DEMYTHOLOGISING CELTIC - CELTIC AS NON-EXOTIC COMPARED WITH OTHER LINGUISTIC SYSTEMS

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Over the past few centuries the Celtic peoples and their languages have been subject to a great deal of fantastic theorising, which has led to all sorts of erroneous speculations. This paper is aimed at dispelling some of the myths surrounding the concept of Celtic, primarily from the point of view of linguistic material, with brief introductory references to literature and culture. It argues that Celtic is less exotic than is commonly supposed, and that one way of being aware of this is to keep one's eye on the linguistic structure of the Celtic languages.

Introduction

This paper is aimed at dispelling some of the myths surrounding the concept of "Celtic", primarily discussing Celtic linguistic material, with brief introductory references to literature and culture, and arguing that Celtic is less exotic than is commonly supposed, and is perhaps even underutilised as a source of data in certain areas of linguistic argumentation. Unless otherwise stated, then, the use of the term "Celtic" in this paper will be strictly linguistic.¹

Over the past few centuries the Celtic peoples and their languages have been subject to a great deal of fantastic theorising, sometimes verging on myth. This may be linked to the fact that any parts of Europe which were formerly Celtic-speaking have not

¹ Fife (1993: 5) puts it thus: "The genetic criterion has switched focus to specifically linguistic features instead of populations or cultures." "That is the sense of 'Celtic' with which linguists are well acquainted and which appears to have a firm foundation in scientific evidence." Chapman (1992: 7-23, 70-75, and James (loc. cit) offer brief aspects of the linguistic issues.

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been Celtic-speaking for nearly two thousand years, pushing the issue into antiquity. Indeed, James (1999: 16-18) argues that there is a perceptible gap separating the Celts of the Classical and Modern Ages, and that the two have little to do with each other. A further important contributory factor has been the apparently exotic structure of the Celtic languages from the Standard Average European (SAE) point of view, despite their geographic location. The following passages may be taken as typical:

Gardner, The Western Highlands: “The Gaelic language seems never to have been meant to be written down. It abounds in sounds that no tongue not brought up to it can produce; its genders are chaotic, and its inflexions affect the beginning or middle of the word rather than the end, making the ordinary type of dictionary almost useless.”

Machen, The Novel of the Black Seal: “... the two men ... talked of philology with the enthusiasm of a burgess over the peerage. The parson was expounding the pronunciation of the Welsh ll, and producing sounds like a gurgle of his native brooks ...”

Literaturnaya Gazeta No. 49 (5769), December 8–14, 1999: 5: “Generally, the majority of “Russian Celts” are erudite people. They know the history and religion of the ancient Irish tribes... And of course, every one of them has read Tolkien’s fairy tales”

Often the label “Celtic” is attached to materials which can only be remotely described as such.²

² For the term “Standard Average European”, and discussion, see Dahl (1990). The concept goes back at least to Whorf 1971 (1939: 156).

³ Many of the articles included in O’Driscoll (1982) might be taken as examples of this phenomenon. Some of the uses of the terms “Gothic” (see Chapman 1992: 131-132) in this context and “Aryan” provide a

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Thus certain modern modes of music are commonly thought of as “Celtic”, although they have little in common with things Celtic, beyond mentioning allegedly “Celtic-related” themes in the lyrics.⁴

One illustrative example is provided by the so-called “Celtic thesis” of Southern US, and Confederate, history, see, e.g., McWhiney (1988), which deals with Southern US culture from a wide range of angles. He suggests that distinctive Southern folkways in areas such as herding, hospitality, pleasures, violence, morals, and education, etc., may be traced back to “Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall ... and the English uplands (1988: xiii)”, or “Ir[land], Scot[land], or Wales [and] ... English uplands (1988: xxi)”, and argues that these may be traced back to the Continental Celts (1988: xiii-xliii; Prologue by Forrest MacDonald). To drive home his overall thesis, he punctuates the whole of the book with extensive juxtapositions and comparisons of comments by English travellers on conditions in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and Northern travellers on conditions in the South.

parallel. The ongoing attempts by neo-Nazis to appropriate “Celtic” material as a source of inspiration provide a sinister example, see, e.g., the Stormfront website (http://www.stormfront.org), which advertises such items as “Celtic T-shirt with Nordic/Viking Runes”.

⁴ The songs of Loreena McKennitt provide an excellent example of this phenomenon (see especially her introduction to the CD The Book of Secrets). Her CD Parallel Dreams includes the piece Standing Stones (6:56), which is taken from Orkney, which, if anything, might be classed with Scandinavia, rather than the Celtic countries (Orkney may never have been Celtic in speech).

This seems to have been lost on government officials in Scotland, who promote the use of Gaelic in Orkney. These statements are not meant as any form of criticism of Loreena McKennitt’s music as such; it is just that one might well dispute the use of the word “Celtic.” This theme is developed by Chapman (1992: 116-119). One is reminded of Bentley’s comment on Pope’s translation of the Iliad: “You have made a very pretty poem Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer.” (see Knight 1969: 1).
This is not the proper area to discuss the “Celtic thesis” in any detail, save to note that the references to “Celtic origins” often involve the North of England, the Scottish Borders and Lowlands, or Ulster (as actually admitted by McWhiney loc. cit.), rather than the Scottish Highlands, Wales, or the rest of Ireland. The “Celtic thesis” is often not free of error in interpreting Celtic material, cf. the discussions in Ó Baoill (1988), Fischer (1989: 860 fn.), Chapman (1992: 230-232, 293 fn. 49), and Hill (1998a & 1998b).

Some citations from current webpages may serve as further examples of the mythologisation often linked to Celtic topics:

“Aisling Association of Celtic Tribes (AACT) is a non-profit religious organization, dedicated to the promotion and development of Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism. We work to develop a modern form of tribal life, blending Iron Age ideology with modern day practicality and to honor the Gods in all we do.” (http://www.aislingact.org/home.html).

