first comparative study of the extant Celtic languages. A study of placenames in this pioneering linguistic work led to the hypothesis that Britain had been peopled from Gaul by two groups of Celts: first came the C Britons, then the P Britons (Daniel, 1954; Roberts, 1986). This is the first demonstration of a fundamental division of the Celtic language family (later known as Q-Celtic and P-Celtic) and the first suggestion that these two linguistic groups may have had some ethnic significance.

The scientific study of the Celtic languages is generally held to have commenced with the publication of the *Grammatica Celtica* by Zeuss in 1853. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Celtic studies in Britain and Ireland were greatly influenced by the prolific Sir John Rhys who was also one of the relatively few scholars of his generation to consider the question of "the coming of the Celts". His views and the linguistic arguments they provoked in scholarly circles have been summarised in T.F. O'Rahilly's *Early Irish History and Mythology* (1946). In 1882 in his *Celtic Britain* and in subsequent works, Rhys suggested that the first Celtic inhabitants of Britain and Ireland were the Q-Celts, or Goidels as he called them, who were at a later date followed by the P-Celts or Britons. The Goidels had invaded southern England from the Continent at some unknown date (probably several centuries before the Britons) and thence moved westwards and northwards to Ireland and Scotland. This movement may have been initiated or accelerated by the Brittonic invasion, also from the Continent. Both of these major movements may actually have comprised several immigrations "not all over in one year or even in one century". The Britons arrived in the last few centuries BC and included the Belgae. The peripheral location of Irish and Scots Gaelic, the modern descendants of Goidelic, led Rhys to believe that this branch of Celtic was the earliest having been driven there by later comers and

the Goidels themselves had displaced a pre-Celtic population. As we shall see, he was also aware of contemporary archaeological developments and attempted to correlate his linguistic hypotheses with certain archaeological phenomena. Among the various linguists who rejected Rhys's theory of a Goidelic occupation of Britain, Kuno Meyer (who thought it a curious fact and perhaps something to do with the Welsh subconscious that this theory was advocated only by Welshmen) declared in 1895 that no Goidel "ever set his foot on British soil save from a vessel that had put out from Ireland". Zimmer (1912), whose criticisms have been summarised by C. O'Rahilly (1924), pointed out that the Romans, whose legions were posted almost in the middle of what Rhys considered to be the Goidelic territories of western Britain from the Clyde to south-western England, preserved no record in name of person or place of the presence of Q-Celts. Furthermore, Ptolemy in his *Geography* located a P-Celtic tribe, the Menapii, in part of eastern Ireland behind the lines of the supposedly westward driven Goidels and early Irish tradition, of course, held no memory whatever of an ancestry across the Irish Sea. Zimmer argued that the Goidels came directly from western Gaul to Ireland and any Goidelic connections with Wales (as in Ogham inscriptions) were due to later contacts in the early centuries of the Christian era. Coffey had independently come to a similar belief in direct Gaulish contact on mainly archaeological grounds. "We must disabuse our minds", he wrote (1910) "of the notion that the movements of the Celtic peoples always took place as a hydrostatic wave filling up the neighbouring parts".

Whatever about the controversy concerning early Goidels in Britain, Rhys was responsible in great measure for promulgating the belief that the linguistic P and Q dichotomy had some ethnic significance. This division was originally a phonological one: some speakers of Celtic retained the original Indo-European *qu*, others replaced it with *p* (compare Welsh *penn*: "head" and Irish *cenn*), a change that also occurred in some Greek and Italic dialects. Terms such as Goidelic and Brittonic are convenient labels for these particular linguistic groups but their use, like references to Goidels and Britons, has had unavoidable ethnic connotations too. Indeed Rhys once went so far as to say this "ancient distinction of speech between the Celts implies a corresponding difference of race and institutions" (1902).

The nineteenth century saw the development of both comparative philology and archaeology as scholarly disciplines and in the latter the concept of three consecutive ages of stone, bronze and iron gave a new chronological perspective to European prehistory. As Daniel (1975) has shown, the three-age conceptual model then formulated was not primarily an evolutionary one: in Denmark, for instance, the initiation of both the Bronze Age and the Iron Age was attributed to the arrival of new peoples. A belief in migrating hordes became the preferred explanation

for many innovations in the archaeological record and, inevitably, linguistic and archaeological theories of this sort were to become inextricably entangled.

In his 1889 Rhind Lectures, for example, Rhys suggested that the round barrows of the British Bronze Age were the work "of the later Celtic comers, that is to say, of the Celts of the P group" (1890). He was later to revise his opinion somewhat and to claim that the Bronze Age invaders just mentioned were Q-Celts while those of the following Iron Age were the P-Celts (Rhys, 1904), a view also propounded by Lloyd in his *History of Wales* (1911) and by Hubert (1932). This popular notion was rejected by MacNeill (1919) who pointed out that no phonetic change of the P and Q variety could be considered as corresponding to any racial or political boundary. For him, both the archaeological evidence and the evidence of the historical migrations of the Continental Celts indicated that the earliest Celts did not reach Britain or Ireland until the fourth or fifth century BC. This invasion preceded the division of Celtic into P and Q dialects, the change to P occurring in Britain and on the Continent but not in Ireland. The later, Belgic, settlements were limited but extended to Ireland as well as Britain. Macalister in his *Archaeology of Ireland* (1928) more or less agreed: the Celts came to Ireland at the inception of the Iron Age, c. 400 BC; they were few in numbers but subdued the pre-Celtic aborigines with their superior iron weapons.

The views of Meyer, Zimmer and Coffey notwithstanding, the "old notion" of Rhys of successive waves of Celts supplanting the preceding population continued to find general favour in Britain perhaps because, as Mortimer Wheeler said in 1929, "this reasoned theory, even in its aboriginal crudity, has a logical simplicity that lulls criticism". Indeed the literature of the earlier decades of the twentieth century is scattered with archaeological and anthropological speculations about intrusive Goidels and Britons. Rice Holmes, who in his *Ancient Britain* (1907) reviewed contemporary opinion at considerable length, opted for a modification of Rhys's theory. He agreed that the Goidels had come in the Bronze Age but could not accept that they were represented by the brachycephalic folk of the round barrows early in this period. He argued that the Celts of Gaul were dolicocephalic or mesaticephalic and since they had invaded Britain before the end of the Bronze Age it followed they had to be represented among those later Bronze Age people who cremated their dead. Here was an explanation for the absence of "Celtic skulls": "they were reduced to ashes by cremation". A few such as Loth (1921) continued to believe in early Bronze Age Celts but attention in the 1920s and 1930s generally tended to focus on likely folk movements in the Late Bronze Age. Crawford (1922) suggested that new bronze types such as the leaf-shaped sword, and Deverel-Rimbury urns, represented an invasion of Celts who may have been Goidels. This invasion theory was elaborated by Peake (1922) who claimed,

in a memorable phrase, to have traced the history of the Celtic peoples from the Würmian glaciation to the Roman Conquest: he followed Rhys and unhesitatingly equated bronze swords with Q-Celts; these Celts were followed by P-Celts who arrived after iron had been introduced through commercial contacts. The varying theories and dates proposed for the first Celts in Britain were summarised by Hawkes (1930): a complex of Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (Hallstatt) migrations before 500 BC, followed by La Tène Celts coming from the Paris Basin to Yorkshire c. 250 BC, followed in turn by Belgic invaders in the first century BC. As archaeological research progressed in the following decades this picture was modified considerably: hillfort and pottery studies in particular resulted in an increasingly complex pattern of folk movements and regional groups (Cunliffe, 1974). These Iron Age cross-channel migrations brought the P-Celtic or Brittonic language to Britain and in this at least the archaeological and linguistic evidence seemed to harmoniously agree (Jackson, 1953).

