

SIR JOHN RHŶS MEMORIAL LECTURE

Celtic Origins, the Western and the Eastern Celts

WOLFGANG MEID

University of Innsbruck

IT IS A GREAT HONOUR for me to be invited to give the renowned Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture. But it also fills me with a certain amount of anxiety that I may not be quite up to this task, and disappoint my audience. The announced title of my lecture, ‘Celtic Origins, the Western and the Eastern Celts’, may have led you to suppose that what I am going to present will be, in a balanced way, a general survey of the Celtic question. However, the main focus of my paper will be on the less known eastern Celts on whom I recently did some research. But in order to achieve some balance, these remarks must be placed in a more general framework in which the controversial Celtic question itself must be addressed, and the question of Celtic origins plus the movements and distribution of Celtic-speaking groups brought into perspective, together with the linguistic and cultural aspects attached to them. This seems an impossible task to cover in one hour, and instead of showering linguistic and archaeological data upon you, I will just state my opinions on some of the more controversial matters.

Some preliminaries

I am by profession an historical linguist—not so much the sound-shifting type, but rather a philologist interested in the traditions of or about the

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various peoples who speak, or once spoke, an Indo-European language. Therefore my approach will be tainted by that. I am not an archaeologist preoccupied with material culture and its remains, and so I am not an expert in this field. But I understand that a number of archaeologists, especially in Britain, have problems with the notion 'Celtic', some of them suspecting even that this is a fictitious concept with a fictitious reality behind it, whereas, on the contrary, many Continental archaeologists are quite carefree in their use of this term as a cultural label. But 'Celtic' is not primarily a cultural label; rather it is, when it first emerges, an ethnic label, referring to the *Keltoi* or *Kéltai*,¹ *Celtae*, an ethnic group in Western Europe to which—and this is the important point—a distinct language can be attributed. This language—or rather, group of closely related dialects—can be therefore called 'Celtic'.

So far, so good. But here Comparative Linguistics stepped in and was able to show that this Continental Celtic language group attested by inscriptions from France, Switzerland, northern Italy and Spain, as well as by onomastic evidence from a much wider area, had close relations in Britain and Ireland, and that this ensemble constituted a distinct sub-group within the Indo-European family of languages. And now scientific terminology comes in: onto this whole Indo-European sub-group, by extension, and in view of the mutual linguistic relationship of its dialects, the label 'Celtic' was attached, although the ethnic term 'Celts' did perhaps not apply to the speakers of these so-called 'Celtic' dialects in Britain and in Ireland, who preferred to call themselves *Brittones*, *Scotti* or just by any other tribal names.²

But the non-attestation of this ethnic term for the people of Britain and Ireland does not mean that there was no awareness of this notion. We know—Caesar refers to this³—that detachments of Continental Celtic tribes crossed over the Channel in recent prehistoric times to settle in southern Britain, retaining for the most part their original names,⁴ and though Caesar here gives their origin *ex Belgio*, at least some of them

¹ The form Κελτοί is found with Herodotos and other Greek writers. Strabo says this name cited by him in the variant form Κέλται is the older one; he himself refers to the Celts constantly as Γαλάται.

² A similar situation, by the way, is found in the Germanic area; *Germani*, the name of a rather obscure tribe, being extended to the whole or the greater part of the Germanic-speaking ethnos which conceived itself rather as tribal entities, *Saxones*, *Francones* etc.

³ *Bellum Gallicum* 5. 12, 1–2.

⁴ In fact, tribal names such as *Atrebates* and *Parisii* occur on both sides; *Catuvellauni* (in South Britain; their king *Cassivellaunus*, Caesar) and *Catalauni* (in the Marne region: Châlons) may also be compared.

must have come from the area where the inhabitants—again according to Caesar⁵—called themselves *Celtae*.⁶ It is almost certain that these emigrants took this name over with them, and if not used any further must have at least remembered it. The Bretons in Bretagne may serve here as a parallel: they are by origin *Brittones* from Britain who have held on to their name in their new surroundings.

Therefore one should not deny outright the people of southern Britain their Celticity solely on the basis of the non-attestation of this term which may be simply due to the scarceness of the sources. Negative evidence cannot constitute positive proof.⁷

Language is a means of communication, essential to people living together, and these people have a way of life which one may call their 'culture'. But with Celtic allegedly being a fictitious term, archaeologists have difficulty in applying this epithet to the material remains they excavate, holding that they cannot find sufficient proof that these remains constitute evidence of 'Celtic' culture in these isles. This may be so for the material remains which cannot speak out sufficiently for themselves, or for the people who left them. The fact that people live together in rather small communities makes their culture variable on a small scale. There is no such thing as a uniform Celtic culture, just as there is, and was, no such thing as a uniform Celtic language, not even in prehistoric times— notions like Proto-Celtic, 'Urkeltisch', or Common Celtic are notional abstracts which do not stand for a uniform language but mean that this language, in spite of variations on a lower level, is characterised by a set of common features which distinguishes it from other languages of Indo-European descent. The emergence of linguistic Celticity is a gradual process spanning many centuries. In this process the original feeling of linguistic identity may be transformed and eventually lost, and Celtic consciousness reintroduced by other means.

Celtic perhaps branched off from the Indo-European mainstream in the second millennium BC. It has certain features in common with eastern Indo-European languages,⁸ a fact which tends to show that the ancestors of the Celts came from eastern parts of Europe, settling then in central

⁵ *Bellum Gallicum* 1. 1, 1.

⁶ This narrow relation of Britain with *Gallia omnis* is evident from a number of passing remarks throughout the whole of Caesar's *Commentarii*.

⁷ The other general term for the Celts, *Γαλάται*, or other names built on the basis of the pan-Celtic root *gal-, 'valour'—the British ethnicon *Galatini*, the Irish tribal name (in Leinster) *Galeóin*—also seem to have been known in Britain and Ireland.

⁸ See K. H. Schmidt, *Celtic: a Western Indo-European Language?* (Innsbruck, 1996).

and western Europe where, in the late second and in the early first millennium BC, their ethnogenesis, or rather ethnic consolidation, seems to have taken place. They had perhaps some share in the Urnfield and Hillfort culture of the second millennium BC, and a larger share in the following Hallstatt culture (roughly 800–400 BC), especially in its western part, but definitely Celtic in character is the so-called Latène civilisation (from 400 BC onwards).