“Until recently, Celtic Art has been regarded as a mysterious relic of an archaic culture and people who once lived in the British Isles and other parts of Europe. Truth is, they live here still, despite attempts by successive invaders and cultures to dislodge or swamp them. Disappearing but briefly into the remote wilderness of Scottish lens, Welsh mountains, gloomy mists of Irish bogs, Cornish castles and moors and Breton amor they have continued to emerge throughout history to found glorious dynasties and intermingle occasionally with ‘foreign’ Saxon cultures.” (Celtic Art Home Page - http://www.celtic-art.net/)

“... many people who are seeking a ‘Celtic’ tradition are being led astray by profit-oriented “New Age” writers, instead of seeking the truth for themselves from more academic sources.” (http://altreligion.about.com/religion/altreligion/pi/dynami

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c/ofsite. Html site = http://members.aol.com/eponamyst/notcelt.ht.

Berresford Ellis (1997: 251-281) provides a brief history of the modern “rediscovery” of the Celts and the Druids and reminds us how central the actual languages are to the whole enterprise: “Language is the highest form of cultural expression ... . Once the languages disappear then Celtic civilisation will cease to exist... (1997: 280; emphasis mine - RAO).”

This phenomenon is of long standing, and has not gone unnoticed by serious scholars, cf. Pedersen (1967: 58): “In the hands of undisciplined dilettantes these modern forms could be used for anything” 5. The term “serious scholar” can be seen as loaded in some contexts. In this paper I would like to use it merely to mean someone who has done his homework and checked his sources, etc. In the Preface to his acclaimed A Celtic Miscellany Jackson states “... a group of writers approaching the Celtic literatures (about which they usually knew very little, since most of them could not read the languages at all) with a variety of the above prejudice conditioned by the pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic movements ... were responsible for the still widely held belief that they are full of mournful, languishing, mysterious melancholy, of the dim ‘Celtic Twilight’ ... this is a gross misrepresentation... In fact, the Celtic literatures are about as little given to mysticism or sentimentality as it is possible to be...” (1973: 19-20). O’Leary (1994: 282) cites the April 23, 1898 issue of the journal Fáinne an Lae as saying “that strange sect who ... while ignorant of any Celtic language, write and talk much of a ‘Celtic’ movement.” More recently Jasanoć & Nussbaum (1996: 202-203): “An especially conscious role in the crank linguistic literature is played by the Celts, whose popular reputation for ‘mystery’ accounts for their pivotal position in ... fantastic speculations ...” This degree of irritation can be seen in Chapman (1992: xiii); James (1999: 35, 40) who cite Tolkien: “Anything is possible in the fabulous Celtic twilight, which is not so much a

5 Pedersen’s Danish original dates from 1924.
twilight of the gods as of the reason”, and has even reached the mass media, cf. the very title of a *Times* editorial of October 22, 1999: “Scything at Silliness” (dealing with objections offered by the self-styled “Iris Brigantia Celtic Pagans” to the Christian reburial of a Bronze Age corpse).6 Lambert (1994: 8) puts it forthrightly: “Le caractère anti-scientifique de nombreuses publications ... concernant les Celtes est dû précisément à une manque de méthode et de rationalité, et à une ignorance complète concernant les cultures celtiques médiévales, irlandaise et galloise.” Often people can be quite open about their feelings; Chapman (1992: 242-243) describes the “mysterious glamour” of Celtic oronyms in Scotland and Wales, and the relative letdown when they are translated, see also Gardner (1948: 15-16).8

6 Sims-Williams (1998: 17) reminds us that much that is believed about the Druids in Gaul is simply untrue, and points out that “... the Romantic idea of the ‘Celts’ was, and remains, through and through synthetic and anachronistic: if the ancient Celts preferred orality so must their descendants (an assumption no one would make in the case of the Anglo-Saxons vis-à-vis the ancient Germans”).

7 Many such speculations showed a startling ignorance of the actual Celtic languages, cf. Jackson *loc. cit.* O’Leary (1994: 255) cites the following anecdote: “Denis Gwynn has recorded a conversation between [Pádraig] Pearse and [Standish James] O’Grady in which Pearse corrected O’Grady’s mispronunciation of Cú Chulainn’s name as “Cuch-ulane”. Gwynn writes: “O’Grady was overwhelmed by the discovery, and after a long pause informed Pearse that he would have written an entirely different book if he had known the correct sound of the name.” Berresford Ellis (1997: 12-13) points out that organisations such as the “Ancient Order of Druids (founded in 1781)” conduct all their “worship” in English.

8 However, Chapman is in error (1992: 243) when he translates the Skye Cuillin oronym Sgurr Mhic Choinnich and ascribes it to “an English climber who had named it after himself in the 1890’s”; it was actually named after John MacKenzie, a local man who may have been the only climbing guide Scotland ever produced. Chapman is possibly confusing it with Knight’s Peak, another name for the fourth pinnacle on Sgurr nan Gillean, named after Professor Knight of St. Andrews.

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Examples of erroneous perceptions of Celtic

1) Cornwall

One manifestation of erroneous and fantastic ideas about the Celts is that for some time in the nineteenth century it was alleged that the inhabitants of Cornwall were primarily Jewish, fuelled by obvious misinterpretations of place-names such as Marazion and Market Jew.9 Berresford Ellis (1974: 140) expresses it thus: “With the death of the language, and even the vague memory of its existence forgotten, Cornwall was left with a countless number of place-names which in the eyes of most people, were merely gibberish. With the cessation of the language the Cornish people had become cut off from their past. Even the most serious scholars began to give credit to the most peculiar fantasies about the Cornish.”

An example of this type of thinking may be furnished by citations of its treatment in the Sherlock Holmes stories, both Conan Doyle originals and later additions, such as the following:

Conan Doyle, *The Devil’s Foot*: “[Holmes] ... had conceived the idea that [Cornish] was akin to the Chaldean, and had been largely derived from the Phoenician traders in tin. ... those Chaldean roots which are surely to be traced in the Cornish branch of the great Celtic speech.” (1910: 774).