In Ireland, however, it was the problem of the Goidelic Celts that occupied the minds of linguist and archaeologist, and less harmoniously. As in Britain, in the 1920s and 1930s, early Celticization was attributed to the Late Bronze Age "sword-bearers" but in Ireland the urns and other bronze types differed from those found in southern England. As in the parts of Britain remote from direct Continental influences, some of these differences were held to represent the absorption of those cultural influences imposed on lowland England. These urn and sword folk came to Ireland via Scotland (Evans, 1930) and some writers considered them Goidels (Pokorny, 1933; Mahr, 1937; Davies et al., 1939) who were followed in time by La Tène P-Celts, also from Britain. Macalister (1935) too thought the sword folk to be Goidels but suggested that they were followed by iron using Teutons, a group numerically too small to leave any linguistic mark but large enough to establish the tradition in early Ireland that tall stature and fair complexions were the hall-marks of aristocracy. Needless to say, this theory is as ingenious as his suggestion that the loss of Indo-European *p* in early Celtic (which retained *qu*) may have been due to the mutilation of teeth or lips as in some modern primitive societies.

When Macalister was speculating about blond Teutons and mutilated Celts, T.F. O'Rahilly published (as the Rhys Memorial Lecture for 1935) a remarkable and original paper on the Goidels and their predecessors. A study of early Irish tradition, the Brittonic words in early Irish and the archaeological evidence such as it was, induced him to reverse the theory of Sir John Rhys. O'Rahilly argued that P-Celts were already in occupation in Ireland when the Goidelic Q-Celts arrived. In the late fourth century BC Ireland and Britain were known to Pytheas of Massilia as "the Pretanic islands", a Brittonic name implying the presence of P-Celts in both islands by this time. O'Rahilly thought it likely that these Pretani or Priteni were those Late Bronze Age sword-

bearers just mentioned who were not Goidels as others had claimed. The Priteni were followed by the *Fir Bolg* (or *Erainn*) whose name he thought essentially the same as that of the Belga of Gaul and Britain and who, according to Irish tradition, were an important element of the pre-Goidelic population. They came from Britain too and initially occupied the south of Ireland. He provisionally equated them with Hallstatt Iron Age migrants in the sixth century BC. Other pre-Goidelic invaders, of the La Tène Iron Age, included the Laigin, a group of tribes who came from western Britain possibly in the early third century BC and the Cauci of Ptolemy who came some time later from the shores of the North Sea. Next to arrive were the Goidelic Celts who began to migrate directly from the Continent in the first century BC. While Gaul was generally P-Celtic, as shown by tribal and personal names, O'Rahilly argued that the Sequani and Helvetii were Q-Celts. Caesar's defeat of the Helvetii and their allies in 58 BC when they were migrating westwards is claimed to have resulted in a remnant of this group of Celts setting sail for Ireland from the Loire area in western Gaul. O'Rahilly suggested (admittedly in a footnote) that his theory of a Goidelic invasion of folk from land-locked Switzerland found further support in the absence of Goidelic names for sea-fish and sea-birds.

Such a late date for the arrival of the Goidels did not find archaeological favour: De Navarro (1936) expressed some reservations and Mahr (1937) flatly rejected it. Childe (1940) ignored it and expressed the belief that the Beaker Folk were the earliest Celts and possibly Goidels. J. Raftery in 1947 and in his *Prehistoric Ireland* (1951), a work completed in 1943, thought that the post-glacial settlers were the only immigrants to have come in significant numbers in prehistoric times. As far as the Iron Age was concerned a number of small P-Celtic immigrations, possibly of refugees, occurred including several from Britain and the Cauci from the North German coast. Pokorny (1940) was not convinced by O'Rahilly's theories either: he preferred a Late Bronze Age or possibly Hallstatt date for the appearance of the Goidels. Dillon (1945) too questioned the Brittonic affinities of some of the words cited.

O'Rahilly elaborated his theory with considerable vigour and some modification in 1946 in his famous *Early Irish History and Mythology*. He was clearly greatly influenced by early Irish tradition in the *Lebor Gabala Erenn* which, fiction though much of it was, still presented in the late first millennium AD a picture of an Ireland composed of various ethnic strata of which the Goidels were the most prominent. As Greene (1983) later remarked because such a picture was unlikely to reflect events one or two thousand years old, this was one of the considerations which led O'Rahilly to opt for such a late date for intrusive Goidels. In 1946, however, he placed their arrival within the years 150-50 BC and abandoned his ideas about an Helvetian migration, for the Helvetii at least may have been P-Celts after all. In their

stead he proposed the Quariates of south-eastern Gaul who were likely to have migrated before 120 BC when their homeland was incorporated in the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis. Not surprisingly he was critical of Rhys and others and particularly so of various theories of Pokorny, but some of his most scathing criticisms were reserved for those archaeologists who had speculated about the likely languages of the various invaders apparent in the prehistoric record. His comments were seemingly taken to heart and thereafter, apart from a thoughtful review of the problem by MacWhite (1955), archaeological comment on linguistic matters was muted to say the least. O'Rahilly's theory of Brittonic Celts being first ashore on Irish soil still did not find general approbation among students of historical linguistics (Dillon, 1947; Pokorny, 1951) though Wagner (1969) was later to broadly accept a late Continental origin for Goidelic.

In a review of the problem of the Celtic settlement of Ireland (written in 1946), Powell (1950) concluded that early Irish tradition contained no memory of any actual immigration but "the traditions of the early population groups, once settled, were sufficiently distinct to ensure a recognition that the several peoples had different origins, not especially in space and time, but in social composition, material culture, and possibly language". Having said that, the question of the origin of the Irish Celts presented no great problem; though the archaeological evidence was rather meagre, "the most ancient route taken by man into Ireland, that from south-western Scotland to the Antrim-Down coasts was chiefly employed, but one may expect support to be forthcoming for other routes, especially from south-western Britain to the river estuaries of the south and east Irish seaboard. Navigation around the northern and western coasts may have been more usual than is generally appreciated...". As Thurneysen in his *Grammar of Old Irish* (1946) had pointed out that around the first century BC the resemblance between Goidelic and Brittonic was extremely close and insufficient to hinder mutual understanding, Powell remarked "the chronological significance of phonetic variations such as the standard Q-P test, can hardly be of much importance for the centuries in which Ireland was open to Celtic-speaking immigrants, and so it is not necessary to seek for a late fastness of Q-Celtic in Gaul to provide a cradle for Goidelic speakers in Ireland". He referred to the possibility that early Goidelic was a more archaic dialect of Celtic. Elsewhere (1948) he suggested that the use of a conservative Goidelic dialect may have been due to the exclusive traditions of those who spoke it rather than to its absolute antiquity. At any rate it was clear that the *q-p* phenomenon in Celtic philology had been over stressed and allowed to assume a disproportionate significance in the minds of many.

