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Celticity: Migration or Fashion?

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The definition of the Celts and Celtic is at the core of Celtic Studies, either in antiquity or the early medieval period. The modern pop-culture understanding of the people, and their culture is very different to the evidence from ancient times; however even when examining archaeological sites and the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans we find discontinuities. The archaeological evidence shows a migration of culture from the Celtic homeland in central continental Europe, a myriad of Halstatt and La Tène artefacts, stone henges and circles, scattered across Gaul and into the British Isles (the home of the modern day Celts). The historical record sees a distinction between the Keltoi/Gauls and the tribes of the British Isles, however similarities between them are apparent. The linguistic evidence is unclear, showing some relationships between the British Celts and the ancient Keltoi, but nothing definitive. The genetic evidence gives the clearest answer to the question “Celticity: Migration or Fashion?”, that the Celts of the British Isles are not genetically related to the original ancient Keltoi (not recently). This paper ultimately shows that Celticity was due to the spread of fashion and not an actual migration of people from the Celtic homeland.

Introduction

Who were or are the Celts and how are they to be defined? This is the biggest question of Celtic Studies. Surely the Celts existed (and might still today), but it is difficult to find truth amongst the legends, modern misunderstandings and the ‘hard’ evidence (which is often contradictory). This paper attempts to synthesise available evidence to address the theories of invasion and cultural overlay in terms of the spread of ‘Celticity’ during antiquity and to determine if the ancient Celts existed as a definitive, genetically distinct peoples, or if what has been perceived as ‘Celtic’ archaeological evidence is a localised art form which was popularised and spread across parts of Europe. This paper ultimately concludes that it is indeed fashion not migration that led to the spread of ‘Celticity’ in antiquity, specifically in regards to the British Isles, the home of the modern day Celt.

The Historical View

This section is brief owing to the fact that most of the sources about the ancient Celts were Greco-Roman and while offering some useful information for this paper do not give much insight into the migration or fashion debate; also remembering that they show only the classical Mediterranean viewpoint.¹ What is important for the debate, from sources such as Posidonius, is the geographical context and physical descriptions of the Celts/Keltoi.² According to the Greeks the ‘Keltoi’ lived in many separate tribes across mainland Europe, spreading from the Rhine and Danube into Gaul but there is never mention of the Keltoi being in Britannia.³ Our current “historiographical tradition... regularly refers to the movements of people as agents of historical change” particularly at the time in the Iron Age and early medieval periods when the mainland Celts (despite being Romanised they still maintained much of the La Tène material culture) were said to have invaded or migrated to the British Isles.⁴ The physical descriptions give us a mixed pool of possible genetic traits to draw from, which suggests they were not, at least on the continent, one genetic group; certain genes and traits are characteristic of specific groups e.g. red hair was a trait developed in Scandinavia with the Vikings, or microcephaly is predominantly found in the gene pool of Japan. Therefore if a group has a mixture of such traits, they show interbreeding between groups⁵. However, this does not mean they weren’t a cohesive cultural unit. The biggest obstacle in deciphering the ancient historical record is quite simply that “the Celts wrote no history.”⁶

¹ J. V. S. Megaw and M. R. Megaw, “Ancient Celts and Modern Ethnicity”, *Antiquity* 70 (1996): 177.

² J. J. Tierney, “The Celtic Ethnography of Posidonius”, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, no. 60C (1960): 247-75.

³ Patrick Sims-Williams, “Genetics, Linguistics and Prehistory: Thinking Big and Thinking Straight”, *Antiquity*, no. 72 (1998): 505-28.

⁴ Lynette Olson, “Genetic Evidence and the Early Medievalist”, *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 4 (2008): 213.

⁵ Anthony J. F. Griffiths et al., “Population Genetics,” in *Introduction to Genetic Analysis* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 2012), 609.

⁶ Aedeon Cremin, *The Celts in Europe*, (Sydney, New South Wales: The University of Sydney – Centre for Celtic Studies, 1992), 6.