Celtic origins

This said I wish to return for a moment to the question of Celtic origins. I said that the Celts, or rather their linguistic ancestors, came originally from the east. There is an alternative theory, fashionable at the moment but nevertheless erroneous in my view, that the Celtic languages came into being and developed as the language of the megalithic population of the Atlantic fringe. Professor Barry Cunliffe poses a question which he is inclined to answer in the affirmative: ‘Could it be that, far from being a language introduced by invaders or migrants moving in from central Europe, it was the language of the indigenous Atlantic communities which had developed over the long period of interaction beginning in the fifth millennium BC?’⁹

The answer to this is a blunt ‘No’, as a positive response would ignore the Indo-European origins and connections of Celtic. It is only true insofar as the very late forms of Celtic developed in the British Isles, but Celtic speech itself was introduced from outside, and that means by a sufficient number of immigrant speakers—sufficient to cause the non-Indo-European language of the original population to disappear. You can’t quite do without migrations. Likewise, English was brought onto this island, and the inmates of the three boats of Hengist and Horsa evidently would not have been sufficient to force their language onto the British-speaking populations.

The eastern origin and westward drift of Celtic, and the staged development of Celtic itself may be illustrated by two models taken from a recent publication by Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel (Figs. 1 and 2).¹⁰

⁹ B. Cunliffe, *The Celts: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2003), p. 26.

¹⁰ P. de Bernardo Stempel, ‘Language and the historiography of Celtic-speaking peoples’, pp. 45 f., figs. 15 and 16.

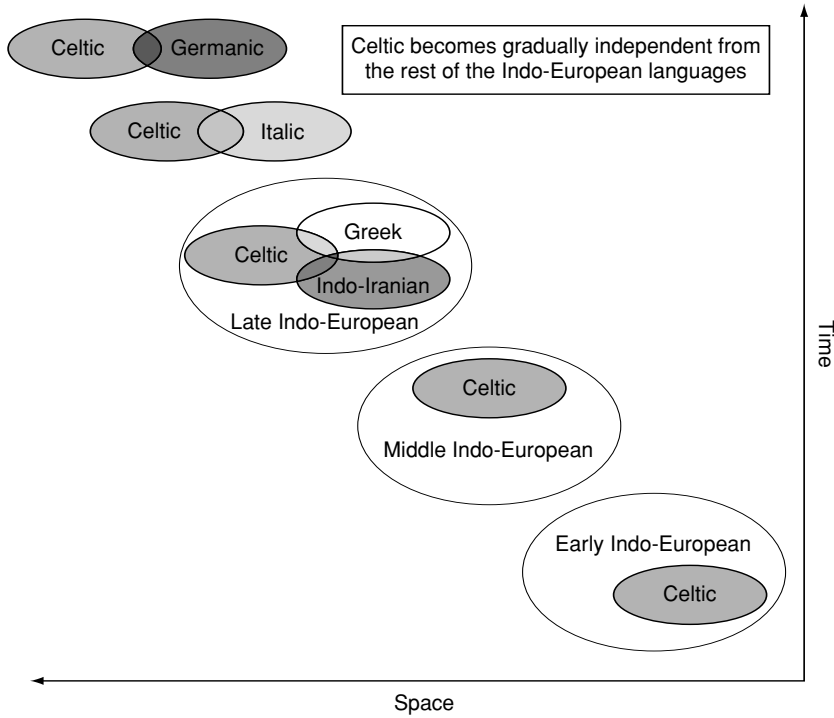


Figure 1. The westward drift of Celtic (from P. de Bernardo Stempel, ‘Language and the historiography of Celtic-speaking peoples’, fig. 16).

Of course in the early stages of the drift model the designation ‘Celtic’ must not be taken literally. By ‘Celtic’ is meant dialect features (isoglosses) which contribute to the gradual making of Celtic as we later find it. I cannot comment here on the stage model, which is a matter for future discussions, nor can I say that I agree with every detail, but the notion of a staged development, evidenced by preserved features of these stages in the linguistic record, seems correct.

By the time of the Latène civilisation the Celtic territory was already more widespread than the extent of the Latène civilisation, so Celtic culture and Latène are not synonymous concepts. Earlier movements of Celtic speakers, into northern Italy, the Iberian Peninsula and Ireland, brought still archaic forms of Celtic speech and forms of Hallstatt culture to these parts. Latène forms were introduced only later, secondarily.

The Latène territory of Celtic, that is Gaul in its widest sense, and by extension Britain, is linguistically *p*-Celtic, by which is meant that it shows the innovation by which the Indo-European labiovelar, **k^w*, was

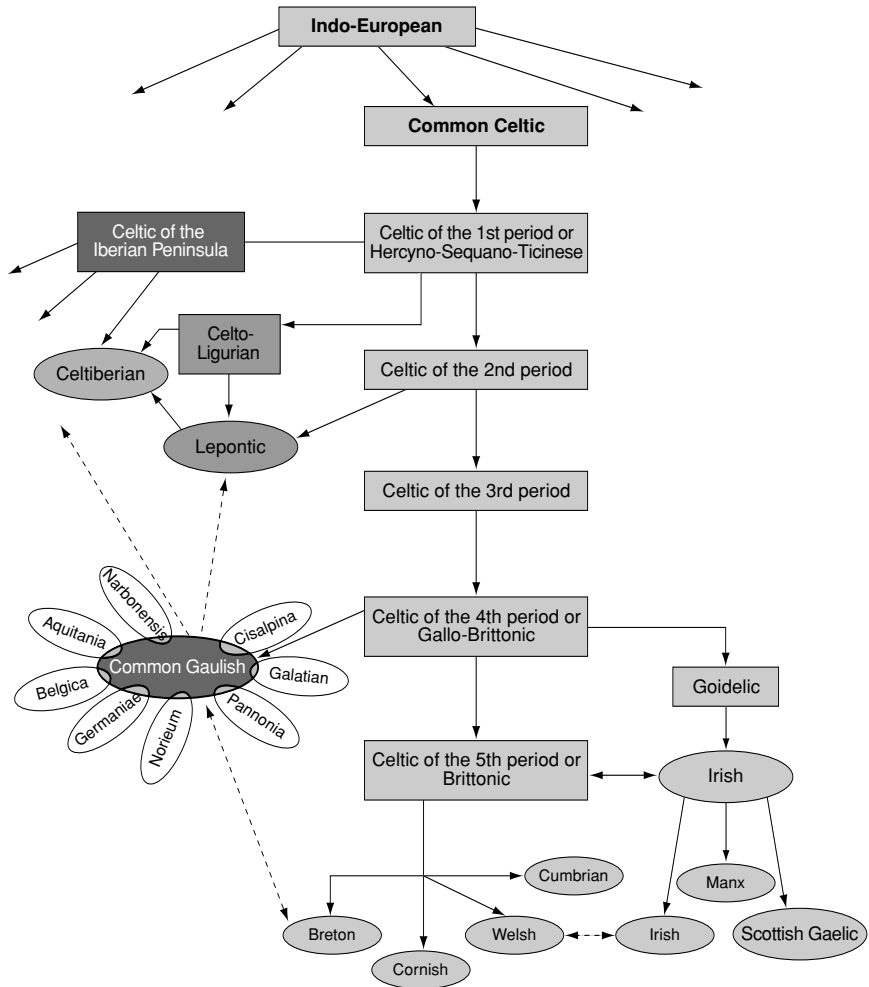


Figure 2. A gradual-development model of Celtic (from P. de Bernardo Stempel, ‘Language and the historiography of Celtic-speaking peoples’, fig. 15).

transformed to *p*, whereas in the archaic Celtic periphery **k^w* was retained. Even in Gaul there are isolated instances of retained **k^w*, such as in *Sēquana*, the river Seine, and in the month-name EQVOS in the Coligny calendar, as against normal Gaulish-British **epos* in the name of the horse-goddess *Epona*.