However, like Coffey and Zimmer and others, Powell also alluded to the possibility of direct contact between Ireland and Gaul along the Atlantic

seaways. This has been a fairly constant feature of Irish archaeology: various claims for population movement (Henry, 1940), contact (Fox, 1958) and infiltration (Rynne, 1961) being made from time to time and invariably resting on the western distribution of a few decorated pillar stones and, perhaps, a scatter of other artifacts. An Iberian element has also been claimed (Caulfield, 1981). Some settlement of Ulster from northern England was widely accepted of course and in 1950 Piggott, for example, was writing of "the plantation of Ulster by Yorkshire charioteers" shortly before the dawn of the Christian era. The Continental and British connections reflected in the Irish material were studied in several pioneering papers by Jope in the 1950s and early 1960s. He believed that some of the archaeological evidence indicated the movement of chieftains and their retinues, or craftsmen, but he refrained from discussing the linguistic implications. Nonetheless, some agreement with the linguistic evidence was apparent. Greene (1964) did not have any reason to believe in the presence of Celtic-speaking peoples in Britain and Ireland for any great period of the prehistoric past or "that the original invaders represented any more than a fairly thinly-spread ruling class". At much the same time, in a study of the making of insular Celtic, he concluded that the very tenuous evidence indicated, *contra* O'Rahilly, the improbability of any Brittonic occupation of Ireland on any significant scale. Brittonic came to Britain somewhere around 500 BC and Goidelic to Ireland appreciably later. He again rejected suggestions that some form of Celtic or proto-Celtic was spoken in these islands from remote prehistoric times: "there was no other form of Celtic in either island before those dates" (Greene, 1966). This rejection of course raised the question of the language or languages of the pre-Celtic inhabitants — the linguistic "substratum". His review of this issue demonstrated the immense problems involved in the identification of such a substratum and any influence it may have had on the development of Celtic. Indeed there is no clear evidence for a pre-Celtic language.

In the late 1960s Dillon, who had studied Indo-European elements in early Irish tradition, reverted to older notions of early Celts: "If we suppose that the Celts emerge as a separate people about 2000 BC, Goidelic may be a very early form of Celtic, and Gaulish (with British) a later form; and the first Celtic settlements of the British Isles may be dated to the early Bronze Age (c. 1800 BC), and even identified with the coming of the Beaker Folk..." (Dillon and Chadwick, 1967). He was aware that most scholars dated the first Celtic settlements in Britain as late as 600 BC "but it is a tenable opinion and the great archaism of Irish tradition in language, literature and social organisation make it seem to me probable" (Dillon, 1975). Linguistic theory had not come full circle, however, for this suggestion was rejected by Wagner (1969) and Greene (1983) for a variety of reasons. Greene, in particular, was of the opinion that if Goidelic was spoken in Ireland for some two thousand

years Irish and Welsh could hardly have been mutually comprehensible in the early centuries AD. The facts of linguistic change could not be ignored and he instanced Icelandic and Norwegian, separated for less than a thousand years and no longer mutually comprehensible. More recently, MacEoin (1986) has suggested a diffusion of Celtic to Britain and Ireland towards the end of the Bronze Age. A measure of linguistic consensus is clear: the Celtic settlements of these islands and the introduction of the Celtic languages occurred in later prehistoric times. However, the basis for this consensus deserves closer examination.

The Celtic family of languages is today divided into Continental Celtic and Insular Celtic, names reflecting the geographical distribution of these groups in Europe and Asia Minor. Insular Celtic is subdivided on linguistic grounds into Goidelic, whose modern descendants comprise Irish, Scots-Gaelic and Manx, and Brittonic comprising Welsh, Cornish and Breton. The latter is classed as an Insular Celtic language because it derived from Brittonic in the fifth century AD.

Continental Celtic includes Gaulish, Lepontic, Celtiberian (or Hispano-Celtic), and Galatian (Schmidt, 1979, 1980). All were extinct by the seventh century AD. The evidence is very fragmentary indeed and consists mainly of inscriptions, but also coin inscriptions, names, glosses and substratum words. The Gaulish inscriptions, for instance, comprise over eighty examples dating from the third century BC to the first century AD. The Lepontic inscriptions, about seventy in number, come from a limited area of northern Italy; they are written in a variant of the Etruscan alphabet and date to the last centuries BC. Celtiberian is known in the main from stone inscriptions and a few bronze inscriptions from northern Spain; the earliest date to the last three centuries BC. In addition to this sort of evidence, Continental Celtic includes thousands of proper names from a great variety of sources. This whole body of material is the earliest extant primary evidence for the study of the Celtic language family.

The earliest inscriptions in Insular Celtic are to be found in the Ogham inscriptions known mainly from the southern half of Ireland and from Wales; some of these date to the fourth century AD or earlier, some are later. The rich textual evidence, of course, is later still, much of it incorporated in Medieval manuscript. Jackson (1953) has used the term *Primitive Irish* for the earliest Goidelic material, from the placenames mentioned in Ptolemy's map of the second century AD to, and including, the later Ogham inscriptions of the early seventh century. *Archaic Irish* is the language of the oldest manuscript material of the seventh and early eighth century followed by *Old Irish* from then to the middle of the tenth century. The earliest Brittonic he calls *British* first known from the writings of Greeks and Romans, from Pytheas of Massilia in the late fourth century BC down to the sub-Roman period in the fifth century

AD and on into the sixth. Primitive Welsh, Cornish and Breton appear as separate languages from the end of the sixth century.

Primitive Irish (Goidelic) differs from *British* (Brittonic) phonetically in several ways as well as the familiar retention of the archaic Indo-European **qu*, thus "four" is *pedwar* in Welsh but *cethir* in Old Irish and *quattuor* in Latin where Indo-European **qu* survives as *q* or *c*. As we have seen this *q* - *p* shift unduly preoccupied some scholars for over half a century. The presence of the innovative *p* is but one indication of the affinity between Brittonic and Gaulish, witness the term Gallo-Brittonic used by other writers. It is a measure of how little survives of the early Insular material that in Britain, for example, where Brittonic is known mainly (though not entirely) from placenames and personal names, there is insufficient evidence to indicate the certain presence of dialects over such a large area though their existence was quite likely. Early Irish literature contains no traces of dialects either.

The famous reference of Pytheas to the Pretanic islands of the later fourth century BC may indicate that the *q* - *p* cleavage had occurred by that time. The instances of *q* in Gaulish as in the river name *Sequana*, or the names of the months *Quimon* and *Equos* in the Coligny Calendar, are unexplained (Evans, 1981) but may be archaisms. Archaic elements are a notable feature of Celtiberian where as in Goidelic the non-labialization of *q* is found and is but one of a number of primitive features common to both of these languages. It seems fair to say that in later centuries of the last millennium BC a linguistically more conservative Goidelic and Celtiberian may be contrasted with a more innovative Brittonic and Gaulish, a difference perhaps somewhat blurred by labels such as Insular and Continental.