Tremayne, *The Affray at the Kildare Street Club*: “... Holmes’ fascination with the Celtic languages in which he was something of an expert. In my narrative “The Devil’s Foot” I mentioned Holmes’ study on *Chaldean Roots in the Ancient Cornish Language*. I did not mention that this work won high praise from Henry Jenner, the greatest living

9 Both names, however, have perfectly good Brythonic pedigrees: Marazion < *marghas byghan* ‘small market’; Market Jew < *marghas yow* ‘Thursday market’.
expert on the Cornish language. Holmes was able to
demonstrate the close connection between the
Cornish verb and the Irish verb systems.” (p. 29)¹⁰

Myers, The Case of the Faithful Retainer. “... The
ancient Cornish language ... convinced as he
became that it was rooted in the Chaldean...
(p. 368)

Dorothy Sayers’ Lord Peter Wimsey also provides
an example.

Clouds of Witness: “Mrs. Grimethorpe ... was more
wonderful than ever. There was no
trace of Yorkshire descent in the long, dark eyes and
curled mouth. The curve of nose and
cheekbones vouched for an origin immensely remote;
coming out of the darkness, she might have
just risen from her far tomb in the Pyramids, dropping the
dry and perfumed grave-bands from her fingers.
Lord Peter pulled himself together.
“Foreign’, he said to himself matter-of-factly. “Touch of
Jew, perhaps, or Spanish, is it?” (p. 238)

But later on we discover where she is really from:

“I am free now,” she said. “I am going back to my own
people in Cornwall.” (p. 317)

2) Ossian

James Macpherson’s Ossianic poems, an eighteenth-century
literary fabrication from the Scottish Highlands, despite being

¹¹See Gaskill (1990), Chapman (1992: 120-124) (also including
discussion of a Breton analogue), Schamschula (1993), and the literature
cited therein. Ossianic poetry was astonishingly influential in its time,
and beyond ("Ossi” and "Selma” are still on the list of Finnish names). It
may have been one of the first popular fads in Europe, and may have
substantially contributed to the mythological aura surrounding things
Celtic. This discussion is not aimed at commenting on the merits of
Ossian as literature, regardless of its origins.
3) The Status of Scots

Among the countries normally considered “Celtic”, Scotland is unique in that it has two native minority languages: Scots and Scottish Gaelic. The two are often apparently confused, with slipshod references to “Scottish”, in literature of all levels, even linguistic, an ironic state of affairs in that for much of their common history their speakers were in direct conflict, up to and including open warfare. Again, it is helpful to keep one’s eye on the strictly linguistic aspects: basically, Scots derives from a northern dialect of Old English which became a written standard in the Middle Ages, and Gaelic from the dialects spoken by the Irish invaders of Scotland in the centuries immediately following the departure of the Romans.

Part of the confusion may derive from the very nomenclature: in the Middle Ages Gaelic was referred to as “Scotic” and Scots as “Inglis”. In the late fifteenth century a shift in the nomenclature took place, and the two languages came to be renamed Scots and Erse (Erse; Irish, etc.) respectively. Nowadays, of course, both Scots and Gaelic are both under different types and degrees of pressure from English.

4) The Mandans

For a long time reports came of tribes of Welsh-speaking Indians in North America, mainly west of the Mississippi. Over two centuries, frontiersmen travelling in the Missouri and Mississippi valleys reported encounters with Welsh-speaking Indians. Tales such as that of the clergyman who escaped being killed by kneeling down and praying in Welsh and being answered in Welsh and then released have reached almost urban legend proportions.

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12 A recent apparent example is Bauer (2000: 179).
A linguistic contribution

The general feeling that Celtic is somehow exotic has also permeated discussion of the actual languages. It seems to be the Indo-European branch where the largest number of theories of pre- or non-Indo-European substrata have been proposed. This seems to be an ongoing discussion and has generated much literature, which can be only discussed briefly here; many of the parallels cited involving North African languages, specifically Berber and Egyptian; Caucasian languages; Finnish, Arctic languages, etc. Many scholars accept that insular Celtic underwent some substratum influence (see, e.g., Pokorny 1949, 1959, 1960, Wagner 1969, 1987, Schmid 1990, etc.), although the exact nature of the substratum is often left open. Recently Vennemann, in a series of well-argued thought-provoking papers, has revived and elaborated the idea of Hamito-Semitic influence on Celtic (see Vennemann 1994, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999, and the literature cited therein). On the other hand, Watkins (1962): I criticised the readiness to cite substrata to explain interesting linguistic features in Celtic.\(^\text{13}\)

Renfrew (1987: 26-28, 211-249) devotes some space to attempting a synthesis of the archaeological and linguistic approaches to Celtic, offering (1987: 214) eight possible definitions of “Celtic”, only one of which is linguistic (“a language group”), and two partially so (“people whom the Romans designated by that name” and “people who called themselves by it”). He amasses a formidable amount of evidence to indicate that, as he puts it, the term “Celt” “is not a proper ethnic term (1987: 224)” While admitting the validity of Celtic as a linguistic designation, he goes on to conclude that the Celts arose from an “undifferentiated Indo-European language... spoken

\(^{13}\) For a succinct treatment of such theories see Berresford Ellis (1997: 43-47). A Celtic substratum has even been proposed to explain mazurekic (the substitution of s, z, and c for š, Ž, and ŝ) in Polish; see Lehr-Splawiński (1956: 7-9), but such influence seems unlikely.

in Europe North and West of the Alps”, and that the area of the Iron Age La Tène Culture, often cited as “Celtic”, cannot be seen as the “unique and original homeland of the Celts (1987: 249)”, and further suggests that most of the modern Celtic languages may have evolved in the areas where they are currently spoken, rather than been imported by migrants. This approach is in contrast to that applied in traditional Indo-European studies, where the location of homelands for various branches, and the Indo-Europeans themselves, is accorded a great deal of discussion.

Developing some of Renfrew’s argumentation, James (1999: 36) even goes as far as to claim that “the archaeological interpretations are now discredited, with serious implications for the rest of the Celtic construct.” He goes on to attack the very use of the term Celtic, even in its linguistic sense (1999: 20, 44-46, 59, 81-83, 137-138).\(^\text{14}\) One cannot escape the feeling, however, that in deconstructing some of the wilder speculations, James is throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and that James himself is half-aware that he is doing so; his criticism of the use of Celtic as a linguistic term is often hedged with its de facto acceptance. It should be noted, however, that James cites hardly any linguistic material.\(^\text{15}\)

Nevertheless, the term “Celtic” can still be usefully used in its linguistic sense. It has denoted a coherent, universally-agreed upon, linguistic grouping for nearly three hundred years. What alternative name is there for that grouping? “British” (or maybe a variation of “Brittonic”)? “Goidelic”? “Gaelic”? “Gaulish”? It might be pointed out that other such names, e.g., Germanic, have similar problems attached.