The Linguistic Story

The linguistic side of the debate is brief owing to the often confusing and contradictory accounts; however almost all the sources used for this paper whether, historical, archaeological, genetic or linguistic mentioned the clear connection between the ancient languages of the Irish, Welsh, Cornish and Scottish within the Isles and also to the ancient languages of Gaul. The linguistic evidence is hard to match up with exact migrations or archaeological cultures and it is an imprecise science, with languages not evolving at a constant rate. It relies on comparing words across languages, which causes problems for Pictish, which appears to be non-Indo European, or non- proto-Indo European, which the other Celtic/Gallic languages are.⁷ An explanation for this discrepancy with archaeological cultures and/or genetics and linguistics is argued quite forcibly by Sims-Williams; he argues that you cannot equate languages with any one group and that languages are not always ancestral. A transfer of language does not require a migration of the people to happen, even in ancient times.⁸

The Archaeological Record: La Tène and Halstatt, Henges, and More

The art styles of Halstatt and La Tène and the material cultures they are associated with are almost completely synonymous with Celticity in archaeology, or at the very least show close contact with the 'Celtic' manufacturers. Cremin is convinced from the spread of 'Celtic' settlements and La Tène artefacts that the 'Keltoi' from central Europe and Gaul did migrate across Europe, towards the East and also into the British Isles.⁹

The archaeological and historical evidence of a spread into Turkey and its surrounds seems to be undisputed, so this paper will instead focus on the supposed western migration across the British Channel.

According to one of Cremin's maps most of Europe was classified as part of Celtica in the second century BC, she seems to equate Celticity with language, which does by most definitions

⁷ See note 3 above.

⁸ See note 3 above.

⁹ Cremin, *The Celts in Europe*.

include Britain and Ireland, the *almost* perfectly correlated spread of La Tène objects (summarised in a map) and lifestyle.¹⁰ However Ireland has barely any Halstatt or La Tène objects so can they really be Celtic if material culture is the sole definition? Surely this would show that people did not migrate, successfully to Ireland if they did not bring their wares with them; but yet they share linguistic, religious and some genetic similarities with 'Celts' in Britain and Iberia.

Lifestyle and language can be similar without the same ethnic group or 'civilization', spread of ideas and items come just as easily through trade, and the way people live depend on resources available, how advanced their technology is, climate etc. For instance you wouldn't say that the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians were the same group, due to all the common factors they share. There is an interesting point in Megaw and Megaw from Otto-Herman Frey about grave goods; which is valid for this argument since most La Tène archaeological finds are from burials.¹¹ Just because someone has La Tène grave goods does not mean they were Celtic, like his analogy that just because someone has Coca-Cola and a baseball cap does not mean they are American. What this does mean is that "it indicated the presence or influence of people who first produced" the Celtic grave goods.¹² This would mean cultural overlay/fashion is the agent of cultural change into 'Celticity'.

There is also the argument that there is no sense of Celtic unity in ancient times; firstly since they did not produce their own writings we cannot know this for certain and as discussed before, the Greek and Roman sources carry their own bias. Secondly the archaeology does not explicitly show a lack of unity, in fact quite the opposite. All of the so-called 'Celtic' areas on Cremin's map share language, culture, customs and art (things which Renfrew says we are allowed to apply the term "Celtic" to).¹³ There is no doubt that the Celts did exist in the archaeological record, at least showing unity of material culture and at some level language even if they were not a 'nation' or 'polity' like in Greece or Italy. They appear to draw strong parallels with the ancient

¹⁰ Ibid., 25(map) and 7.

¹¹ J.V.S. Megaw and M.R. Megaw, "Ancient Celts and Modern Ethnicity", 180.

¹² See note 9 above

¹³ Ibid., 179.

Mesopotamians, who were definitely not a united group but shared linguistic, material and religious cultures.

Torcs also seem to follow this Mesopotamian pattern of culture. The torc is an ancient symbol of a Celt or Gaul, they are found in classical texts, statues, carvings and as part of grave goods. Cremin says that “all Celts, whether men or women, were said to wear one” as what she sees as a deliberate act of identifying their Celticity.¹⁴ However we know that other cultures had very similar items so they cannot be a purely Celtic invention, but even though other cultures have similar jewellery, it does not retract from the significance of it to the Celts as the mark of a warrior. The appearance of the torc does show continuity through the regions described by Cremin, perhaps it is not migration, but a gold torc could definitely be called fashion.¹⁵

If the artefacts cannot give us an answer, perhaps stone circles and henges will. Stone henges themselves are meant to be “exclusive to the British Isles”, whilst not strictly true most stone circles and alignments appearing in the well-known Celtic/Gallic places – Brittany, Wales, Cornwall, Scotland and France.¹⁶ Oddly barely any of these appear in eastern England, something that correlates with the genetics of this region. Oppenheimer believes that the distribution of these lithic monuments is consistent with the Stone Age genetic inputs.¹⁷ This Stone Age commonality could be an early Celtic link.