As already mentioned, Continental Celtic represents the earliest extant primary evidence for a Celtic language and as Evans (1983) has remarked it is therefore particularly important for any reconstruction of the preceding language; the Common Celtic of some writers, the Proto-Celtic of others. As defined by Schmidt (1976) Common Celtic is "that reconstructed language-model which, on the one hand, preceded historically the separation of Celtic into the singular attested languages, while exhibiting, on the other hand, those transformations through which the Celtic languages were differentiated from the Indo-European parent language". While Continental Celtic provides considerable evidence for the phonology of Common Celtic, its scanty records offer little information on morphology or syntax; for grammar Insular Celtic, particularly Old Irish, is the principal source. Common Celtic, as tentatively reconstructed (an asterisk before a word or letter conventionally indicates a reconstructed form), contains much of the ancestral Indo-European language structure but differences include, in the vowel system, the replacement of Indo-European **a* by **o* and Indo-European **é* by Celtic **i*: compare Gaulish *rix* and Irish *ri*, "king", with Latin *rex*. Differences in the consonantal

system include the early loss of Indo-European **p*, compare Irish *athair*, "father" and Latin *pater* (Greene, 1974). As far as the development of Continental Celtic is concerned, Schmidt (1979) argued that the phonological and morphological evidence indicated Celtiberian was an early variant of Gaulish and this differentiation occurred after Goidelic has separated from Proto-Celtic. Both of these developments preceded the *q* - *p* change in Gaulish and "correspondences between Goidelic and Gaulish... may be explained by independent convergent developments". Schmidt also briefly summarized the archaeological evidence but it is important to note that the picture he sketched was based mainly on the work of Kimmig and Filip in the 1960s and was the conventional one of insular and continental Celtic migrations. He did not propose any precise correlation of his relative sequence of linguistic developments with the archaeologically or historically attested population movements. However, in a study of Indo-European and Celtic linguistic problems, Tovar (1977) did attempt some synchronization of the two. For him Celtic and Germanic were the two dominant Indo-European dialects in western Europe to emerge towards the end of the Bronze Age. Celtic migrations to Gaul, Spain, Britain and Ireland followed and in part at least the picture is one of "Q-Celts" succeeded by "P-Celts", the latter represented by the La Tène culture. In Ireland, possibly because La Tène material was not accompanied by a large number of people, the Goidelic *q* sound prevailed. Both Tovar and Schmidt are in broad agreement; as the latter stated in 1980: "the wide dispersal of the Celtic languages is the result of Celtic conquests during the Hallstatt (from the 8th century BC) and La Tène periods (from the 5th century BC)".

Because Common Celtic (or Proto-Celtic) can only be reconstructed in a rudimentary way it is an over-simplification to consider it to have been a uniform language spoken at a particular time in a particular area by a particular people (Meid, 1968). Schmidt's fissiparous schema has not convinced Evans who in a series of papers (1977, 1981, 1983) has preferred to emphasize the fragmentary and scattered nature of the evidence and the considerable methodological and chronological problems which beset the reconstruction of the Celtic language family. For him "the concept of Common Celtic, of Proto-Celtic or of a Celtic "*Grundsprache*" in a disputable one", useful merely as an analytical tool (Evans, 1983). Furthermore, in the Celtic-speaking areas of Gaul, Italy and Iberia, it is generally agreed that clear linguistic unity is not to be expected but the scattered evidence is such that dialectal divisions can barely be established though it is increasingly clear that there were "considerable and significant divergencies and dialectal cleavages" therein. On the latter topic Wagner (1969) for instance is one who had no doubts: "the basic error of comparative grammar is the reconstruction of undivided or homogenous *Common Languages* or *Ursprachen*. In reality

language or dialect diversity is always primary, while language unity is the secondary result either of the expansion of a language over wider territories or the creation of an oral or literary standard language". It must be significant that the socio-economic circumstances which might well have encouraged the development of an oral standard language or languages can be archaeologically documented in later prehistoric times in certain areas of western Europe.

Our understanding of the archaeology of western Europe has changed considerably in the last three decades. The critical scrutiny of the migration model is but one reflection of a whole series of significant shifts in its intellectual orientation and methodology. Since the 1960s, archaeology, in an exciting and sometimes bewildering fashion, has borrowed freely from other disciplines in its methods of analysis and interpretation of the evidence of the prehistoric past. Ecology, computer modelling, statistical analysis, general systems theory or cybernetics, and human geography have contributed much, followed by social anthropology which has exerted considerable influence. Essentially, the identification and dating of archaeological units or cultures became no longer an end in itself; the processes by which cultural systems worked and changed required elucidation. Thus there was renewed emphasis placed on the study of economic factors and a new interest in the investigation of social organisation. Taxonomy remained of fundamental importance, of course, but its impact on archaeological interpretation was diminished. As Renfrew (1988) has remarked, classification always seemed to result in the calculation of measures of similarity between objects or cultures which were then usually considered to be the result of contacts. These presumed contacts, be they direct or indirect, almost inevitably engendered diffusionist interpretations.

A socio-economic approach offered alternative theoretical perspectives. Modern anthropology inspired attempts to study the social organisation of prehistoric societies, and the morphology and distribution of certain megalithic tomb types, for instance, led to them being variously attributed to tribal or chiefdom societies and seen primarily as a monumental response to local social or economic pressures. Interest in social structure precipitated the identification of hierarchies and elites, and the examination of the roles of elements such as prestige goods and display. The dynamics of social change has proved to be another rewarding field of enquiry: areas of study include the organisation of the subsistence economy, the significance of technology, production, trade and exchange, and, importantly, the complex ways in which these and other factors interact. Those peripatetic "Beaker Folk", whom some saw as early Celts, may be cited as an interesting instance of an extreme functionalist reinterpretation: it has been claimed that "it was the greater degree of social ranking, not movements of merchants or nomads, that made Bell Beaker pottery and trinkets desirable

symbols of wealth, and which led to their adoption all over Europe at about the same time... The Bell Beaker "expansion" is therefore likely to have been the product of competition among neighbouring elites striving to keep abreast of the latest fashions in wealth, or its display, in order to control yet more of the resources that were available to them" (Harrison, 1980, p. 164). Shennan (1986) has further argued that the Beaker phenomenon was associated with the spread of a form of organisation in which social relations and political activity were expressed in terms of the control of prestige goods.

Innovative approaches to the study of material culture and the analysis of socio-economic organisation have also altered our understanding of many facets of later European prehistory. Here, too, the investigation of mortuary and settlement data in particular has led to the introduction of stimulating concepts such as hierarchies and hegemonies, power, dominance and exploitation, cores and peripheries, and peer polity interaction (Shennan, 1987). A number of theoretical studies, with a socio-economic orientation, have illuminated aspects of the "Celtic" Iron Age as some would label it, and some of these studies have a bearing on the thorny problem of the nature of the relationship between the Insular and Continental Celtic-speaking worlds.

From about 1300 BC, in a wide area of central and western Europe significant developments occur in burial practices and technology, and in subsistence and settlement patterns, and there is abundant and long-recognised evidence for social stratification. Rich metalwork, including weapons and armour, burial and settlement evidence sometimes combine to suggest complex hierarchical structures. The picture, of course, varies considerably both spatially and chronologically, but at certain times and in certain places it is possible to identify particular concentrations of monuments or artifacts or both which seem to denote such a phenomenon. Champion (1982) has examined one such concentration in the Rhine-Main region of Germany where from about 1250 BC major changes in burial, technology and settlement distribution can be charted. A number of rich graves are concentrated on the richest loess soils of the valleys. The metalwork from some of these burials and from rivers includes status-related items such as bronze cauldrons, buckets, cups and weaponry. It is argued that control, intensification and readjustment of the subsistence economy played an integral part in the emergence and development of a social elite in this area. Broadly similar socio-economic transformations may have taken place elsewhere: "concentrations of artefactual wealth and technological skill tend to coincide with areas of maximum agricultural potential, especially in the river valleys of western Europe such as the Loire, Thames and Rhine. These areas were joined together by a network of exchange links manifested in high-status objects and such widespread ties established a considerable degree of homogeneity in the forms and fashions found throughout Europe,

in contexts associated with high-status population groups".