\(^{14}\) Chapman (1992: 182-184) shows that the Greeks probably meant simply something like “barbarians” by Κύκλοι, and that this usage persisted well into Byzantine times.

\(^{15}\) Linguistic data certainly should not be dismissed in the way that James seems to; it can often shed light on a wide variety of issues; for a succinct presentation of excellent examples (e.g., the origin of the Malagasy people, the use of toponymy in Europe, Japan, and North America, kinship systems), see Comrie (2000).
At this stage it might be worthwhile to quote Pedersen (1967: 58) at length: “During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Celtic language was a stalking-horse for the ghosts which Leibniz had exorcised.... The sovereign remedy against Celtomania was to be sought only in a systematic comparative investigation of the Celtic languages...”. Ironically, however, for some people many of the structures to be found in the modern Celtic languages seem to strengthen the perceptions of the Celts deployed by Pedersen, but still current, and therefore it is clear that these ghosts are still haunting the fringes of serious Celtic scholarship.

However, the perception of Celtic as an essentially exotic concept may be altered by citing actual linguistic data. As is well-known, the beginnings of the discovery of Celtic as a linguistic family, conventionally dated to the early eighteenth century, proceeded in stages, with scholars such as Buchanan and Lhuyd making important contributions (see Chapman 1992: 207).

Later on, somewhat tentatively, its wider affinities were hinted at. Sir William Jones included Celtic in his famous 1786 address. Nevertheless, Celtic often continues to be ignored in discussions of pan-European linguistics (cf. Isačenko 1974). The following discussion will focus on sound patterns (phonology), and then grammatical and syntactic forms (morphology and syntax).

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16 A particularly egregious example is Fell (1978), which has already been subject to extensive criticism. From the linguistic point of view, it is sufficient merely to glance at the alleged Celtic toponyms cited in Fell (1978: 247-251), a chapter headed “New England’s Celtic Place Names” (?I), to see that the “ghosts” have by no means been exorcised yet.

17 “… there is a similar reason .... for supposing that ... Celtick, though blended with a very different Idiom [emphasis mine - RAO], had the same origin with the Sanskrit.”

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The more commonly studied Celtic languages (Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic) all have sound patterns and individual phonemes which at first glance often strike the L1 SAE language learner or the theoretical linguist as exotic. Nevertheless, most of them are actually quite widespread, albeit not in SAE, which has possibly skewed the picture.

1) Voiceless Laterals

One of the most striking features of Welsh which confronts the learner is the voiceless lateral, (orthographic ll, phonetic [ɬ] e.g., the numerous place-names in llan ‘church’, e.g., Llangollen, Llanelli. English-speakers often treat this sound as exceptionally difficult, a perception which has been in the popular consciousness for some time, cf. the Machen quote cited as an epigraph at the beginning of this paper. Voiceless laterals are not generally found at the phonemic level in more commonly studied SAE languages, although on a world scale they are actually quite widespread, being attested over most continents, e.g., Burmese (Asia), Mandan, Klamath (North America), Ilaa (Oceania), Zulu (Africa), see Ladefoged & Maddieson (1996: 198-214) for detailed discussion.

The fact that some of the languages with voiceless laterals are Amerindian may have been instrumental in the popular
eighteenth-century myth of Welsh-speaking American Indians, especially, e.g., Mandan, as well as some in British Columbia, partly on the basis of this shared phoneme, were believed to be related to Welsh by early settlers in North America (see also below). In North America I have been mistaken for a German on the telephone on occasions.

2) Mutations

The Celtic consonant mutations have long been seen as a unique feature, almost without parallel in other linguistic systems and have given rise to a great deal of speculation. Paradoxically, however, the Celtic mutations offer a startling proof that Celtic is Indo-European. In its day their proper interpretation represented a major step forward in the development of linguistics as an area of study. It will be argued below, however, that the mutations are merely an example of Celtic applying a fairly common principle more thoroughly than anywhere else.

The phenomenon where a linguistic relationship is guessed at on the basis of one phonological feature may also be found in the attitude of English-speakers to the voiceless velar fricative, which, although it is still phonemic in certain varieties, is exotic in most others. In English-speakers' perceptions of German, Scots, Welsh, and Gaelic it is a salient feature. There is a sort of folk mythology that German and Scots are mutually intelligible, of which I can remember numerous examples from my own ten years in Scotland. Some Scottish accents are even erroneously stereotyped as crypto-German by other Scots. At my school there was a teacher from another part of Scotland whose distinctive accent gave rise to rumours that he was really a German (which led in turn to all sorts of ludicrous speculations about World War Two, etc.). My German teacher at the same school was very irritated by this myth, and once spent most of a class denouncing people who compared German and Scots. He traced the misconception back to the fact that both have voiceless velar fricatives, sometimes in cognate lexical items, specifically also because Germans and Scots are stereotyped as saying "Acht!" and "Och!" respectively.

For a brief account of the evolution of the correct interpretation of the Celtic mutations, along with other phenomena, see Pedersen (1967: 57-63).

The most widespread and thoroughgoing mutation process in Celtic is lenition. Both Goidelic and Brythonic make use of lenition for grammatical purposes, although it is manifested in different ways. Taking examples from Irish and Welsh, generally, Goidelic has stop→fricative ([-CONTINUANT] → [+CONTINUANT], e.g., b→v (orthographic bh, cf. bean → mo bhean) throughout, whereas Brythonic has voiceless stop → voiced stop ([-VOICE] [+VOICE] [+-LENIS], or [-FORTIS]?)) e.g., k (Welsh orthographic c) →g, cf. cadair → y gaddair and voiced stop → fricative ([-CONTINUANT] [+CONTINUANT], e.g., b→v (Welsh orthographic f), cf. buwch → y fuwch) as part of the same mutation. These developments may be subsumed as follows. If we assume that vowels and voiceless stops are maximally opposed to each other in the two features [+/- VOICE] and [+/- CONTINUANT], we can see that the lenition of intervocalic consonants involves the acquisition of one feature of the flanking vowels by intervocalic consonants. As pointed out by several authors, this phenomenon is actually quite widespread in historical sound-change, cf. Latin liber > French livre (stop > fricative); Latin amicus > Spanish amigo (voiceless stop > voiced stop).