Although a huge Iron Age migration may not have taken place, perhaps the movement of ‘Celts’ happened earlier, and later the circles had Druidic significance for the Celts, who now separated for millennia, were still conducting trade and cultural contact. Whilst James does reject the idea of the ancient Celts, and their migration he does offer a good explanation for the

¹⁴ Cremin, *The Celts in Europe*, 52-53.

¹⁵ Cremin, *The Celts in Europe*, 6-7.

¹⁶ Aedeon Cremin *et al.*, *Archaeologica: The World's Most Significant Sites and Cultural Treasures* (North Sydney, NSW: Random House, 2007), 150-151.

¹⁷ Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British: The new prehistory of Britain and Ireland from ice-age hunter gatherers to the Vikings as revealed by DNA analysis* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd., 2006), 256.

similarities in the archaeological and linguistic records, saying that they arose out of a “parallel development” of peoples in close contact, rather than sharing an origin.¹⁸

The Genetic Evidence: The Nature of It and What It Tells Us

Unfortunately most of the genetics in this paper is predominantly focused on ‘the Isles’ (Britain and Ireland), as that is where most of the research has been focused out of nationalistic interest and ease. However that does not mean there haven’t been attempts to link any ‘Celtic’ DNA to that of mainland Europe. One problem with attempting to define an ancient ethnic group or race is the ‘ancientness’ of the scientific samples, as Sykes describes, it is a fine line between good and bad preservation.¹⁹ Uncovering enough DNA to analyse and make viable conclusions is sometimes an impossible task. The slightest mistake can cause degradation, something one can ill-afford when working on the likes of the Cheddar Man.²⁰

What makes uncovering the genetic existence or identity of the ancient Celts aggravating is that it is easy to get DNA from the current population, and easy to get a broad scale view of the current population - but not of the ancients. We do not have hundreds or millions of perfectly preserved fossils, bog-men or even teeth of the ancient Celts to compare with the ancient Vikings, Romans etc. to determine if they were genetically distinct in antiquity. It would take three minutes or less to obtain enough DNA from a classmate, as easy as a cheek swab²¹. Analysis takes much longer, but there are a variety of techniques, in this case population genetics techniques need to be used, since we want to uncover information about the Celts on a broad scale.²² But here is where the number of ancient samples becomes an issue – how can we get an idea of an ancient

¹⁸ Simon James, *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?* (London: British Museum Press, 1999)

¹⁹ Bryan Sykes, *Blood of the Isles: Exploring the genetic roots of our tribal history* (London: Transworld Publishers – Corgi Books, 2006), 22-29.

²⁰ See note 16 above

²¹ School of Molecular Bioscience – Discipline of Molecular Biology, *Molecular Biology and Genetics A MBLG 2071/MBLG2971 Laboratory Manual Semester 1, 2011* (Sydney: The University of Sydney, 2011), 5.5-5.8.

²² Griffiths et al., *Introduction to Genetic Analysis* 609-649.

population with few if any ancient samples, or with copious modern samples which have undergone mutations, interbreeding, 'dilution' and possible genetic extinction since ancient times?

Bryan Sykes and his team focused on using variations of the 'Molecular Clock' method to trace back the mitochondrial (mtDNA or mDNA) and Y-chromosomal DNA of their modern subjects to when the 'clan mothers' and 'clan fathers' originally colonised the British Isles.²³ The reason they used mt and Y-chromosomal DNA is twofold.

Firstly mitochondrial DNA is often the only type of DNA, which survives in preserved human remains, or is usually the best preserved, and the easiest to extract, since it is separate to the nuclear DNA, and similar to obtaining bacterial DNA. Secondly mtDNA is inherited through maternal lineage without any input from a father's DNA; therefore a maternal grandmother, mother, her male and female children all share identical mtDNA. The lack of male mtDNA to combine with in fertilisation makes the mt genome haploid (only one parental contribution), which in turn means that mt DNA types are called haplotypes, with certain haplotypes being more common amongst certain populations. The absence of interfering male DNA makes mtDNA analysis simpler.