There is much discussion of the possible nature of late prehistoric hierarchical societies, and the roles of economic or demographic factors, of kinship and of ritual, in their formation, development and demise are much debated (e.g. Rowlands, 1984; Bintliff, 1984). These are important issues but of greater significance as far as the particular problem we are considering is concerned is the duration and extent of the phenomenon: in particular the symbolic manifestation of rank and status in fine metalwork, for a period of a thousand years or more here and there over a wide area of western and central Europe. Whether in competition or emulation, for self-aggrandisement or political power, the shifting diachronic pattern of exchange systems suggested by these objects seems to indicate an elaborate network of stratified communities interacting with one another at least at an elite level.

A range of metal types (and at the moment precious little else) indicates that Ireland shared in this complex process from the latter part of the second millennium BC if not before. Some of these items, notably bronze spears and shields, and finely decorated or crafted objects of gold or bronze, of various dates, are justifiably seen as prestigious elite possessions some probably for ostentatious display. Indeed the ability to regulate the movement of such objects and the patronage given to the craftsmen who made them may well have been one source of the political power of the groups in question. Caution is necessary in assessing the significance of such Irish material, supportive mortuary and settlement evidence for social ranking is scanty or absent. However, some of the British evidence has been plausibly interpreted in this way: within the weapon hoards of the Later Bronze Age, for instance, "an aristocracy is evidenced, with the right to possess horse and waggon equipment, a cauldron and possibly a sword, also having a retinue of spearmen using the short javelin and long thrusting spear, and a smith at their command. Other hoards suggest the artisan class of this society, especially metalworkers, woodworkers and leatherworkers" (Coombs, 1975). There is, moreover, a hierarchy of settlement evidence not inconsistent with this picture (Barrett, 1980; Darvill, 1987).

The study of the metal artefacts of later prehistory, whether they are obviously of high status or not, provides abundant evidence for contact between Ireland and Britain and between Britain and the Continent. There are, of course, local fashions and developments but time and again certain objects reflect a shifting pattern of contacts across the Irish Sea (and across the English Channel). Only some examples can be cited here. The distribution (fig. 1) of one of the earliest bronze sword types found in Ireland, the Ballintober sword, and its British counterparts, swords of Lambeth and Chelsea types, indicates contacts between Ireland and the Thames Valley in or about the 11th century BC. Related swords occur in northern



Figure 1 - Distribution of Ballintober swords and related weapons.
(After Burgess, 1969 and Colquhoun and Burgess, 1988).



Figure 2 - Distribution of gold and bronze "dress-fasteners".
(After Hawkes and Clarke, 1963).



Figure 3 - Distribution of "lock-rings". (After Eogan, 1969).

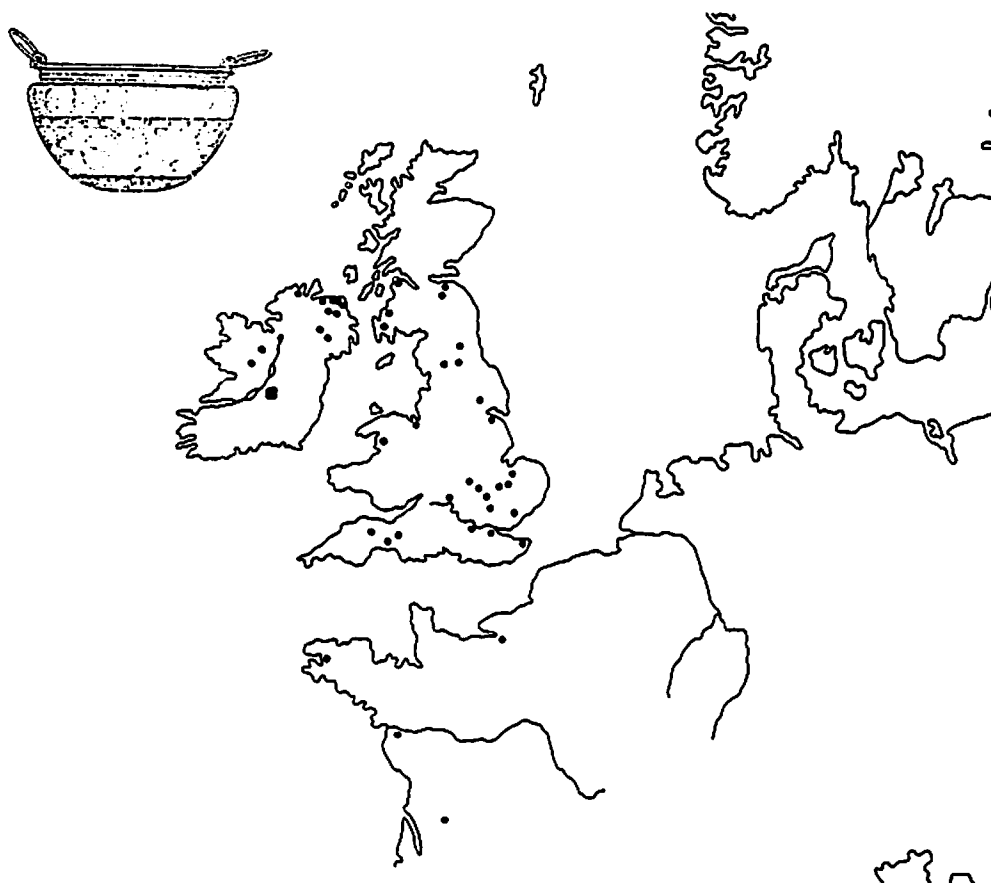
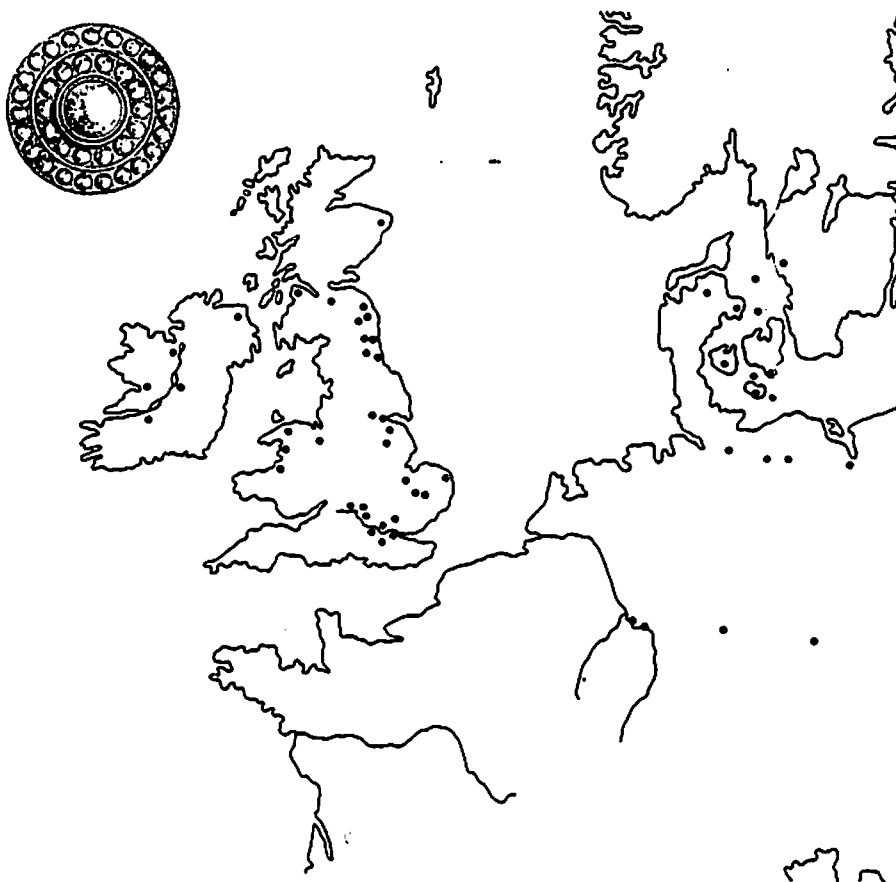
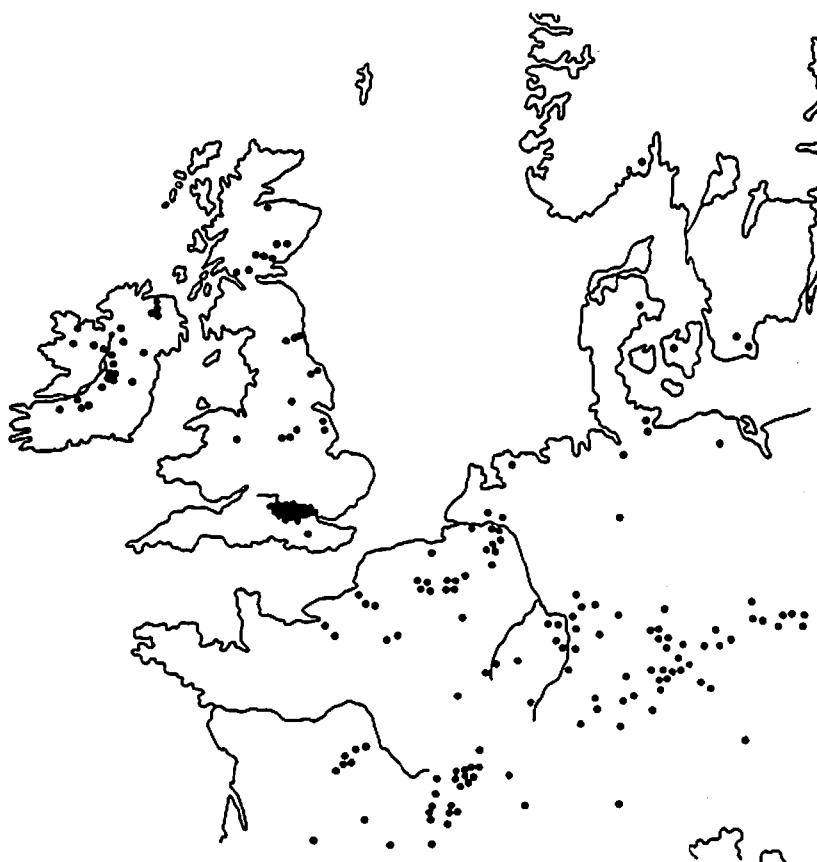


