

THE IDEA THAT A CELTIC
LANGUAGE EXISTED IS A MYTH

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Abstract

The Celts, this variety of people with the Celtic culture, spoke a variety of Germanic languages.

Evidence lies in the Germanic etymologies of the Roman names, place names, tribal names, etc.

The etymologies will provide more information about that period

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Introduction

Academically, this paper will not be regarded as a scientific work. The aim was not to produce an opaque paper but a text that is easy to read. Therefore, it might be considered an essay. Historical papers should be filled with scientific references. This paper contains very few references, although I would like to include hundreds. However, I couldn't find much to cite. The reason is simple: the ideas presented in this essay challenge a widespread consensus within the historical community. People who doubt my statements can always verify information online. That is another reason why I prefer not to overload my texts with references to books. The problem with the historic community is that they often refer only to themselves.

This book was not intended for people who are completely unaware of the subject. I also never set out to provide etymologies for all the names the Romans left us. There are 520 names for Britain alone and probably a similar number in Gaul. I simply chose some.

The main aim of this essay is to offer new insights into the origins of the names from the Celtic and Roman periods. Much valuable information is hidden within names, surnames, place names, tribal names, and similar terms. The straightforward assumption that Celtic people spoke 'Germanic' helps clarify many issues. There are far too many contradictions in the current consensus that Celts spoke a language similar to Old Welsh. The traditional explanation, also supported by French historians, is that the so-called 'Celtic', which I prefer to call Brythonic, was very mysterious and 'written texts in the Gaulish language are rare'. This statement often serves as an excuse for the fact that research on the languages spoken by the Celts has largely come to a halt. Surprisingly, no one has seriously considered the possibility that the Gauls and the Britons spoke Germanic languages since antiquity. This simple yet unexplored idea could have resolved many so-called 'mysteries'.

Culture and language are two different things and only loosely related. The Romans adopted the Greek culture but spoke Latin. Modern Japanese people speak Japanese but adopt a Western culture. So why is the Celtic culture so much linked with a supposed Celtic language?

Concrete evidence for my hypothesis is limited. However, re-examining the thousands of Roman names and placenames across Europe, along with examples like Galatia, could reveal new insights. These names hold much untapped information. Regrettably, I am unable to re-analyse all these names

myself. I can only offer notable examples. It will fall to future generations to undertake most of this work.

I studied ICT when I was young. I chose this science because my only talent is analysis. I seem to have a sixth sense for identifying inconsistencies. My speciality later became database programming. I founded my own office and for a while, it worked well.

Around 2000 the study of etymology became my hobby. I bought books and studied them. This was a whole new world for me. Today, most of it is available online.

While managing British databases with names and addresses for an English client, I grew suspicious of the official story that the Anglo-Saxons imported the English language. My sixth sense kicked in. After a decade of analysis, I became convinced that English was never imported.

I thank my good friend Dr. Anthony Durham for his unwavering support and help.

Testimony

This book serves as a testimony. Sooner or later, a clever scholar or AI will conclude that people sharing the Celtic culture spoke a set of Germanic languages rather than a set of Celtic languages. It would be a remarkable breakthrough. Naturally, he would want to take the credit for it. This book has been published to demonstrate that I was the first to do so.

PART ONE

**Celts mainly
spoke
Germanic
languages**

How important is this book?

At the turn of the 16th century, the Gauls suddenly burst into the history of France. The time of the Renaissance was also that of the Italian wars and the rivalry of the kings of France with the Habsburgs of Austria. In turn, after the Italians, the French rediscovered classical antiquity. But there occurred, in reaction against Greco-Latin imperialism, a phenomenon of 'gallophilia' - the French claim to cultural specificity in the face of ancient Greece and especially of ancient Rome, as opposed to prestigious Italy, heir and emulator of Rome.

Ancient texts were studied diligently. The significance of the Celts became clear. However, one key question arose in France and prosperous Flanders: what was the language of the Celts? Flanders and some wealthy German regions could afford scholars, similar to Paris and its Sorbonne University. The north found some non-Latin words in the ancient texts that resembled German or Dutch words. Their initial conclusion was that the Celts or Gauls spoke a Germanic language. A weakness in their argument was that the science of etymology was not yet developed. French scholars mostly agreed but remained uneasy. At the same time, they rediscovered the extent of ancient Gaul and its natural borders—something France lacked at the time—so they urged the French king to conquer all lands west of the Rhine. Meanwhile, their supposed Germano-Celt language connection continued to trouble them.