Celtic has merely extended the principle to the phrase, instead of the word, see Greene (1974: 18-19). Both processes of

Although this breaks down for certain continuants: m→v (orthographic mh), cf. mac → mo mac.

Actually, "lenition" is a fairly good term for capturing the essence of the mutation in question: it can include voicing and spirantisation, see above. In Goidelic linguistics it is a great improvement on the older "aspiration". For our purposes it is quite fortunate that the same term (which captures both the Goidelic and Brythonic phenomena) can be used both for the alternation and the diachronic process, see also Campbell (1998: 41).

The term "lenition" applies to only one type of mutation. For example, in addition to lenition, both Brythonic and Goidelic have nasal mutations, e.g., Welsh ci 'dog'; fy nghi 'my dog'; Irish bliain 'year'; deich mbliana 'ten years', and Brythonic has a few more. The origin of the nasal mutation is quite straightforward (assimilation of a stop
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lenition may be subsumed under the strength hierarchy proposed by Foley (1977: 25-52), with voiceless geminates the strongest members and fricatives the weakest (tending to zero in some cases), cf.

voiceless geminate (1) > voiceless stop (2) > voiced stop (3) > fricative (4) > zero (5)

consonant to a preceding nasal); and the basic principle is the same: Celtic has extended the application of a sound change from the word to the phrase (i.e., Welsh fy < *men; Irish deich < *dekN). In Irish voicing in mutation is related to nasalisation, and the two phenomena are grouped together under the heading "eclipse", e.g.,

Irish

voiceless stop > voiced stop   voiced stop > nasal deich dheach < *dekN tegesa Baile Átha Cliath i mBaile Átha ‘ten houses’

Corcaigh  i gCorcaigh  ‘in Cork’  * in Corcaigh

Welsh

stop > nasal fy < *men fy, cath fy nghath < *men catta ‘my cat’
fy, darlun fy narlun < *men darlun ‘my picture’
cf. Latin septem boves  Irish seacht mbá ‘seven cows’

From a different viewpoint, and building on the views of several other scholars, Bethin (1998: 28) cites a hierarchy of increasing sonority: voiceless stops - voiced stops/voiceless fricatives - voiced fricatives - nasals - liquids - glides/high vowels – vowels It will be noted that this hierarchy roughly corresponds to Foley’s strength hierarchy, and that the further rightward one proceeds, the less likely mutation, especially

This is an area where these strength hierarchies work very well: voiceless consonants are voiced, whereas voiced consonants are spirantised. For Brythonic, this may be illustrated by citing complexes such as Welsh cath, du -- y gath (2 → 3) ddu (3 → 4); Breton pluenn - ar bluenn (2 → 3); but beaj - ar veaj (3 → 4). The final stage may be illustrated by the lenition of g to zero in Welsh, cf. cath gwen - y gath wen (3 > 4 → 5).

The history of Spanish provides some similar examples, where (2) has evolved to (3) (with further development to (4), e.g., Spanish amado < Latin amatum, accompanied by (3) (> (4)) > (5), e.g., paraíso < paradisum).

A similar example is provided by consonant gradation in Finnish, which may also be seen in the light of the strength hierarchy, e.g., katto ‘roof’ gen sg katon (1 → 2) pata ‘pot’ gen sg pata (2 → 3) tapa ‘custom’ gen sg tavon (3 → 4) joki ‘river’ gen sg joen (3 → 4 → 5)

In addition to the above account, however, it is commonly believed that Celtic is unique in: 1) extending the application of the sound change beyond the word to the phrase, and 2) grammaticalising it to reflect, e.g., the masculine/feminine in Early Old Irish (Common Celtic) feminine forms such as siuI would have originally ended in a consonant (< *s lis, parallel to *donjos > Welsh dyn, also Irish duine), but they cause lenition nevertheless: gorm ‘blue’; siuI gorm ‘blue eye’). The development may be illustrated thus:

Irish

ART + NOUN + ADJ an fear beag

Welsh

ART + NOUN + ADJ y dyn tew

lenition, is to occur. The position of voiced fricatives is problematic from this point of view.
Common Celtic
* sindos wiros bekkos
‘the little man’

* sindos donios tegus
‘the fat man’

cearc, beag — an chearc beag
cath, tew — y gath dew

Common Celtic

*sinda kerka bekka
‘the little hen’

*sindá cattá egus
‘the fat cat’

In both cases the original final vowels or *-s can be reconstructed based on the presence or absence of lenition.

Several non-standard varieties of Romance show almost exact parallels to Celtic lenition, even to the point of extending the process to the phrase and grammaticalising it, e.g.,

* illa dama Spanish dama/la dama
Canarian Spanish [la ˈgoda] < la goda [la goda] < las gotas

* illa porta Tuscan (Italian) porta/la forta

Oftedal (1985: 32-38 35) gives examples of parallels to Celtic lenition. Specifically, he gives examples of an oft-discussed phenomenon in the Tuscan dialect of Italian, reminiscent of Goidelic which provides a good example (1985: 35):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pena} & \quad la \text{ pena} \quad \text{(phonetic [ləˈpəna])} \\
\text{torre} & \quad la \text{ torre} \quad \text{(phonetic [ləˈtɔrre])} \\
\text{casa} & \quad la \text{ casa} \quad \text{(phonetic [ləˈxaˈsa])}^{24}
\end{align*}
\]

24 For a much more detailed treatment see Izzo (1972). Oddly enough, Izzo hardly mentions Celtic at all in his otherwise comprehensive work.