Figure 4 - Distribution of Class A cauldrons and buckets. (After Gerloff, 1986).



*Figure 5 - General distribution of bronze shields.
(After Coles, 1962 - Needham, 1979 - Raftery, 1982).*



*Figure 6 - General distribution of Gündlingen swords.
(After Cowen, 1967).*

France. The importance of the Thames Valley is clearly demonstrated by the dense cluster of finds there and south Wales seems to have been the intermediary in this instance. There are other later sword types and bronze items which show broadly similar patterns though differing in some detail (e.g. Burgess, 1969, fig. 8 and 10). The lower Thames region continues in importance: the quantity of Continental material from here, in the earlier part of the first millennium BC particularly, demonstrates that it was a major centre in long distance exchange networks. A different picture is presented by the distribution of gold and bronze dress-fasteners and bracelets (with cup-shaped terminals) of the eighth century BC and later where northern and south-western Britain also figure (fig. 2). Finds from Cornwall and from just north of the Severn estuary are probable reminders that coastal traffic was, as always, an important means of communication, and a discovery from northern Germany extends the pattern significantly. The fine gold lock-rings of broadly similar date are found in northern Britain, north Wales, south-eastern England and France (fig. 3). There is a remarkable concentration of them in north Munster where Eogan (1974) has identified one of two late Bronze Age regional metalwork clusters, the other being in the north-east. Champion (1989) has rightly compared the rich north Munster finds to those similar concentrations of metalwork in other river valleys of western Europe in the later Bronze Age such as the Thames, Seine, Loire and Rhine.

The Continental dimension of various Irish-British patterns of contact is also clearly revealed in other distributions of the general period: class A cauldrons and buckets (fig. 4) and bronze shields (fig. 5), for example. The different types of vessel and shield on these maps however span quite a number of centuries and such illustrations, aside entirely from distortions produced by placing large dots on small maps, are misleading insofar as they seem to depict a synchronic event. This has been the interpretation of the distribution of bronze Gündlingen swords variously considered in the past to represent immigrants, raiders or traders from the Continent in the Hallstatt Iron Age c. 700 BC (fig. 6). With the recognition that most insular examples differ in minor typological detail from most Continental examples trade or exchange became the preferred explanation for this supposed Hallstatt influence. Exchange and emulation is a plausible interpretation but more interesting still is the easily forgotten fact that this particular sword type is not a sudden novelty: "if they are seen in a longer chronological perspective, it can clearly be seen that they are a part of a long tradition of sword manufacture and usage in Ireland from the Middle Bronze Age onwards in which there is a continuous process of change in the precise forms of the weapons actually used... The adoption of this specific type must, in fact, be seen as merely a regional expression of a broadly distributed and long-lasting fashion for sword usage" (Champion, 1982a).

A final and especially interesting illustration of elite emulation and patronage is provided by a whole series of finely decorated and crafted objects of the last few centuries BC. They are items, often of bronze or gold, bearing La Tène art, "the first conscious art style to be created in Europe north of the Alps" as Powell once described it. Splendid regional schools in this remarkable expression of artistic fashion are known from Hungary to Ireland. Initially the product of craftsmen of princely courts in the Middle Rhine region, eastern France, and southern Germany and Austria, this aristocratic art has been synonymous with the Celts of the pre-Roman Iron Age since the 19th century. Its distribution and that of other elements of the so-called La Tène culture have been equated with the migration of Celtic groups. Some finds of La Tène objects from as far away as Egypt and Greece, are the reflection of some of the historically attested raids or migrations of Celtic-speaking peoples. Other finds have different explanations: very occasional imported pieces of fine metalwork in Ireland and Britain are likely evidence of exchange links in prestige material and the insular styles of La Tène art are, in turn, highly skilled and innovative renderings of designs ultimately of Continental inspiration; they are the output of local craftsmen working for wealthy aristocratic patrons. This widespread art style raises many intriguing questions but at one level it and many of the portable artefacts it decorates are expressions of a familiar preoccupation with finery and status by regional, interacting elites. It is a general pattern of activity in which Ireland shared to a varying degree but with considerable consistency for a period of more than a thousand years.