The older, Indo-European **p* had already been lost earlier (*atir* in Gaulish, *athir* in Irish, as against Latin *pater*). This loss of **p* is Common

Celtic, one of the oldest features which distinguish Celtic from other Indo-European languages (in Germanic **p* became *f*: *father*).

Curiously enough the voiced labiovelar, **g^w*, became *b* everywhere (Indo-European **g^wōus* > Ir. *bó*, Celtiberian *bou-stom* ‘cattle stand’). Hence, this shift is also very early, in fact common Celtic, whereas **k^w* > *p* is later and regionally restricted, a dialect feature.

So there is a gradual development of and within Celtic, a variety in space and time, but there is also continuity in identity. If we apply this to the cultural level, there is bound to be diversity in time and space also, because there cannot be cultural uniformity over so vast a territory and stretch of time, with so many populations of ever varying Celtic speech. But there can be, and must have been, common traits, perceived similarities. It is by and large not the archaeological record which reveals these common cultural features but rather the combined linguistic, literary and oral traditions supplemented, where the former are missing or scarce, as on the Continent, by historical testimony. There are if not identical at least similar systems or patterns of human behaviour, of social structures and government which pervade the Celtic world. Raimund Karl has made a notable effort to describe and explain them in his recent book on ancient Celtic social structures.¹¹ To mention just a few at random: the commitment to ‘heroic’ values and war-like behaviour; heads as trophies; social status—an inequality implying a different honour-price according to rank; various forms of legal marriage or sexual union; rules of inheritance; the joint family as owner of landed property, as in the Early Irish system, where the joint family (four generations) is the owner of landed property; the system of fosterage, meaning the education of children outside their own families; legal contracts, surety, hostages; etc.

Many of these concepts, or practices, are found in other societies too, and therefore by themselves would not seem to be indicators of any specific Celtic culture. Indeed the concept of the territorial unit and its population, the **teutā*, or of the unit of common genetic descent, **gentis*, **gntis* or the like, occurs all over Europe, and is an Indo-European heritage. But the occurrence of such concepts, if bound together with a definite linguistic terminus (a specific word) and co-occurring with other concepts and related termini, such as the co-occurrence of **teutā* and **rēks* (Irish *túath*, *rí* with equivalents in all Celtic languages) is proof of a certain social structure within the Celtic realm. It may not have been

¹¹ R. Karl, *Alteltische Sozialstrukturen* (Budapest, 2006).

present at every place (the Celtic *rīks* may have been deposed and kingship abolished), but it is there as an ideal, as the many personal names in *-rix* show. It is set off from the Germanic world where **teutā* and **teutonos* (later **kuningas*) is the formal expression of the equivalent constellation; but Celtic **rīg-* had already made its impact, as the term **rīkja-* (German *Reich* and cognates) from Celtic **rīgiom* and the adjective **rīkja-* ‘rich’ (< **‘kingly’*) show. Add to this the institution of the **ambaktos* (also borrowed into Germanic).¹² Where this word as such does not occur, as in Hispanic Celtic, it is at least present as a personal name, *Ambatus*, which in this form is typical for Hispania.

As regards the reconstruction of Indo-European lexemes, a generally agreed principle is that if a word occurs in three individual Indo-European languages (or language groups) it may be safely posited for the protolanguage. (Indeed, I should say, even two occurrences in widely separate languages may be sufficient.) Applying this principle to the ancient Celtic dialects, when three go together—e.g. Irish, Welsh and Gaulish, or Celtiberian—a certain cultural terminus, and the concept behind it, may be posited for Common Celtic, even if it is not attested in all of the Celtic dialects, particularly in the Continental Celtic ones which are notoriously of fragmentary attestation. Thus, the concept and institution of the *druid*, under this term (with its archaic word-formation: **dru-wid-s*) which is attested from Gaul, Britain and Ireland, but not from Spain, must nevertheless be presupposed for Common Celtic; **dru-wid-s* means ‘who has the wisdom of the oak’, the oak being the world-tree, symbol of the universe. Equally of pan-Celtic currency are the **wātis*, the **bardos*, the **ambaktos* and other representatives of the social system, for instance the *vassus*. The etymological background of the **wātis* is present in Italic (Latin *vātēs*) and Germanic (in the name of *Wōdan* and related vocabulary)¹³ and thus transcends Celtic, therefore by implication is a pre-Celtic inheritance. The word **bardos* is based on an already Indo-European collocation ‘putting praise (upon someone)’, **gʷr̥(ə)- dh̥ē-*, as evidenced by Vedic Indic *gīras dhā-*.¹⁴ In this way linguistic evidence may supplement, or act as substitute for, archaeological evidence where this is missing, or cannot speak out clearly enough for itself. You would not know about a druid or many other things from the archaeological record; the real proof

¹² Old High German *ambaht* ‘officer’, *ambahti* ‘office’ (Modern German *Amt*) and cognates.

¹³ W. Meid, *Aspekte der germanischen und keltischen Religion im Zeugnis der Sprache* (Innsbruck, 1991), pp. 25–7, with n. 24.

¹⁴ For references, see W. Meid, *Keltische Personennamen in Pannonien* (Budapest, 2005), p. 220.

of cultural concepts lies in the combined linguistic and philological record.

Some other examples of cultural notions include the following. ‘Peace’ is conceived as friendship, as a state of mutual love: **karantiom*. This Celtic term replaced an Indo-European one based on the root **prī-* ‘to love’, in Germanic **friþu-* (German *Friede*). The opposite of peace is enmity. The enemy (Latin *inimicus*) in Old Irish is *námae* going back to **nāmant-* which is quasi ‘non amans’. This is an archaic, isolated word, but it is attested in Gaulish personal names, such as *Namanto-bogius* ‘who “breaks” the enemy’, or *Ad-namatus* ‘facing the enemy’, frequent in Pannonia.¹⁵ So the opposed notions of friend–foe underlie those of peace and war, a semantically structured opposition.