New mutations, which can distinguish haplotypes, occur occasionally and are easy to find. Analysing these inherited mutational variations can determine the relationships between individuals or whole population groups or even species.²⁴

When two groups deviate from a common ancestor they both accumulate a "unique set of random DNA mutations" and so long as these mutations occur at a constant rate then the "number of mutations is proportional to the length of time that two groups have been separate". This is what we call the molecular clock and independently determined events (established through methods such as carbon dating and geochronology) are attached to give a more definite timescale. The observed mutation rate does not actually reflect the true mutation rate since the mtDNA mutates at a rate far higher than nuclear DNA, but Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) patterns are inherited more or less unchanged following Mendelian laws through thousands of generations, and

²³ Cold Springs Harbor Laboratory, "Genetic Origins", *Dolan DNA Learning Center*, <<http://www.geneticorigins.org/>> (accessed 5 August, 2011); Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*

²⁴ See note 19 above

there is a high statistical probability that many of these mutated regions have “back-mutated” to the original state (something which is very common in all species).²⁵

It is through this method, with statistical and comparative adjustments that Sykes and other geneticists have determined the “mitochondrial Eve” and specifically for Sykes the “Seven Daughters of Eve” whom with a few lesser daughters, all indigenous Europeans are descended from – Ursula, Helena, Jasmine, Xenia, Tara, Velda and Katrine; known as “clan mothers”²⁶. This means that it is theoretically possible to trace the origins of the people of the British Isles back to one of these daughters, to see if they share common ancestry with people living in the Celtic heartland of central Europe.

On the male side with the Y-chromosome, it is inherited from a paternal lineage with no female input, but unlike mtDNA, which is carried by all people, Y-chromosomes (at least for the purposes of this paper) are specific to males. Y-chromosomal SNPs are inherited like mtDNA SNPs but do not have the same high rate of back-mutation but are instead thought “to represent a unique mutation event that occurred once in evolutionary history”, so in other words each major SNP is likely to represent one major “clan father” or dominant male ancestor – such as Niall or Somerled.¹⁹ Such groupings of Y-chromosomal DNA (which is haploid) are called haplogroups, with the basic principles of mtDNA haplotypes applying. There are 20 paternal clans worldwide with 8 clans being in Europe, 5 of which are present in the British Isles – Oisín, Wodan, Sigurd, Eshu and Re²⁷. Therefore the molecular clock method can be used on Y-chromosomal DNA as well, allowing possible Celtic paternal lineage to be traced back.

Perhaps the biggest problem of the genetic approach is what Sykes points out, and what is at the crux of this whole debate: “*When it comes to getting hold of a definition of the Celt, or Celtic, a definition to be tested by genetics, I found myself struggling*”²⁸. This is undoubtedly a problem for any geneticist who has tried to define the Celts and their movements. Being of European origin,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 135-138.

²⁷ Ibid., 193-194.

²⁸ Ibid., 68.

both the groups of Celts are likely to have inter-bred with neighbouring populations and share haplotypes/haplogroups with them – it is very unlikely they were genetic isolates, unlike the Native American Indians, who were genetic isolates until recent times due to not only geography but their large founder effect.²⁹ Furthermore the exact definition of what makes a Celt is a common problem across disciplines – everyone has different opinions about who the Celts were, where they lived and whether the spread of ‘Celticity’ was migration or fashion. The genetics does not deal with art styles or language but it can complement it; here is what Bryan Sykes and Stephen Oppenheimer have concluded about the Celts and their genetic roots:

The DNA of Ireland

The maternal clan of Ursula appears to be the oldest in Ireland (originating in Greece) with approximately 10% of all Irish men and women as direct descendants with an arrival date in Ireland of approximately 7,300 years ago. Helena (who has the strongest presence in the Isles) is the dominant mtDNA present in the Irish population, with Tara, Jasmine, Xenia, Katrine, Velda and even Ulrike all showing an occurrence of approximately 10% or less in the modern Irish population.³⁰ All of these clan arrivals (except for minor ones like Ulrike) date between 7,500 and 4,500 years ago which means that the maternal ancestors of the Irish arrived as early as the Palaeolithic, before the Neolithic Revolution and definitely not in the classical or medieval periods.³¹

Roughly 80% of Irish men belong to the paternal clan of Oisín, arriving in Ireland approximately 4,200 years ago, with penetrance of the chromosome varying in a gradient between regions in Ireland, something which Sykes suggested shows the effects of the 12th Century Anglo-Norman invasion, confirmed by the Y-chromosomes showing a clear correspondence to Anglo-Norman surnames and the A blood group (highly prevalent amongst Anglo-Normans, and not amongst the indigenous Irish).³²

²⁹ Griffiths et al., *Introduction to Genetic Analysis*, 633-638

³⁰ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 182-201.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See note 30 above.