Moving outside Indo-European, Oftedal 1985: 32-33 cites a similar system of mutations in Fula, e.g.,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ranw-} & \quad \text{danw-} \\
\text{yar-} & \quad \text{njar-} \\
\text{war-} & \quad \text{mbar-} \\
\text{hirsanaama-min} \quad (b’e-)kirsanti-min & \quad \text{‘white’} \\
\text{‘drink’} & \quad \text{‘kill’} \\
\text{‘slaughter’}
\end{align*}
\]

These mutations are often cited in popular literature as making Celtic languages almost impossible to learn (e.g., Gardner loc.cit., although many more examples could be cited). Even within Celtic, some orthographic conventions are cited as superior to others, cf. MacLaren’s (1935: 5) comparison of the renditions of lenition in Scottish Gaelic and Welsh:

By retaining the consonant unvaried and by indicating the change to its second sound by the application of the h, Scots Gaelic has preserved its orthography. Compare the effect of the mutation of the consonant in Welsh by departing from this system. In Welsh the radical initial is changed so considerably and so often that it is hardly recognised as the same word.

**Scots Gaelic**
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ceann} & \quad \text{pen} \\
\text{do cheann} & \quad \text{dy ben} \\
\text{mo cheann} & \quad \text{fy mhen} \\
\text{a ceann} & \quad \text{ei phen} \\
\text{caraid} & \quad \text{cyfaill} \\
\text{do charaid} & \quad \text{dy gyfaill} \\
\text{mo charaid} & \quad \text{fy nghyfaill} \\
\text{a caraid} & \quad \text{ei chyfaill}
\end{align*}
\]

**Welsh**
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pen} & \quad a \text{ head} \\
\text{dy ben} & \quad \text{thy head} \\
\text{fy mhen} & \quad \text{my head} \\
\text{ei phen} & \quad \text{her head} \\
\text{cyfaill} & \quad \text{a friend} \\
\text{dy gyfaill} & \quad \text{thy friend} \\
\text{fy nghyfaill} & \quad \text{my friend} \\
\text{ei chyfaill} & \quad \text{her friend}
\end{align*}
\]

It will be noticed that one mutation in Scottish Gaelic is being compared to three in Welsh. An analogous comparison of Irish with Welsh serves our purposes even better:
DEMETHYLOGISING SYSTEMS

Irish
cath
a chat
a gcath

Welsh
cath
ei gath
fy nghath

English
cat
his cat
their cat
my cat

3) Palatalisation - caol/leathan - hard/soft

This is a very prominent feature in the phonology of Goidelic. However, exotic might be to SAE eyes, this feature finds several fairly close typological parallels with the respective hard/soft contrasts in Slavic, several of which are close to universal. It is carried through to its greatest extent in dialects of Irish, where nearly all consonantal segments may be distinguished by the presence or absence of the feature [+PALATALISED], e.g., Irish bán - bdin [ba:n - ba:n], where the palatalisation of the final n is indicated by orthographically by the i. In the native terminology the [+PALATALISED] consonants are referred to as caol, and the [-PALATALISED] consonants as leathan. In English the term leathan is usually translated as "broad" and caol, "narrow", is translated in this sense as "slender" or "small" when treating Irish or Scottish Gaelic linguistics. In Slavic linguistic terminology the parallel to the caol/leathan distinction is universally referred to as "hard/soft".\(^{25}\) The discussion below will extend this terminology to the discussion of Celtic.

Parallels between the hard/soft contrasts in Russian and in Gaelic have often been cited on a superficial level, especially in pronunciation sections in grammars or in throwaway comments, both oral and written, e.g., Greene (1972: 19, 22-23, 58); Ternes (1978: 198-199, 200). Nevertheless, they repay closer study, cf. Huntley (1983), where material from Irish and Scottish Gaelic provides a typological control for a problem in Slavic phonology.

Robert Orr

Some selected close parallels between Goidelic and Slavic within the overall topic of the hard/soft contrast include the following patterns:

a) Gradation - the degree of pervasiveness of the hard/soft contrast

Within Slavic, Russian has the largest number of hard-soft contrasts (17; Hamilton 1980: 86), parallel to Irish within Celtic, with 21 contrasts (Mac Eoin 1993: 111). In Polish there are fewer such contrasts, parallel to Scottish Gaelic. One might even extend the parallel to cover the whole of Slavic and the whole of Celtic: Ternes (1978: 198-201) provides a succinct description, ranging from Welsh (least) to Irish (most), as follows:

Welsh - Breton - Manx - Scottish Gaelic - Irish
(slightly simplified from Ternes 1978: 201).

Taking Russian as roughly parallel to Irish and Polish as roughly parallel to Scottish Gaelic, a similar table could be drawn for Slavic thus (adapted from Dalewska-Greb 1997: 64-69):

Slovenian - Czech - Macedonian/Slovak/Serbo-Croatian - Polish - Ukrainian - Sorbian - Belarusian - Bulgarian\(^{26}\) - Russian.\(^{27}\)

b) The status of soft labials.

Soft labials, especially in word-final position, are very vulnerable to loss or decomposition. Over much of Slavic formerly soft labials have been lost, or become phonetically

\(^{25}\) There is even a parallel error that has crept into the terminology - the impression that the terminological contrasts caol/leathan and hard/soft refer to the vowels, when in fact they denote the consonants, is often found in pedagogical literature, both in Russian and Irish.

\(^{26}\) Following Dalewska-Greb (1997: 66-68), the North-Eastern dialects of Bulgarian are cited here; the standard language has far fewer such correlations.

\(^{27}\) Townsend and Janda (1996: 107-108) note that within Slavic there are two contrasts: palatalisation and pitch: the Slavic hard/soft contrast, most fully-developed in Russian, is in complementary distribution to the tonal contrasts, most fully-developed in Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian. This phenomenon finds no parallel in Celtic.
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decomposed into labial + j clusters. This is especially true of final labials, e.g., Polish golab gen sg gotebia ‘pigeon’, cf. Russian ronja gen sg ronyja ‘golupa’ id. The only area in Slavic to preserve final soft labials is the Russian dialect continuum north of Moscow and also the contemporary Russian standard language.