To remain in the realm of war, the war-god is of course a very prominent figure in the Celtic pantheon, but we do not know the real name of this Celtic ‘Mars’. According to Hispanic testimony,¹⁶ he may have been called *Neitos* (*Nētus*, *Nētō*), related to Irish *niath* ‘hero’, but this is not sufficient evidence to award this name Common Celtic currency. ‘Mars’ occurs under many names or epithets, in Noricum as *Latobius* ‘he who smites in fury’.¹⁷ The many epithets, together with iconographic evidence, testify to his existence. There is also a war-goddess, or demon, *Bodb* in Irish, who may appear also in the shape of a crow (the bird that feeds on the carcasses of men fallen in battle). There is no direct cognate in Gaulish (apart from the lexical element occurring in names), but on Gaulish coins a crow is often depicted flying over the head of a mounted warrior riding into battle. This gives the concept ‘Bodb’ = war demon universal Celtic currency. One may note in this context that the Hispanic Celts thought it honourable for the fallen warrior to be defleshed by birds of prey because they were supposed to carry his soul to heaven.¹⁸

Speaking of Gods there is a great variation of names or epithets. The only pan-Celtic god known by name is *Lugus*, attested by corresponding

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 135, 160; also W. Meid, ‘Freundschaft und Liebe in keltischen Sprachen’, in L. Sawicki and D. Shalev (eds.), *Donum grammaticum. Studies in Latin and Celtic Linguistics in Honour of Hannah Rosén* (Leuven, 2002), p. 261.

¹⁶ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.19.5, and inscriptions; see W. Meid, *Die erste Botorrita-Inschrift. Interpretation eines keltiberischen Sprachdenkmals* (Innsbruck, 1993), p. 100, for further references.

¹⁷ W. Meid, ‘Mars Latobius’, in M. Ofitsch and Chr. Zinko (eds.), *Studia Onomastica et Indogermanica. Festschrift für Fritz Lochner von Hüttenbach zum 65. Geburtstag* (Graz, 1995).

¹⁸ According to two ancient testimonies, Silius Italicus, 3.341–3 and Aelianus, *de natura animalium*, 10.22; see J. M. Blázquez Martínez, *Religiones primitivas de Hispania*, I (Rome, 1962), pp. 12 f.

forms from Gaul, Spain, Ireland and Wales, and in addition by quite a number of place-names of the type *Lugu-dunum*. His Roman cover-name seems to have been *Mercurius*, according to Caesar the god most venerated in Gaul. Lugal has affinities to the Germanic *Wōdan* who is also equated with *Mercurius* (*Mercurii dies* = *Wednesday, Odinsdag*). The Irish *Lug* is *il-dánach* ‘many-gifted’, and there is a curious dedication by a guild of cobblers, *collegium sutorum*, from Spain, not simply to *Lugus*, but to a plurality of *Lugoves*.¹⁹ This multipersonal *Lugus*, like *Mercurius*, apart from other functions, must have also been a god of roads and travellers. Travellers wear out shoes, and are in need of either new ones or repairs, from which cobblers benefit. This explains the connection.

I think there is a lot to be said in favour of recurrent traits of Celtic culture. In order to find them and put them on a secure basis, an interdisciplinary approach seems to promise better results than one following only one particular line, because there is always the chance that we may discover structural patterns. So we had better forget such preposterous notions that there were no Celts, and consequently there was no such thing as Celtic culture. If it cannot be recognised in material culture, it is abundantly present in the linguistic and philological record, clear to see for everyone who cares to look.

But it must also be stressed that everywhere, in the course of their expansion, the Celts came in contact with other populations, partly of the same Indo-European origin (previous layers of settlement) and partly of non-Indo-European descent (Aquitanians, Iberians, Etruscans, Pannonians, etc.), and this gave rise to processes of cultural as well as ethnic assimilation and admixture. Even where Celtic communities maintained their identity they were no pure-bred societies, hence Celtic culture is of the same, hybrid character.

Eastward movements

But I feel I have already dwelt too long on these preliminaries. I said before that the Celts originally came from the East. But there is also a secondary movement back eastwards. You are perhaps familiar with the account, by Livius, of the legendary exodus of a mass of people from Gaul, partly into Italy, partly into the regions of the Hercynian forest

¹⁹ *CIL*, II. 2818.

(*Hercynia silva*), the huge expanse covering central and east-central Europe.²⁰ There are movements, from at least the fourth century BC onwards, to the eastern Alpine regions, to Noricum, and along the Danube into Bohemia, Pannonia and further. They even made excursions into Greece (pillaging Delphi in 279), and some crossed over to Asia Minor and settled there (the redoubtable *Galátai*).²¹

Maybe some of these emigrants came from eastern France or southern Germany where the transition of the Hallstatt to the subsequent La Tène civilisation seems to have caused unrest, the Late Hallstatt centres being partly destroyed or abandoned, and the area apparently depopulated, as the scarcity of find materials tends to show.

Be that as it may, there is, more or less at the same time, settlement of Celtic tribes in Noricum and Pannonia. In Noricum they established a sort of confederate kingship (*regnum Noricum*) which came to be on good terms with the Romans who, however, took it over completely in AD 14, apparently without great difficulty. Before that the *Boii*, who had aggressively impinged on Dacian territory, were defeated and decimated by the Dacian king Burebista, and lost much of their power and significance. A strong Celtic settlement was near Aquincum (present-day Budapest), under the tribal name *Aravisci* or *Eravisci*, and other settlements were further inland, one near present-day Zagreb. But to the south, in the area of the *Dravus* and *Savus* river systems, was Pannonian territory, inhabited by very warlike tribes with near connections in Dalmatia; they also spoke an Indo-European language, which was different from Celtic (Fig. 3). Up to the middle of the last century this language was considered to be Illyrian, but the concept of Illyrian had been driven to extremes by then, and broke apart.²² Illyrian properly speaking must be assumed to be restricted to the original Illyricum—present day Albania and the Kosovo region—but Pannonian is a near relation. The Pannonian language and the population speaking it originally extended much further north; the immigrating Celts overlaid it, not without conflicts, but later some form of coexistence and assimilation arose. Neither the Pannonians nor the Celts have left us with linguistic documentation in form of texts, the only

²⁰ Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, 5. 34–5; also Iustinus, *Epitoma* (excerpts from the lost *Universal History* of Pompeius Trogus), 24.4.1–4, who gives their numbers as 300,000.

²¹ The evidence for these movements and settlements is well-known; for the most recent collections of the onomastic evidence see the publications by Sims-Williams (2006) and Raybould and Sims-Williams (2007).

²² As to the Illyrian problem see Meid, *Keltische Personennamen*, pp. 10 f. with nn. 3, 4, 5, and p. 22, n. 14 with discussion and further references.