The notion of elites and exchange is not new in archaeology. What is relatively new, however, is the processual approach and the delineation of the local dynamics of socio-economic organisation. A concern with the linguistic implications of such hierarchical contact is not particularly new either. In 1979 Piggott remarked "prestige objects are portable and can move rapidly with their owners or be transmitted by acts of gift exchange, and so form an upper-class mobile archaeology superimposed on the static background of the products of the peasantry, and not only can La Tène metalwork be best considered in these terms, but the Celtic languages and their transmission might well be seen in the same light". He touched on this theme again that year at the International Congress of Celtic Studies in Galway and noted the demise of simplistic archaeological invasive models like "The Coming of Iron" or "The Coming of the Celts" (Piggott, 1983). In contrast David Greene at the same Congress was of the opinion that the "linking of the Celtic settlements in Ireland with an Iron Age beginning somewhere round 600 BC... is the least unacceptable solution" (1983).

Speculation about the potential ability of interacting elites to stimulate linguistic change has not impressed many Irish archaeologists. In 1984 Mallory bravely attempted to moderate a seminar on the

theme of "the origins of the Irish". There was a measure of consensus that the search for the earliest Celtic speakers should be confined to the first millennium BC but even if the exchange of the prestige goods of hierarchical societies could be seen as the material expression of the development and diffusion of prestige dialects, as was diffidently suggested by this writer, some form of intrusion was deemed logically necessary. Again it was generally accepted that "languages cannot diffuse in vague manner often assigned to the expansion of art styles or ideas but require a population vector" or to put it even more bluntly "the appearance of the Irish language in Ireland cannot be explained without reference to an intrusion of Irish-speaking people into the island". This intrusive group remains utterly elusive, however, and neither the archaeology of the late Bronze Age nor the Iron Age (ably summarised by MacEoin, 1986 and by B. Raftery, 1989) offers any convincing evidence..

The diachronic interactive model of Celtic linguistic development has been propounded by Renfrew (1987, p. 245) who adapted Hawkes' concept of "cumulative Celticity" and has argued that the Celtic languages emerged from generalized Indo-European "essentially in those areas where their speech is later attested". From before 4000 BC when he sees Indo-European speaking populations in France, Britain and Ireland with linguistic changes continuing thereafter :

"It is helpful to think of these changes in terms of Schmidt's [19th century] wave model. In some cases the wave would extend to the most distant Celtic-speaking regions, so that the Celtic languages would be evolving together. If the wave did not extend further, that would imply a process of linguistic differentiation for Celtic as a whole, serving to distinguish the Celtic languages from their neighbours, i.e. the Italic and Germanic languages. But it is not always necessary to think of a wave starting from a very specific centre. It is permissible to refer again here to the concept of peer-polity interaction in archaeology, and to the existence of long-distance trading networks which effectively established contacts over considerable areas. Developments could thus take place in step, so to speak, without our having to think of any one local region as a prime innovating centre... Here we can take up once again Christopher Hawkes' evocative "cumulative Celticity", and use it in a more mutual and collective sense : "cumulative mutual Celticity". Instead of always thinking of England as the recipient of these accumulating Celtic qualities, we would rather think of England and continental Europe as starting on a more equal footing, and developing together that cumulative mutual Celticity which results in the position which we see at the time of Christ. It is perhaps not necessary to see one region as always the donor and the other the recipient. In this perspective there need be no one, localized Celtic "homeland". The homelands of the Celts would in fact be constituted by the full extent of the area where Celtic

languages came to be spoken (always excluding such later offshoots as Galatia and perhaps Italy, if it is clear that Celtic speech there really was the result of demonstrable later migrations)".

This model of Celtic linguistic development has at least the merit of being in harmony with much current archaeological thinking. It may even appeal to some historical linguists concerned with Continental developments where such a formation process broadly conforms to notions about Celtic origins if not to beliefs about early Celtic expansion. It will undoubtedly present some problems to students of the insular scene and it is probably fair to say that these problems will appear most acute to those interested in the seemingly intractable problem of the Celticization of Ireland. Mallory (1989, p. 274) finds this evolutionary scheme most unconvincing because the insular Celtic languages share a common late prehistoric vocabulary, with words for iron, lead, weapons and chariot terminology, which seems to indicate little significant dialectical separation over the long time span of some 3000 years conceived by Renfrew. Furthermore the Celtic languages were extremely similar to one another when first recorded, a phenomenon best explained, Mallory believes, by a relatively recent divergence in Common Celtic. No doubt others will have qualms about a theory which offers but a minor role, if any, to migratory Celts and their ethnic baggage. Yet others will continue to question the ability of pre-literate hierarchical societies to initiate significant language change no matter how much their elites might interact. Ireland's peripheral location, an island off an island off the coast of Continental Europe, is in all probability one significant reason why it is so difficult to envisage the likely degree of contact and social interaction necessary in such a process. But both the duration and the degree of contact and interaction, at certain levels of society, may have been underestimated.

Given the clear evidence for broad cultural continuity in the Ireland of the last two millennia BC, it is not unreasonable to assume that a language or languages of Indo-European descent were spoken there before 1000 BC. Neither is it unreasonable to assume any significant linguistic divergence between Ireland and Britain given the degree of contact between the two islands evinced by both pottery and metalwork since at least 2000 BC. However geographical considerations would probably determine some measure of peripheral differentiation. There may have been a dialect continuum over a considerable area, with those at either end, for example, being unintelligible to each other. The situation may even have been more complicated than that for our belief in prehistoric monolingual communities may be quite as unfounded as our tendency to imagine the existence of large single speech areas. Bilingualism and multilingualism are the norm in many parts of the world and among many primitive societies, in South America, in New Guinea, in India and elsewhere (Gumpertz and Hymes, 1972 ; Pride and

Holmes, 1972). Indeed it is bilingual circumstances which allow the phonetic and other traits of one language to be absorbed or superseded by another.

In short, it is not stretching credulity to suggest that at least as early as the second millennium BC, Ireland and Britain consisted of an interacting patchwork of monolingual communities, linked by patterns of social interaction and separated by whatever social or geographical factors that might weaken communication. Many would obviously be linguistically related. In passing it may be noted that archaeology in no way suggests that the island of Ireland was an isolated cultural entity at this early date either. While the long distance exchange networks of later prehistory may not be so much in evidence, there is every indication of extensive contact between the two islands, particularly between north-eastern Ireland and northern Britain. The relatively narrow stretch of water which separates them would have been less an impediment to prehistoric travel than many a long cross-country trek. The distance from Rosslare to Fishguard and from other points on the east coast to north Wales is about 100 km. The Isle of Man is about 60 km from either coast and Down to Galloway a mere 40 km. As Piggott (1979) has remarked "with prehistoric as with early historic boats, under oars or sails, speeds are not likely to have been greater than those of classical antiquity and so average about 5 knots (9 km an hour) or less... it seems reasonable to assume that a daylight voyage of around 100 km out of sight of land for no more than 8 or 10 hours, would be normal...". Indeed our growing knowledge of Bronze Age boats (McGrail, 1987) suggests that the possible extent of such prehistoric sea crossings and of coastal traffic may have been underestimated. Champion (1975) has shown how the English Channel served to connect southern England and the Continent in the Iron Age and how worthwhile an exercise it is to consider whether Britain and Europe should be considered as separate in prehistory as they have been in modern political history. Perhaps we should think of the Irish Sea as "a great land-locked lake" (Dillon and Chadwick, 1967, p. 70).