Something very similar has happened in Goidelic. Generally, Scottish Gaelic shows the tendency to decompose former soft labials into labial + j clusters, and to lose them in final position, (cf. meall [myəl]; im [ɪm]) (see Ternes 1973: 32-52, and the extensive literature cited therein, Gillies 1993: 154-156)) whereas Irish dialects generally preserve soft labials, even in final position (cf. mil [mil], im [ɪm]) (Ternes 1973: 32, 52, MacEoin 1993: 106-111))

(c) The tendency to affrication of soft dental stops

A very close parallel to Goidelic is offered by a joint citation of Russian and Polish. The development of palatalisation of /l/, /d/ in Polish is similar to that in SG; in both languages palatalised /l/ and /d/ become affricated (approximately [ʃ], [ʒ]), in contrast to Russian and Irish, e.g.,


Morphology

As in phonology, there are several phenomena in Celtic morphology which appear to the L1 SAE learner as odd, in addition to the grammaticalisation of the mutations cited above.

(1) Welsh Plurals

As is well known, Welsh has a complicated variety of plural formations, which deserve to be much more widely known to linguists, but which are seldom actually cited. In this context two recent acclaimed works dealing with various topics in general

Robert Orr linguisticas, Pinker (1999) and Corbett (2000), omit mention of the Welsh data in two areas where it would strengthen their argumentation considerably.

As an illustration of the human capacity “for the storage of irregular forms in an associative memory”, Pinker (1999: 221-227) enumerates eight varieties of plural formation in German: θ, θ + umlaut, -e, -e + umlaut, -en, -er, -er + umlaut. Of these, German uses -s as a “default plural”, as established by numerous experiments, loanwords, etc. He also cites further supporting examples from Arabic, Hebrew, Hungarian, and Chinese (1999: 233-239).

Pinker’s arguments might have been even stronger, and his illustrations of the human capacity for the storage of irregular forms even starker, had he selected examples from Welsh instead of, or as well as, German. Welsh plural formations may be reduced to: -au, -iau, -ion, -ydd, -i, -od, -oedd, -aid, -ed, umlaut, -au + umlaut, -i + umlaut, -iau + umlaut, -on + umlaut, -ion + umlaut, -ydd + umlaut, dropping of suffix, dropping of suffix + umlaut, replacement of suffix by -au, plus some irregular forms. Welsh also uses the English -ys plural with some English loanwords, e.g., tacsi(-s) ‘taxi’, bws ‘bus’ bysyy (although the more formal bystau also exists). Sometimes the -ys is used in very colloquial contexts, or even for humour. Parry-Williams (1923: 43, 55, 82, 85, 86-89, 95-105, 125, 130, 140, 143, 146, 176-179, 185-186, 192, 213, 222, 226) cites several examples indicating that this is a long-standing phenomenon. 18

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18 It should be noted here that the rules for umlaut in Welsh are more complicated than those in German; in fact, the very subsuming of the different processes involved under the term “umlaut” is an oversimplification.

29 Parry-Williams (1923) mainly deals with phonology of loanwords, and although he cites a great deal of material on the borrowing of *-s, it has to be gleaned by combining sporadic references.

Of special interest are the bewildering variety of forms he cites (1923: 102-104) such as cwysae ‘cuts, lots’ (ys + native plural); galosis ‘gallows’ (reduplicated (ys)); cf. also ffyffen ‘fig’, pl ffyfys. Saeson
Similarly, Corbett (2000: 150-151) illustrates plural formation by subtractive morphology mainly from Hessian, which is not a very good example, as the alleged subtractive morphology in question actually appears to be phonological in origin, rather than morphological. Apart from an enigmatic footnote (2000: 117)), Corbett does not mention the situation in Welsh, which includes apparently genuine subtractive morphology in pluralisation: dropping of suffix, e.g., coeden (sg) ‘tree’ coed (pl), dropping of suffix + umlaut, e.g., aderyn ‘bird’ adar (pl). This subtractive morphology has even shown some degree of productivity, e.g., ffygysen ‘fig’ (singulative form on the analogy of patterns such as coeden/coed), ffigys (<English figs).

2) Prepositional Pronouns (especially Slavic and Hungarian)

Another item that strikes the learner of any Celtic language quite early on in his studies as unusual is the prepositional pronouns, tables and tables of which have to be learned, e.g.,

**Irish**

\[ ag + me \rightarrow agam \text{ "at me"} \]
\[ ag + ti \rightarrow agat \text{ "at you (sg.)"} \]
\[ ag + se \rightarrow aige \text{ "at him"} \]
\[ ag + si \rightarrow aict \text{ "at her"} \]

\[ ag + sim \rightarrow againn \text{ "at us"} \]
\[ ag + sibh \rightarrow agabh \text{ "at you (pl.)"} \]
\[ ag + said \rightarrow acu \text{ "at them"} \]

\[ 'Englishmen' \ (sg Sais) \ can \ in \ some \ areas \ assume \ the \ form \ Saesons \]
\[ (native \ plural + (s)) \]

**Slovenian**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st sg</th>
<th>name 'on me'</th>
<th>onekem 'to me'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg</td>
<td>nate 'on you (sg)'</td>
<td>nekde 'to you (sg)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg</td>
<td>nanje 'on him'</td>
<td>nek 'to him/her/it'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)act</td>
<td>nanje 'on her'</td>
<td>nase 'on self (reflexive)'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hungarian**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st pl</th>
<th>againn</th>
<th>nektonk 'to us'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl</td>
<td>agaibh</td>
<td>nek 'to you (pl)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl</td>
<td>acu 'on them'</td>
<td>nekik 'to them'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd dual</td>
<td>nanje 'on them'</td>
<td>nanje 'on them (dual)'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, no other Indo-European language has applied this principle as extensively as Celtic, or to as many prepositions; this is perhaps another example of Celtic applying a fairly common principle more thoroughly than anywhere else. For further discussion, see Lencek (1982: 224 for Slovenian), Guild (1990-1991 for Hungarian).