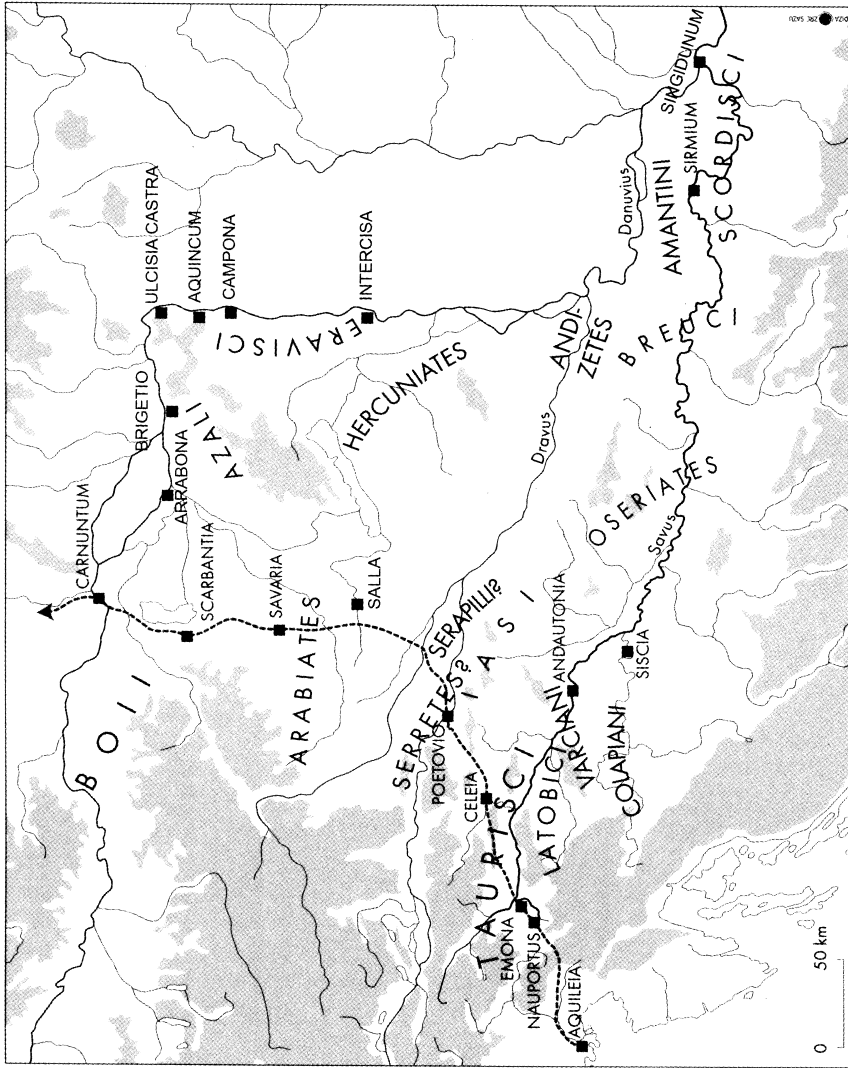


Figure 3. Tribal territories and places in Pannonia (from W. Meid, *Keltische Personennamen in Pannonien*, p. 346). Celtic tribes are the Boii, the Eravisci, the Hercunvates, the Taurisci, the Vatabri, possibly the Varciani; the Scordisci are also Celtic by origin, but with strong Pannonian and Illyrian admixture. The other tribes on the map are presumably all Pannonian, as are nearly all the local names.

linguistic evidence being personal, tribal and local names. It must be said that the local names in the Celtic settlement area are mostly Pannonian in origin, which shows that the Pannonians were the earlier population; *Aquincum*, *Arrabona*, *Campona*, *Ulcisia castra*, *Scarbantia* are such non-Celtic names. The name *Pannonia* itself is derived from an Indo-European root **pan-* denoting swampy territory,²³ which is characteristic for the Dravus/Savus region, and must have originally referred to that region, but was later extended to cover the whole Roman province. On account of its preserved Indo-European **p* this name *Pannonia* cannot be Celtic, the Celtic equivalent being attested in Gaulish as *anam*, glossed ‘paludem’ (‘swamp’).²⁴

Personal names

Celtic or Pannonian personal names are attested mostly from funerary inscriptions of the Roman period, the Romans having added Pannonia to their empire in the late first century BC and second centuries AD. There are about 500 Celtic names or name families attested, perhaps more, but some of the names cannot be safely attributed.

Some remarks on a typology of these names

Personal names may be compounded, frequently with *-rix* or *-marus* (‘great’) as second parts elements, and then have an aristocratic or heroic connotation:

<i>Bitu-rix</i>	‘king of the world’
<i>Dago-rix</i>	‘king of good men’ (or ‘good king’)
<i>Nerto-marus</i>	‘great in strength’ (Welsh <i>nerthfawr</i>)
<i>Ressi-marus</i>	‘great in attack’
<i>Brogi-marus</i>	‘great in land’.

Some of these occur quite frequently, as also, for example, does the prefix compound *Ad-namatus* ‘facing the enemy’ (Figs. 4 and 5).

²³ *IEW*, 807 f.

²⁴ In a fifth-century glossary of late Gaulish words or names, called ‘Endlicher’s Glossary’.