The origin myth of Brutus coming across from Spain and the rest of the Iberian Peninsula was shown to have genetic basis with a particular Atlantic Modal Haplotype signature found in the Isles only on the Irish Y-chromosomes; this is a signature common with the Basques and Galicians in Spain and is the most common signature in the Irish clan of Oisin.³³

The DNA of Scotland and Its Islands

In Shetland and Orkney Oisin is yet again the major paternal clan at roughly 60%, with the majority of the remaining 40% belonging to Wodan and Sigurd. As the names may suggest, these Islands have Celtic/Pictish and Viking heritage. The results were tested against the Y-chromosomes of Norway and it was found that roughly 58% were Pict and 42% were Viking.

There was just as much Viking mtDNA in the north islands, suggesting the Vikings brought their women with them when invading the Isles (not the traditional picture painted by historical sources). However the Pictish ancestral base still holds on strongly with about 60% of North Islanders being of Pictish descent.³⁴

In Pictland (Grampian and Tayside) Sigurd and Wodan are present but in low levels, suggesting Pictland has virtually no Viking ancestry which is “what we would have to expect from the history and the archaeology” of the region.³⁵ The mtDNA from the Pictish heartland is more ancient than that of Ireland with Ursula as the oldest again at 9,200 years ago and the youngest from Jasmine’s clan arriving about 5,000 years ago. Already we can see that the maternal ancestry of Britain and Ireland is ancient and consistent, despite the Vikings and other visitors. As Sykes points out “it takes a lot to displace indigenous genes, especially on the female side.”³⁶

The Hebrides were very different to not only the rest of Scotland but the rest of the Isles with unusually young branches of the Jasmine and Tara clans, which have what Sykes calls “a distinctly seaborne flavour about them”, coming from the Atlantic coast as more recent immigrants.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 226-262.

³⁵ Ibid., 246.

³⁶ Ibid., 249.

Argyll on the maternal side was more similar to Pictland than the Hebrides, and the Highland coast was in between these values. On the paternal side Pictland is definitely Pictish, Argyll has 30-40% “replacement of Pictish by Gaelic Y-chromosomes” with all areas except for the North Islands showing little to no Viking footprint. The replacement by the Gaels, is probably explained by history, with a “hostile replacement of Pictish males by the Dalriadan Celts, most of whom relied on Pictish rather than Irish women to propagate their genes” but this is hard to definitely determine since the Picts and Irish Gaels/Celts are extremely close genetically, so any statistical estimates are difficult. The geneticists insist that this gives us a solid conclusion that “the Picts and the Celts have the same underlying genetic origins.”³⁷

The DNA of Wales

The Welsh mtDNA pattern is remarkably similar to Ireland and Pictland with Helena dominating at approximately 47%. Like the other traditionally ‘Celtic’ areas of the Isles, Wales has almost no Norse or Viking lineage or other signs of settlement. What Sigurds are in Wales have a different signature to the Viking Y-chromosomes. So Wales too, is almost completely indigenous.³⁸

The DNA of England

England is a big complicated mixture, not surprising given its history and geographical position. The maternal trend is much the same as the other regions however there is a trend from east and north to the south and west of England seemingly right along the Danelaw, with Helena at 43% in East Anglia getting up to 47% in the north and much more presence of the minor clans, particularly Ulrike. This indicates female immigration “into the east [of England] from continental Europe” a trend not shown in the west or north.