A French scholar then proposed the idea that if someone wanted to know what language the Gauls spoke, they should look at the most remote region in France that had been least affected by the Romans. That region was Brittany. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Brittany was believed to extend much further west than it actually does. During the French Revolution, the map of Brittany was redrawn more accurately, prompting some politicians to exclaim that France had lost more territory through the work of geographers than through war. Breton was the language spoken in Brittany, and soon Old Breton was proposed as the language of the Celts. It became the 'Celtic language'. This suited the political needs of the time and was quickly accepted among the state-paid historians. France no longer appeared to have a 'Germanic' ancestry.

In Britain, King James VI of Scotland became James I of England, uniting both crowns in 1603. Initially, the English aristocracy was 'not amused', claiming that the Scots had been 'eternal enemies' of the Eng-

lish. Therefore, they argued, the union of the crown was utterly unnatural. Some English scholars, however, supported the hypothesis that all the Britons once spoke a 'Celtic' language. The reasoning was similar to that in France: in Wales, the original language of the Britons had been preserved due to its remoteness. The text of Gildas, one of the few sources from the fifth and sixth centuries—also called the 'dark ages'—seemed to support this. Gildas wrote that the Anglo-Saxons had chased 'Britons' to the west. Consequently, English must have been imported and imposed by the invading Anglo-Saxons. This reasoning dampened critics within the English aristocracy, as it allegedly proved that the Union of the Crown was not a true union but merely a reunion, since all the early British people had been one.

Since then, the completely unproven conjecture that all Celts spoke an Old Welsh or Old Breton-related language has become the only politically correct stance among historians who study pre-Roman France and Britain. It has solidified into an undisputable fact. I refer to the proponents of this idea as 'Celticists'. Their typical view is that all names, place names, and other inscriptions in Gaul or Britain, left behind by the Romans, are unquestionably Celtic. Even the notion that they might have been another language, let alone Germanic, is met with repugnance. My friend Anthony Durham and I have often faced a wall of disinterest or hostility. Supposedly highly intelligent academics refuse to even consider the possibility that their Celticist beliefs could be wrong. And today, millions of children are taught that English was brought here by rogue Anglo-Saxon conquerors, while all Britons once spoke 'Celtic'. Who are I to question that? As I mentioned above, this isn't science; it's politics.

This book attempts to demonstrate that the majority of people with a Celtic culture spoke a Germanic language. There are an estimated 500 names left to us by the Romans in Britain and a similar number in Gaul. French etymologists claim that the 'Celtic' language is highly mysterious and difficult to unravel because so few texts have been found. Clearly, more than 1000 names, all meaningful, are still not enough. My old brain cannot provide a convincing Germanic etymology for all these names. It will be the work for a new generation of historic linguists. This book contains only a limited number of examples, and inevitably, errors were made.

It was Max Planck, the celebrated German scientist, who said: 'Wrong ideas do not die because they are wrong, but because the people who carry them die.'

Circular reasoning: the Celtic Britain Assumption (CBA)

Here I go, opposing mainstream history. I challenge what I call 'the CBA', the Celtic Britain Assumption. This is the entirely unproven idea that the British spoke a 'Celtic' language before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. The CBA is based on a faulty interpretation of the earliest sources.

I will not call the language of the Celts 'Celtic' in this book. Instead, it will be called **Brythonic**. This is needed to avoid confusion.

People who practice this CBA will state that every single placename in Roman Britain is imperatively a Brythonic placename. *Tertium non datur*. So, one is allowed to use a Brythonic dictionary exclusively if one wants to explain these placenames. And, yes, for many of them, something in Brythonic (*Celtic*) was found. These meanings are, however, all too often unconvincing.

More worrying is that some newly discovered Brythonic words, which were guessed in the placenames themselves, were added to the Dictionary of Ancient Celtic Words.

An example is 'bona', found in placenames such as Vindobona (modern Vienna), Bonna (Bonn), Bononia (Boulogne-sur-Mer), and more. As the Celticist linguists could not find any linguistic link to known Old Brythonic languages, the meaning was inferred to be 'settlement'. Then 'bona' and its supposed meaning were added to the *Dictionary of Ancient Celtic Words*. The meaning 'settlement' has now become the only official one.