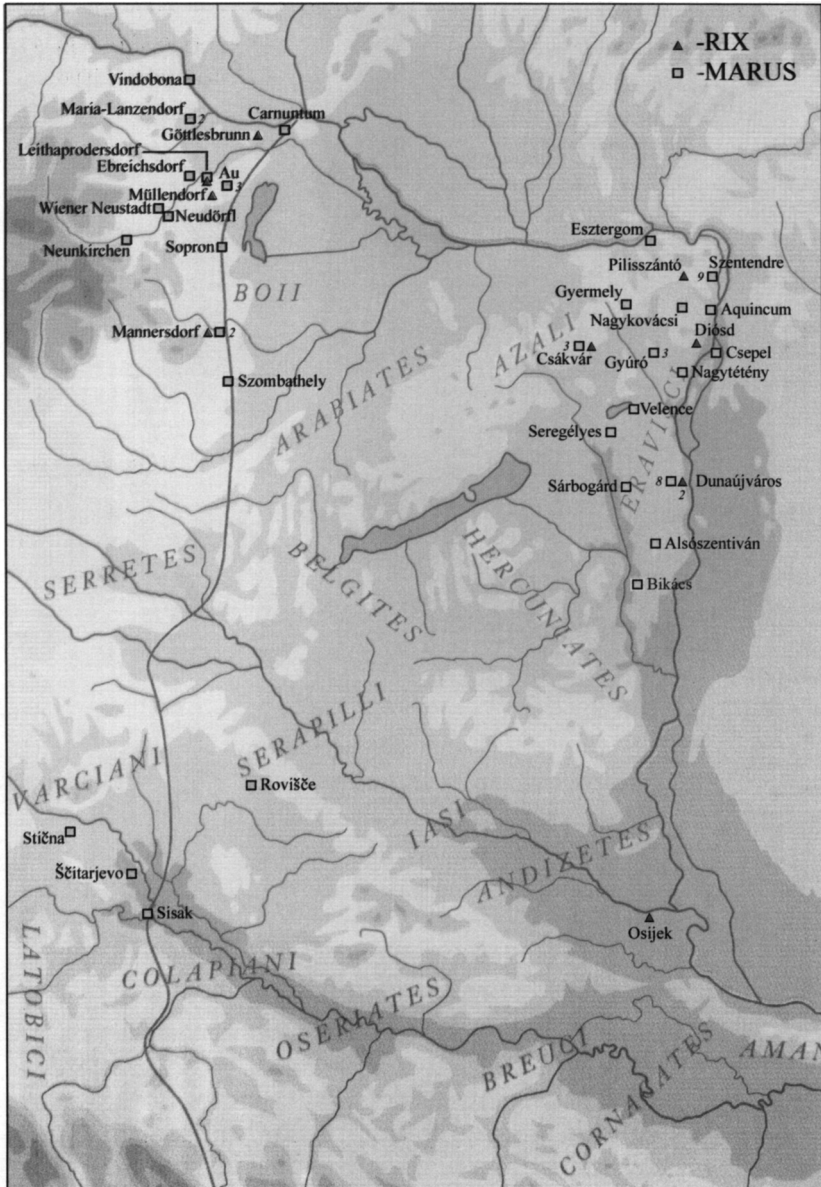


Figure 4. Distribution of Celtic compound names in *-rix* and *-marus* (from W. Meid, *Keltische Personennamen in Pannonien*, p. 347).

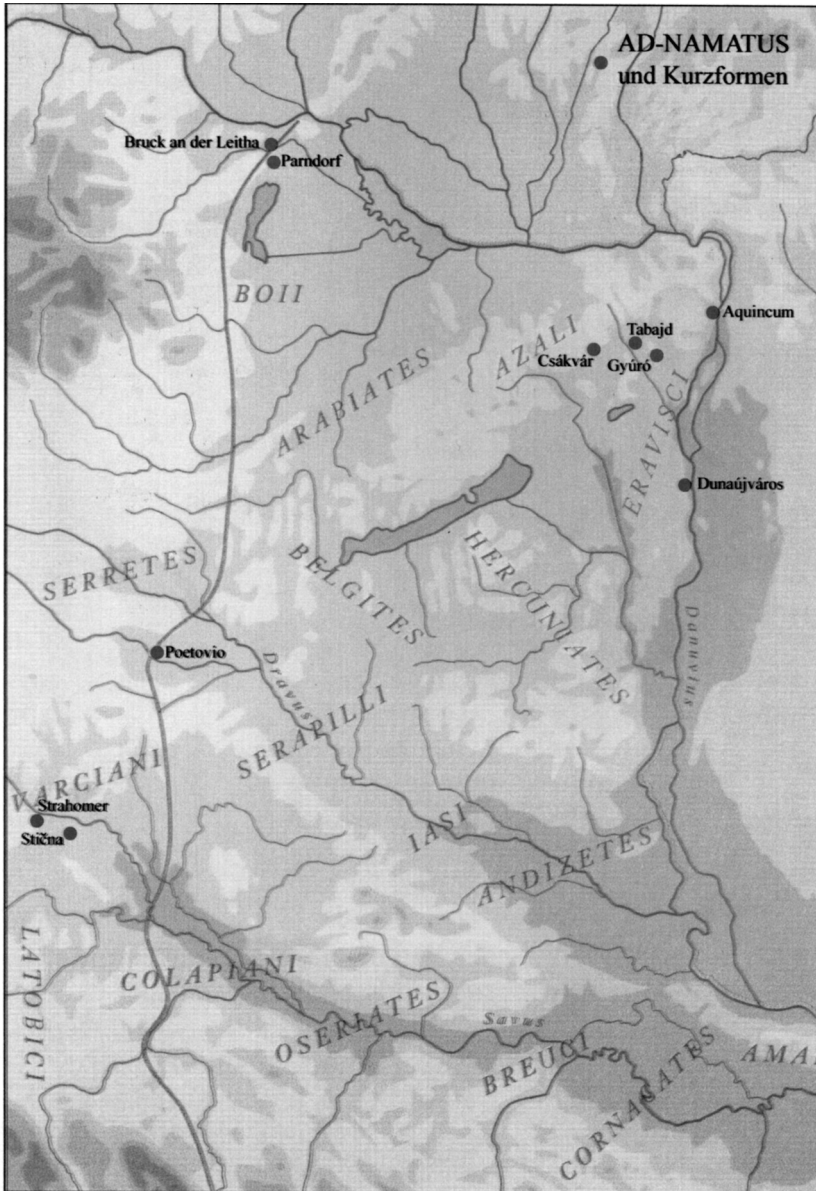


Figure 5. Distribution of *Ad-namatus* and shortened forms (from W. Meid, *Keltische Personennamen in Pannonien*, p. 348).

Other names are built on one stem only like

<i>Cano</i>	‘singer’
<i>Catus</i>	‘fighter’
<i>Boudio</i>	‘victor’
<i>Vindo</i>	‘fair one’
<i>Suadra</i>	‘sweet one’.

Some may be shortened from compound names—e.g. *Catus* from *Catu-marus*

It is noteworthy that compound names are much more frequent in the Celtic inventory than among Pannonian names where they are rare.

Co-occurrence of Celtic personal names with other cultural markers

In the regions where we find a greater concentration of Celtic names we also find burial mounds, chariot graves or ornamented grave stones depicting the passage of the dead person to the other world on a chariot or wagon whereas in the Pannonian regions these features are notably absent. This co-occurrence of Celtic personal names with other distinct cultural markers reveals a complex cultural identity of the population involved.²⁵

Sociological significance of the funeral inscriptions

It is interesting to study the sociological significance of these funeral inscriptions as regards the coexistence of the original Pannonian and Celtic elements, where we can find evidence of either ethnic cohesion or assimilation of the groups involved. There is, on the one hand, a strong tendency of the ethnic groups to keep apart, that is of cohesion within the ethnic group, and yet on the other hand a tendency towards social contacts, of breaking the barriers, shown by intermarriage between members of the different ethnic groups.

As was usual in these inscriptions, the dead person’s name is given with his or her father’s name (the patronym), and the names of other family members are often mentioned which allows one to recognise certain social structures.