For Ireland and Britain, too, a consideration of the interrelationships is surely the more profitable approach. We have seen how from the end of the second millennium BC both islands shared in many aspects of Continental metal working. While, as elsewhere, Ireland had its own regional idiosyncrasies it participated at an elite level in wider contemporary fashions. There is some evidence too that social stratification became more marked in the Later Bronze Age. There are significant gaps in the archaeological record (Champion, 1989) but the broad picture is a fairly consistent one. Indeed even the idiosyncrasy of a Goidelic language (which presumably had developed sometime in the first millennium BC) can be seen just as the retention of an older fashion at the expense of a new.

As MacEoin (1986) has pointed out :

"The geographic pattern of the distribution of q and p in Celtic with the more archaic features found in the extreme west, can be more satisfactorily explained as an old speech area (with IE q retained) in which an innovation (q - p) spread from a central position but failed to reach the western periphery. Since the area covered by the La Tène culture is approximately coextensive with the area of P-Celtic, we may assume that the phonological change originated within the La Tène territory. That it originated on the Continent and not on the island of Britain would seem to be indicated by the general status of Britain as the recipient rather than the donor in its relations with La Tène Gaul. The manner in which the change spread over the homeland of the La Tène culture between the Rhine and the Seine and from these southwards to the Pyrenees and northwestwards over the channel to Britain need not have involved great movements of people. Dialect change can acquire a momentum of its own and spread quickly as long as it is in fashion or is felt to satisfy some linguistic need — one recalls the way in which the uvular r has spread in several continental European languages in the past few generations. Whether the change lost its momentum before reaching Spain and Ireland in the extreme west or whether the barriers of the Pyrenees and the Irish Sea proved insuperable, we do not know. Once the new pronunciation had become established in Britain it must have been a significant distinguishing feature between the languages of Britain and Ireland. This was certainly so at the beginning of the written tradition of both languages in the sixth century AD".

The various suggestions by archaeologists that the exchange of prestige goods, the interaction between elite groups (Renfrew's peer-polity interaction), and the emergence of dialects of social prestige all contributed to the emergence of the Celtic languages in later prehistory, reflect an increasing awareness of the contribution being made by sociolinguistics to the understanding of the mechanisms of language change. A connection between social class and language change has been recognised for many years (Wardhaugh, 1986). William Labov has been a pioneering figure in this field and he has shown, for example, that different levels of a social hierarchy may initiate different sorts of sound changes, conscious change being a feature of higher social strata, change at this level becoming a prestige model for all members of the speech community. Labov's work has stimulated the study of the historical development of social hierarchies and their complex linguistic relationship (Romaine, 1982). The nature and extent of the role of social class in linguistic change is now the subject of some debate but there is no disagreement that social factors are involved. Other studies have examined the role of factors such as social networks characterized by intricate relationships and have suggested that such structures may support vernacular norms, and, interestingly enough, that

changes in network structures are responsible for some linguistic change.

Of course it is true that the linguistic behaviour of recent urban and other speech communities may be far removed from that of late prehistoric European society. What is important, however, is the recognition that speech communities are not linguistically uniform entities and that social elites and networks whatever their date may have a significant role to play in language development. It could also be argued that the linguistic behaviour of an elite may not reflect the linguistic patterns of the population at large. An extreme diglossic situation might obtain, in which two very different varieties of a language co-exist in the one speech community (as in Haiti between Creole and French) and the high version might not prevail. Thus to be more effective in influencing broad linguistic change, a social hierarchy should ideally have a vertical continuum allowing interaction between the different levels. Rowlands' arguments (1980) about the significance of kinship and other factors in early European societies may be at least partly relevant here. A prestige goods model is at best a partial explanation for the emergence and development of wealthy elites. Control of the means of production and exchange was undoubtedly important but as early Irish society demonstrates power and status could have other bases too. It would be unwise to transpose the picture we have of a society of the earlier first millennium AD into prehistory but the survival of elements of archaic Indo-European structures and customs shows that some of its characteristics are of great antiquity (Dillon and Chadwick, 1967 Kelly, 1988). It was, in a well-known definition, a "tribal, rural, hierarchical and familiar" society. A people and a territory were ruled by a tribal king, originally a sacred or quasi-divine individual ritually wedded to the land. In the early Irish law tracts there are two grades of king above the tribal king: the "great king" and "king of great kings". Tributes, gifts and certain obligations variously formed part of this personal relationship between over-king and subordinate kings. The tribe or petty kingdom comprised a group of kindreds bound together by subjection to the king; it was more or less rigidly stratified, the three grades of free members corresponding roughly to "king, lords and commons". The nobility consisted of a warrior class and the "men of art", such as poets (custodians of a vigorous oral tradition) and craftsmen. The commoners were free-men normally bound by clientship to a lord who thus acquired status as well as provisions and services, indeed the greater the number of clients, the greater the status. In return the client might receive an advance of stock or land along with protection and support. The relationship was a contract between lord and free-man (who sometimes might be kinsmen) involving reciprocal duties and advantages. It may have been an ancient and widespread system for it was recorded by Polybius and Caesar among the Gauls, and possibly even further afield, in Iberia and elsewhere

(Champion, 1985, p. 20).

As Gosden (1985) has shown, the structure and customs of Celtic society as recorded in early Irish literature may conceivably shed further light on aspects of the archaeology of the rich chiefdoms of Iron Age Europe. As far as our linguistic preoccupations are concerned such a stratified society with its emphasis on kinship and other links and reciprocal contacts at every level offers abundant scope for a vertical linguistic continuum. If even some of the Insular and Continental hierarchies of later prehistory were in any way akin to this then there was complex and potentially powerful matrix for language development. The Later Bronze Age may thus have been a period of significant linguistic change: a hierarchical linguistic continuum, a widespread pattern of regional interaction at an elite level, a diachronic scale of at least a millenium (and a vigorous oral tradition) are factors which might well combine to produce large single speech areas. This phenomenon in turn would encourage further contact and even facilitate the movement of people, be they chieftains or commoners. It might also help extinguish dialect variation and it will be remembered that dialect traces are absent in early Irish literature.

When in 1971 Hawkes used the term "cumulative Celticity" he was primarily thinking of a sequence of immigrations from Celtic Gaul to Britain: "never grand displacements, effacing old inhabitants, but always bringing an access of new upper class masters" (Hawkes, 1972). Renfrew broadened this concept, as we have seen, and suggested the more or less *in situ* development of the Celtic languages in western Europe, a process he termed "cumulative collective Celticity". Such a process is tentatively envisaged here to explain the development of a Celtic language in Ireland but with particular emphasis on the complex nature of the hierarchical structure of Celtic society and on the enduring connective role of the North Channel and the Irish Sea. This body of water will continue to repay careful study for, in addition to the prehistoric metalwork which was traded or exchanged across it, traders must surely have transported other goods, and boats must have ferried tribute, craftsmen, wives, concubines, slaves, foster children, whole families and communities from shore to shore. People no doubt descended on kinfolk in times of disaster. It is quite possible that one or more significant movements of people took place from one island to the other and lie unrecognised or unrecognisable in the archaeological record. However, if this did occur in the last millenium BC, then it is likely that it merely enhanced the diachronic linguistic developments already underway.

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