Once most placenames have some, even unconvincing, Brythonic meaning, the collection of these is used to argue that the whole of Britain was Brythonic-speaking. Then the circle is complete:

1. All of Britain spoke a Brythonic language. That remains the unmovable starting point. The supposed logic is that, because all of Britain was once part of Celtic culture, it also spoke a 'Celtic Language'.

2. This implies that all (Roman) placenames in Britain are of Brythonic origin.
3. Therefore, only etymologies in Brythonic will be accepted. If a supposed Brythonic word cannot be found in a Brythonic dictionary, then the word and its guessed meaning are added to the dictionary. Not only words but a complete *fictive* language is reconstructed that way.

E.g. Chief Brennus, who defeated and sacked Rome in 387 BC. He was a Gaul, a warlord, no doubt. But no link between his name or title and the attested Brythonic languages could be found. No problema: 'Brenno' was simply added in the 'Celtic' dictionary with the meaning 'chief'. However, I found that Brenno is an attested German name (related to brennen, 'to burn') and means 'burning sword,' referring to he who gives the sign of attack with his polished sword. (> *Woordenboek Van Voornamen, Dr. J. van der Schaar, Het Spectrum, 1979*)

4. The obtained Brythonic dictionary is the very proof of (1).
5. There were so many difficulties in finding decent Brythonic etymologies in England that a completely new 'variant' of Brythonic had to be invented: the *British language*. This alleged 'newly discovered' Brythonic language has characteristics that solve most linguistic problems. Coincidentally, this is very convenient.
6. This also confirms statement (2).

It amazes me that academics can behave like members of a sect, rejecting automatically and indiscriminately all that is not accepted in the highest circles of the sect.

The origin of this circular reasoning lies in the automatic and unquestioned connection between Celtic culture and its language. The term 'Celtic language' is based on 'Celtic culture'. The basic assumption is straightforward: wherever Celtic artefacts are found, it is automatically assumed that the local people spoke a Brythonic language. The extent of this misconception is evident: just because Western culture is present in Japan does not mean one must assume the Japanese speak a 'Western Language'.

French etymologists have adopted the very same logic about the language of ancient Gaul, referring to the British as a way of confirmation.

In the first chapters, I will demonstrate with examples that the CBA is wrong and greatly hinders further scientific work.

Why English was not imported by the Anglo-Saxons

This is how the events of the 5th century AD and the origin of the English language were declared during the 20th century in every history book, in every schoolbook, worldwide :

The Anglo-Saxons brought the English language to Britain in the 5th century. They were initially invited as mercenaries. When their wages could not be paid, they rebelled and took control of the east of Britain. The Britons responded by fighting bravely, but their efforts were hindered by treachery and unlawful cooperation with the enemy by some of their highest-ranking members. Eventually, the Anglo-Saxons succeeded in conquering the eastern population. They imposed their culture and language. A significant part of the population fled west, where British resistance remained successful for a time.

So much for the official story.

But official history has several major inconsistencies:

1. Strangely enough, no contemporary source mentions a language change. This contrasts with Gaul.
2. English should incorporate many more words of Welsh origin. Why can't I explain many place names east of the Pennines either in Welsh (e.g., London) or in Latin? Why was no similar imposed language change enforced on the continent after the collapse of the Roman Empire?
3. How could a very small number of Anglo-Saxons conquer most of England? Is it true that the British were cowards as Gildas wrote in the sixth century?
4. Did the Anglo-Saxons wipe out the eastern population of Britain? Or were the entire population driven to Wales? How were the Anglo-Saxons able to replace 2.5 million eastern Britons? There is no archaeological evidence of this. It is considered purely an assumption.
5. Did East England change its language twice within about 1,000 years? From 450 BC 'pre-Celtic' to 'Celtic', and from 450 AD 'Celtic' to English? Both transitions happened in just over 400 years. Why was the supposed language shift so remarkably rapid?

Mind you, English is known to be a Germanic language. However, some people believe that if English is a Germanic language, it must have been imported from Germany. Why is it so difficult to imagine the existence of a Germanic language during the Neolithic period and afterwards on the British side of the North Sea? Why is it so easily accepted that only proto-Brythonic was present on the other side of that same North Sea?