One family may exhibit either exclusively or preponderantly Celtic names or, on the contrary, Pannonian names. This shows that such fami-

²⁵ Meid, *Keltische Personennamen*, pp. 45 ff.

lies held on to ethnically based name traditions, and so suggests a certain ethnic background. But we also can find a mixture of Celtic and Pannonian names in one family which tends to show that the ethnic boundaries were already loosened. There is also a strong influence of Roman or Italic name traditions. From the Roman point of view the Pannonian population, at least its lower classes, were peregrines, but the privileged ranks were awarded Roman citizenship and therefore had to adopt the Roman name system, but could in this case retain their original name as cognomen.

I shall give now a few examples of possible constellations:²⁶

1 Several good Celtic names in one and the same family, signifying adherence to Celtic name tradition:

Atpomarus, Brogimarus brothers; father *Ilo*; *CIL*, III. 4580, Maria Lanzendorf.

Belatomarus and several other mostly Celtic names in the family: *Verclovus, Veico, Cobua, Cocate, Sura, Vindaina*; Hild, 399.2, Neudörfl.

Deiva, father with incompletely transmitted name in *-rix*, grandfather and grandson *Blatumarus*; *RIU*, 1160, Intercisa.

Vindo Saturnini f. and *Ammuta Mogetionis f.*, married couple with son-in-law *M. Ulpius Brogimarus*; *RIU*, 1482, Sárbogárd. Noteworthy here is that *Saturninus* with a Roman name has given his son a Celtic name; the Roman citizen *M. Ulpius* has preserved his Celtic name as cognomen.

Dallo with daughter *Brogimara* and son-in-law *Magio*; their daughter *Iantuna*; *CIL*, III. 3594, Aquincum.

T. Flavius Cobromarus and *Tincomara*, brother and sister; mother *Summa Calitigis f.* with Celtic patronym; Hild, 249, Au.

C. Iulius Macimarus and son *C. Iulius Comatumarus*, in the context of a Celtic family; other names *Magio, Ressona, Namuso*; *CIL*, III. 3377, Gyúró.

Ressimarus, son has Roman name *Urbanus*, but is married to *Ressilla Adnamati f.*; their son *Iantumarus*; *CIL*, III. 5290, Poetovio region.

2 Marriage between persons with Celtic names: partner chosen from the same ethnic-social milieu:

Nertomarus and *Retdimara Atalonis f.*; their son *Sacro*; *RIU*, 918, Szentendre.

Nertomarus and *Toutomara*, stone in Museum Mannersdorf.

Magimarus and *Adnama Asionis f.*; *CIL*, III. 10352, Csákvár.

Comato and *Comatuia*; son *Senio*; *RIU*, 1256, Intercisa.

3 The male partner has a Roman first name, but is of Celtic lineage, as his patronym indicates; the female partner has a Celtic name:

See sub 1. already *Urbanus Ressimari f.*, married to *Ressilla Adnamati f.*

Tertio Noibionis f., wife *Satimara Atresi f.*; *RIU*, 925, Szentendre.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 311–15 with further examples and references.

Quartus Adnamati f., wife *Catulla Coi f.*; *CIL*, III. 10895, boundary region of Noricum and Pannonia.

4 Marriage between persons with non-Celtic Pannonian names; examples from the region of Emona (Ljubljana):

Enignus Plunconis f. and *Enna Oppalionis f.*; *CIL*, III. 3793, Ig.
Voltrex Buctoris f. and *Eninna*; *CIL*, III. 2323, Ig.

5 Intermarriage between persons of different name traditions, indicating ethnically mixed relationships. There are two possibilities:

(a) The male partner has a Celtic name, the female partner a Pannonian name:

Comatumarus Saconis f. and *Blastaiu Batei f.*; *RIU*, 895, Szentendre.
Segillus Iliati f. and *Abua Tapponis f.*; *CIL*, III. 11302, Fischau.
Lucco Treni f. (man from Britain) married to *Tutula Breuci f.* from the Pannonian tribe of the Azali, *CIL*, XVI. 49 (military diploma).

(b) The male partner has a Pannonian name, the female partner a Celtic name:

Mesio and *Comatumara Vani f.*; *RIU*, 899, Szentendre.
Deuso Agisi f. and *Adbugiouna Atnamati f.*; *CIL*, III. 10883, Poetovio.

The cases where the Celtic name tradition continues in one and the same family are so frequent that they need not be demonstrated with further examples. Interesting, however, are breaks within this tradition. These may be due to the influence of the Roman system of name-giving, but there are also changes from Celtic to Pannonian and vice versa. One would expect that in the course of Romanisation fathers with a Celtic name might give their sons Roman names. This happens indeed, but equally frequently fathers with a Roman name have children with Celtic names. This speaks in favour of a certain persistence of the Celtic name tradition, and has perhaps to do with a family tradition in a wider sense, perhaps also the influence of the mother's side (the mother is often not mentioned).

6 Examples for the change of the naming mode within the lineage. There we find four variants:

(a) Father with Celtic, son/daughter with Roman name:

Ressimarus, son *Urbanus*; *CIL*, III. 5290.
Matumarus, son *M. Cocceius Florus*;²⁷ *CIL*, III. 3546.

²⁷ *Cocceius*, though Celtic in origin, is here the emperor Nerva's gentilicium.

Miletumarus, son *Quartio*; *CIL*, III. 3405/06.

Adnamo, son *Absucus* (but the latter's sons have Celtic names: *Nertomarus*, *Locco*, *Atedunus*); *RIU*, 1146.

Mogetius, son *Primus*, daughter *Gemella*; *Hild*, 421.

Diassumarus, son *Danuvius*, grandson *Maturus*; *RIU*, 1221.

(b) Father with Roman, son/daughter with Celtic name:

Bassus, son *Alorix*; *AE*, 1969/70, 493.

Florus, son *Dullibogius*; *RIU*, 1547.

Optatus, son *Togivepus*; *ILJ*, 304.

Aurelius Respectus, son *Troucetimarus*; *RIU*, 724.

Quintaius, daughter *Comatimara*; *CIL*, III. 3621.

Quintio, daughter *Oxidubna*; *CIL*, III. 3546.

Lucius Bonati f. and *Julia Prisca*, daughter *Bussugnata*; *CIL*, III. 3930.

Saturninus, son *Vindo*; *RIU*, 1482.

Ianuarius, daughter *Otiouna* (same name as mother); *RIU*, 1251.

