

From the Issue Editor


The first written mention of the Celts comes from Herodotus, who in the fifth century B.C. wrote that the Danube River arose in the land of the Keltoi, Europe's most westerly people. Later, writers such as Posidonius, Strabo, and Julius Caesar also gave us descriptions of people they called Celts or Gauls, distinguishing them from both Romans and Germans. But what does such a designation actually mean?

The word Celt is frequently used to describe an ethnic group, a kind of material culture, and an art style. To archaeologists, however, the word describes a group of people who speak one of a group of languages called Celtic. Only a few Celtic languages survive today, among them Gaelic and Breton, remnants of what was 2,000 years ago a group of related languages that stretched from one end of temperate Europe to the other. But since only scraps of written Celtic have survived from that time, archaeologists search for whatever material culture — artifacts, funerary ritual, house style — might be associated with speakers of Celtic languages. Working backward from the time of known Celtic language use, archaeologists have tentatively traced the use of “Celtic” artifacts as far back as 1200 B.C., the Late Bronze Age, in eastern Germany and Switzerland. The identification is firmer in the Iron Age (ca. 800–50 B.C.), but archaeologists still prefer to use terms such as Hallstatt culture and La Tène culture rather than Celtic. So we trace the spread of characteristic La Tène artifacts from their origin in Central Europe outward through temperate Europe and beyond to Asia Minor.

Celtic languages in most of Europe vanished during the first millennium after Christ; the people who had formerly spoken them now spoke languages either derived from Latin of the Roman conquerors or the Germanic of the migrants from the north. Celtic as an ethnic label also vanished in those areas. The people themselves remained, some customs and religious beliefs undoubtedly remained, but “Celt” as a meaningful cultural and linguistic term survived only on the edge of Europe, in Brittany and the British Isles.

This issue of *Expedition* looks at Celts, both archaeologically defined and self-defined, from 600 B.C. to the present. Bettina Arnold's article on the Early Iron Age Hallstatt site of the Heuneberg in Germany discusses one of the early

“princely” sites from the heartland of temperate Europe. Mary Voigt's paper presents Celts in an unexpected place, Galatia in modern Turkey, where a group of Celts migrated to and lived during the fourth to second centuries B.C. My article discusses Celtic towns on the edge of the Roman world, just before Julius Caesar's invasion. Bernard Wailes talks about the Celtic culture of the Early Medieval Period in the British Isles, and Beebe Bahrami's article explores the recent revival of Celticism as young people in Galician Spain seek to claim an ancient identity.

We hope you enjoy exploring the past 2,500 years of the Celts. 

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Issue Editor



CHRONOLOGY OF THE CELTS

Date	Events	Article Author
A.D.		
20th–21st centuries	Celtic “revitalization” movements	Bahrami
800	Book of Kells	Wailes
600	Insular-style art develops	
400–500	Collapse of Western Roman Empire	
431–2	Conversion of Ireland begins	
B.C.		
43	Roman conquest of Britain begins	Hamilton Voigt
58–50	Roman conquest of Gaul	
1st century	Irish royal sites	
2rd–1st centuries	<i>Oppida</i>	
3rd–2nd centuries	Celts enter Anatolia and establish themselves in Galatia	
400–300	La Tène art in Ireland and Britain	
450	La Tène art style begins in Central Europe	Arnold
600–400	Late Hallstatt period (Early Iron Age)	