Simon James (University of Leicester) reminds us that the theory of the introduction of English was established in the 17th century under James I to serve the political needs of the time. The union of the crowns of Scotland and England was described as a reunification of (Celtic) Britain. State-funded historians claimed that Britain was 'Celtic' before the Roman era. They made no distinction between Celtic art or culture and Celtic language. It is strange because it was already known that the Romans had adopted Greek culture, but not their language. They assumed the existence of a 'Celtic' language throughout Britain. This theory was immediately accepted officially because it helped quieten critics who opposed unification. These critics argued that the Scots had always been the eternal enemies of the English.

The English language was explained as an 'unfortunate and imported accident'.

Let there be no doubt:

1. There is no historical evidence whatsoever that the Anglo-Saxons imported English. No author prior to the 17th century ever wrote such a thing. Not even Gildas, our primary historical source from the sixth century who clearly despised the Anglo-Saxons.
2. There is, on the contrary, ample evidence that English is native to England. This can be found in the British-Roman placenames.
3. The entire notion that English was imported relies on the unproven assumption that the Britons originally spoke 'Celtic' (Brythonic) languages.

I will also question the very existence of Celts as a separate people with a distinct language, but not the existence of a Celtic culture. In fact, I discovered an error in the interpretation of the known facts and sources so significant that everyone has overlooked it until now.

In this book, I will elaborate on the hypothesis that English was not imported because it had been in England long before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons.

Alorix

The automatic link between Celtic culture and the Brythonic language is responsible for the widespread idea that the Brythonic language once spanned between Ireland and Turkey. This fact is supported by some received convictions such as the alleged fact that the suffix **-rix** (king), as found on some tombstones, is **diagnostically Brythonic** and firm evidence that the region once spoke Brythonic.

One such tombstone was found in western Hungary, called Pannonia in Roman times, and mentions **Alorix** Decurio Eraviscus (> *Wolfgang Meid, 'Keltische Personennamen in Pannonien', 2005, page 76*). He was a member of the Aravisci (or Eravisci) tribe. The suffix **-rix** was sufficient to diagnose (actually to confirm) (a) the presence of a Brythonic language in the region and (b) that he was a king.

'Decurio' is a military rank roughly the equivalent of corporal in the cavalry. As the tombstone which mentioned the name Alorix was poorly executed, I can suppose that mister Alorix was not a very wealthy individual (*that alone should have made the historians suspicious about the 'king' title*). The writer of the letters on the stone simply applied the grammatical rule: cs, ks -> x. Corporal Alorix was not a king.

But, I know of an Ostro-Gothic king whose name was **Alaric**. The similarity is too great to be coincidental. What if Alorix was simply the same Germanic name? Note that no convincing Brythonic etymology was found for Alorix. At best it is interpreted as 'king of the Ala'. In Germanic the etymology is far more convincing: '[of] All ric'. A 'ric' is still to be found in the English word *bishopric*. In German it is 'Reich', in Dutch 'rijk', in Danish 'rik'. The word is thought to be derived from 'reichen, rijken, to reach'. It is up to how far a governing power or the law, reaches. The basic meaning is 'ruled region', later a kingdom or empire or, 2000 years ago, a village. The genitive (= 'of') is obtained by adding a '-s'. So: *-rics* or *-riks* or in English: *-ric's*. Alaric, although attested Germanic, is therefore not entirely correct Germanic if its meaning was **of** all ric. Alaric possibly meant simply 'all region(s)'.

The Roman author Tacitus described the Aravisci as having a Pannonian language, and the same language and culture as a tribe to the north, the Osi:

'Whether, however, the Aravisci migrated into Pannonia from the Osi, a German race, or whether the Osi came from the Aravisci into Germany, as both nations still retain the same language, institutions, and customs, is a doubtful matter; for as they were once equally poor and equally free, either bank had the same attractions, the same drawbacks.' Germania, 28.

So the Aravisci were a 'German race' like the Osii. Celticists state that these Germans spoke Brythonic.

However, one must make the distinction during Roman times between 'German race' or 'stock' and 'Germans'. The 'race' or 'stock' refers to the culture and language, 'Germans' themselves were obnoxious inhabitants of modern middle Germany. German means 'armed man', 'gear man'. Beware of the translations of Tacitus' Germania on the internet as they are often 'coloured'.

Aravisci or Eravisci : 'hari', *army* + PGM **wisa*, *wise* + PGM suffix - **isk*, *like*, *-ish*. So: 'army-wise-ish'.