(c) Father with Pannonian, son/daughter with Celtic name:

Veladetus, son *Rituris*; *RIU*, 1364

Scupus (Pannon.?), daughter *Vercombera*; *RIU*, 1364

Battus, daughter *Verbugia*; *CIL*, III. 10944

Gripo, daughter *Uxela*; *CIL*, III. 13406

Bucco, daughter *Bietumara*; *RIU*, 1235

Trippo, son *Annamatus*; *CIL*, III. 3372

(d) Father with Celtic, son with Pannonian name:

Annamatus, son *Prenses*; *CIL*, III. 3374

Vercombogio, son *Teutio*; *RIU*, 838

Nertomarus, son *Cusa*; *RIU*, 1219

One can see from these constellations that the Celtic name system, with its typical formations and semantically meaningful names, continued from pre-Roman times, was—on the whole—well preserved at the beginning of Roman rule and persisted for some generations. This tradition was loosened to some extent, but was not abandoned.

There are further arguments in favour of this. One is the popularity of certain names, shown by their frequency. Another is that certain names or name elements reoccur in one and the same family; for example, the grandfather's name reoccurs as the name of the grandson, following an old inherited tradition according to which the grandson reincorporates the soul of the dead grandfather.

There is another important point, which touches the language question. It is clear that the Celtic personal names in Pannonia, indeed the whole naming system, derive from a fully living and functioning language,

in this case a language of Gaulish type. But we do not know for certain if this language was still universally spoken in the second century AD. Naming traditions may continue for some time even after the language from which they are derived has been abandoned. This results—to use German terminology—in ‘Namenlandschaften’ (onomastic territories) which continue earlier ‘Sprachlandschaften’ (linguistic territories).²⁸ But there is one clue. In our record there are many persons who had reached a very advanced age, not merely octogenarians but also persons who had attained 100 years of age. Since as a rule the patronym is also given, the time when this Celtic father gave his son a Celtic name or was himself named by his father may date back before the Roman occupation, or at least into its earliest phase when there could not have been any question of Latin disposing of the native Celtic idiom. These very old people could hardly have forgotten their native language during their lifetime. This supports the assumption that in this society Gaulish was still a living language, a means of communication between its members in places where Latin was not obligatory. The same probably held true for the Pannonian language, and considering the coexistence of the two ethnic groups parts of the population must have been bilingual. Pannonia must have been a polyglot region—Latin, Greek, and Oriental languages were also present, as also to some extent were Germanic dialects, given the foreign elements in the military and commercial orders.

Therefore we can assume that Celtic—in the form of Gaulish—was still a spoken language in the first and in the greater part of the second century AD. How long it stayed alive we cannot tell because the massive invasions by Germanic, Sarmatian and Hunnic tribes from the third century onwards did away with the older social structures. But in the first two centuries these structures seem to have still been intact. Another argument in favour is the relative frequency of Celtic personal names in Noricum and Pannonia attested in Latin inscriptions compared with the western Gaulish provinces.²⁹ The western Gaulish territory is about four

²⁸ For the terminology and model investigations see J. Untermann, ‘Namenlandschaften im alten Oberitalien’ and, for the Balkans, various articles by R. Katičić quoted in Meid, *Keltische Personennamen*, p. 11, n. 4.

²⁹ P. Sims-Williams has worked out, on the basis of Latin inscriptions, statistics on the relative frequency of Celtic compound names in the different Roman provinces, by which Noricum and Pannonia come out on top: see his article ‘The five languages of Wales in the pre-Norman inscriptions’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 44 (Winter, 2002), pp. 10–14, and Meid, *Keltische Personennamen*, pp. 326 f.

times as large as Pannonia and Noricum taken together, yet has about the same relative percentage of Celtic personal names.

In Gaul, which came under Roman rule earlier under Caesar and Augustus, Gaulish survived at least into the third century AD, in remote places still later. Therefore it is likely that in Noricum and Pannonia which came under Roman rule about half a century later the native Celtic idiom survived into the second century, and could have survived longer if the conditions had not become so unfavourable. In Galatia, to where some of the Danubian Celts emigrated and established themselves, according to one testimony, but which perhaps is open to doubt, the native language survived into the fourth century.

For Pannonia there is some archaeological support. Recent large-scale excavations have shown that distinct Celtic features were preserved into the second century AD. From this it may be assumed that there were still groups which preserved their Celtic identity. Cultural features alone cannot tell us anything about the language of the people involved, but if these groups were indeed Celts and felt their identity therein, then these people will—in all probability—also have held on to their native language. Linguistic and archaeological data thus support each other.

Conclusions

To sum up, though we do not have linguistic testimony for either Pannonian or Celtic in the form of texts, the regular formation and semantic transparency of the Celtic personal names, especially the compound ones, as well as the lack of unmeaningful or nonsensical compounding, suggest that we have to deal with a living language. This is also supported by the fact that many name bearers died very old, came from a still intact Celtic milieu, and were probably still Celtic-speaking.

Though subsequently there is a strong Roman influence—the basic language of the epitaphs is Latin of course—this Latin is quite often faulty suggesting that the mastery of Latin in the native population was not at a high level. The stones themselves show native symbols and motifs—women, for example, are depicted in their native costumes.

We conclude then that in the Celtic tribal territories Celtic, meaning a variety of Gaulish, was still the spoken vernacular. The same holds true for Pannonian, in the southern territories inhabited by Pannonian tribes. In regions with a mixed population probably both languages were spoken

and understood. Historically, the Pannonian-speaking population was the older one, and the Celts had superseded it.

The Romans respected the native societies, their customs and cults, and conceded them partial self-administration. As regards the co-existence and cultural assimilation of the originally different ethnic groups, a telling example seems to be furnished by the veneration of the Eraviscan tribal god. And I wish to conclude with this final comment. This tribal god continued to be worshipped under Roman cover as *Jupiter Teutanus* who had his yearly cult feast on 11 June, near midsummer-time.³⁰ The name of *Teutanus* is interesting because it exhibits non-Celtic, rather Pannonian linguistic features;³¹ the Celtic equivalent would have been *Toutonus* or *Toutatis*, as attested several times. It is actually the cult of the pre-Celtic substratum population which survives here, taken over by the Celts and continued by the Roman authorities. The same holds true for *Noreia*, the tutelary goddess of Noricum who also has a non-Celtic name.

These instances show that we need to approach the concept of Celtic culture with the necessary circumspection as something subject to ever changing conditions and circumstances.

References

Abbreviations

AE *L'Année épigraphique*

CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

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IEW J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bern/München 1959.

ILJ *Inscriptiones Latinae qui in Iugoslavia . . . repertae et editae sunt. Situla* 5. 19. 25. Ljubljana 1963. 1978. 1986.

RIU *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*. Vols. 1–6. Budapest 1972–2001.

³⁰ Meid, *Keltische Personennamen*, pp. 57 f. with n. 80 (with further references).

³¹ It is reminiscent of the name of the Illyrian queen *Teutana* which may just have been her regal title, Illyrian being linguistically a close relation of Pannonian. For further discussion see *ibid.*, pp. 59–62.

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