The male side shows huge differences – Oisín is still the largest with 51% in East Anglia, increasing west to Wales and North to Scotland; where Oisín decreases, Wodan increases with his

³⁷ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 253.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 276-286.

highest in East Anglia, but almost no Sigurds in East Anglia, but plenty in the north; suggesting that the east saw the effects of later immigrations, lessening into heavily 'Celtic' areas.³⁹

The DNA of the British Isles in Summary

The genetic evidence clearly shows the people of the British Isles are an old people with very consistent genetics, especially on the female side, with any replacement being from the Dalriadan Celts, the Vikings and other Western Europeans in the East of England. Across the British Isles there was consistently a "lower than expected amount of accumulated mutations in the Y-chromosomes" which seems to be a frequent feature of Celtic regions.⁴⁰

However, these replacements are minute with no 'invading' people since the Stone Age having contributed much more than 5-10% to the indigenous genetics of the Isles.⁴¹ This is as Olson suggests – great evidence for cultural overlay as the driving force behind the spread of 'Celticity'.⁴² Sykes calls his indigenous people of the British Isles Celts owing to their pre-Roman status, longevity of their genetics and because they spoke Celtic languages, but this is one of many interpretations of 'Celt', for he also acknowledges that the continental Celts deserve the name too. Your genetics does not necessarily exclude you from belonging to a cultural group.⁴³

No evidence for a great migration from continental Celts as history suggests, was found in the genetics. Both Oppenheimer and Sykes agree there is "there is no genetic... evidence for this" 'invasion' or migration theory.⁴⁴ Basically "three quarters of British ancestors arrive long before the first farmers" and therefore such a migration any later than the Neolithic is a myth.³²

³⁹ Ibid., 316-326.

⁴⁰ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 286.

⁴¹ Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, 470.

⁴² Olson, "Genetic Evidence and the Early Medievalist", 217.

⁴³ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 338.

⁴⁴ Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, 471-472.

Conclusions: so who were and are the Celts and how did their culture spread?

From the genetics there appears to be two definitions of Celt – those who were the indigenous inhabitants of the British Isles from as early as 10,000 years ago and the mainland Celts as described by Posidonius and others.⁴⁵ The linguistics would group all of them together; which has evolved over time to now almost solely focus the Celtic language in the Isles, this is problematic since “basically, language has nothing to do with genetics”.³ The archaeology shows a mixed view depending on interpretation, it can lend itself as Cremin puts it as including both the mainland Celts and those of the British Isles, or it can include only the classical definition of ‘Keltoi’ with the material culture spreading via trade to the Isles.⁶ Likewise the history backs the view of the traditional ‘Keltoi’ but who after the fall of Rome, moved around, and possibly migrated to the Isles, taking their culture, language and genes, with them.

However, both Sykes and Oppenheimer agree that there is “no evidence at all of a large-scale immigration from central Europe to Ireland and the west of the Isles... The ‘Celts’ [of the Isles]... are not, as far as I can see from the genetic evidence, related to the Celts ... from the heartlands of Hallstadt and La Tène.”⁴⁶ In other words, there was never a big ‘invasion’ or migration of the ‘Keltoi’ to the British Isles. A “large-scale” immigration or invasion in these times with such small populations could have constituted a few dozen or a few hundred people, since population size is important in determining how easily new mutations or genes will become fixed or lost. Hence neutral (i.e. neither beneficial or detrimental) alleles tend to disappear due to genetic drift – for example a combination of not marrying the locals and genetic drift meant little to no Roman genes in Britain, and likewise the Celts made no apparent genetic impact.⁴⁷ The spread of the “uniquely Celtic” art forms and languages is, according to this evidence, cultural overlay.⁴⁸ This is not to say that the indigenous peoples of the British Isles weren’t Celtic; by the linguistic definition, and modern perception they are. Most of the current inhabitants of the Isles have ‘Celtic’ roots, or as

⁴⁵ See note 2 above

⁴⁶ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 332.

⁴⁷ Griffiths et al., *Introduction to Genetic Analysis*, 638.

⁴⁸ Cremin, *The Celts in Europe*, 22.

Sykes puts it “overall, the genetic structure of the Isles is stubbornly Celtic, if by that we mean descent from people who were there before the Romans and who spoke a Celtic language.”⁴⁹ What is important when considering the ancient Celts is to remember that it is a “brand”, which changes its meaning depending on context and what specialisation it is discussed in relation to.⁵⁰ Just because you are not genetically or linguistically Celtic does not mean that you are excluded from the wider Celtic “brand”. Essentially the mass Celtic migration in the Iron Age is a myth but the material culture was spread like ‘fashion’, making the people of the British Isles Celtic at least in part. The ‘Keltoi’ did not migrate to the Isles, however their legacy lives on, due to their close contact with their ‘cousins’ across the channel. It was an importation of ideas, technology and language without genetic input.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sykes, *Blood of the Isles*, 226 – 262.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁵¹ Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British*, 245.

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