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30 Apart from Hungarian, outside Indo-European such constructions can also be found in Semitic and Carrier (Athabaskan). The fact that all the language families share (independently developed!) prepositional pronouns may also have contributed to the erroneous idea that Carrier is related to Gaelic (see above; maybe Hebrew and Hungarian as well).

31 Hungarian has no gender, forms such as neki are used for all 3rd sgs.
Syntax

1) V(verb)S(subject)O(object)

One of the first features about Irish, Scottish Gaelic, or Welsh to strike the L1 SAE learner or linguist is the basic VSO word order. Celtic examples are often cited as canonical VSO in the literature, e.g., Comrie (1981: 6, 81, 86). Several authors, probably starting with Greenberg (1961), have pointed out that VSO word order implies several other things about the structure of a given language: so-called VSO languages are generally also characterised by other orderings, such as Noun + Adj, Possessed + Possessor, Prepositions as opposed to Postpositions.

Again VSO languages are actually quite widespread. Comrie (1981: 81) points out that VSO is the third most common unmarked word order, after SVO and SOV. About as far away from Celtic as it is possible to get geographically are the Polynesian languages, which may also be cited as canonical VSO from the point of view of element order. This may be illustrated by comparing examples from Irish and Hawaiian:

Irish: tugann an fear an bronnantas do Seán
Hawaiian: h 'awi ke kanaka ka makana iā Pua
Gives the man the present to Seán/Pua

Parallel VSO constructions might also be cited from Semitic, Early Ancient Egyptian, and some Nilo-Saharan languages. The Semitic parallels had been noted very early on, and may partly explain the staying power of the theory of a special link between Celtic and Semitic. In this context, however, basing himself on a wide sample of languages, Dryer (1998:315) points out that the canonical VSO pattern as discussed above is in fact much less strict than it had been previously. He points out (1998: 289) that within Europe Celtic is at the top end of a continuum with regard to the order Noun+Modifier, being the group with the heaviest predominance of such an order, as opposed to Finnic, with the least such predominance.32

2) Construct

One pan-Celtic construction that may seem exotic to L1 SAE is the possessive phrase, where only one noun may be marked as overtly definite, e.g.,

Irish leabhar an fhír Welsh llyfr y dyn (the) book the man ‘the man’s book’
Irish leabhar mo níhc Welsh llyfr fy mab (the) book my son ‘my son’s book’

Although without parallels in SAE languages, the Celtic construction does find an exact parallel in the Semitic construct phrase, e.g.,

Arabic kitāb ʾal-rajuli (the) book the man ‘the man’s book’, where the presence of one definite article renders the whole phrase definite, as in the Celtic constructions.

3) Lack of a verb “have”

Another syntactic phenomenon that especially strikes learners of Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, or Manx as unusual at an early stage of their studies is the absence of a verb “have”. The concept of “having” in Goidelic and in Welsh is expressed by a preposition: ag/aig/ec ‘at’ in Goidelic and gan or gyda ‘with’ in Welsh, e.g.,

Irish: tá leabhar agam Welsh: mae llyfr gen ilgyda fi
is book at-me is book with-me

The issue of a verb “to have” over the whole of Celtic, synchronically and diachronically, is quite complicated. Old Irish had a construction using the verb be plus a bound pronominal form with dative force, e.g., ind indocbáil no-b-tá the glory PREF-you(dat.-)is ‘The glory ye have’.

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32 Mainly associated with Lehmann, there is also a tendency to classify languages according to the VO/OV, and treat VSO as a subgroup of OV.
There was also a similar dative + be construction in Brythonic, which seems to have undergone different developments in Welsh on the one hand and Cornish and Breton on the other. Examples are attested from Middle Welsh, see, e.g., Orr (1992: 251-253; 258-259) and the references cited therein. The original dative + be construction survived in Cornish and Breton. See also Lewis and Pedersen (1961: 213-214), also Lewis (1946: 62-63) and Evans (1977: 37) for a similar Middle Welsh example. Georgian also has a verb have similar to the Cornish and Breton constructions, e.g., m-akv-s ‘I have’, where m- in this context is a bound pronominal form with dative force. The form m-akv-s can also be used to form compound tenses. In Breton it is still the unmarked way of expressing have, e.g., ur velo c’hlas am eus a bike blue to-me is ‘I have a blue bike’.34

These constructions are broadly similar: the possessor is marked by an oblique case or a preposition, and the object of possession is in the nominative. Outside Celtic, such constructions, e.g.,

- Russian у меня книга, at me book
- Hungarian nekem könyv van
to-me book is ‘I have a book’
- Also Hungarian könyvem van
book-my is ‘I have a book’

33 An extremely interesting development can be traced in the history of Cornish, cf. Lewis and Pedersen (1961: 210-211): “The combination dat.pron. + verb ‘to be’ came to be felt as a transitive form ‘I have’ etc., and was preceded by the corresponding indep. pron. Thus beside gallas a-m bues ‘power to-me is’ ‘I have power’, are found forms like why a-s byth ancow ‘you to-you will-be death’ ‘you will have death, will die’ (for the more correct ancow a-s byth ‘death to you will be’).” This construction also provides a further parallel with Hebrew.

34 Cornish and Breton also made use of the prepositional construction with gan to express possession, although in Breton the meaning is rather “on one’s person”.

are the norm rather than the exception on a world scale. Actually, it is the presence of a transitive verb “have” that is quite rare cross-linguistically: the fact that SAE has a verb “have” has distorted perceptions, see, e.g., Isa enko (1974: 77), Trask (1979: 398-399). This is probably an instance where Celtic is actually less exotic than its immediate SAE neighbours from the point of view of language universals.

Conclusion

It may be seen from the above material that Celtic, while apparently exotic from the SAE point of view, can easily be made to fit into patterns well established in other parts of the world. In Celtic studies awareness of the linguistic material often makes it possible to see various issues in proper focus, such as the modern applications of the term “Celtic”, the “druids”, or the alleged relationships between the Celts and other peoples such as those of the Ancient Middle East or pre-Columbian America. This awareness is often instrumental in the proper debunking of some of the wilder claims. It might be reasserted, therefore, as noted by scholars such as Pedersen, that the linguistic structures and interrelationships of the Celtic languages deserve to be much better known as a possible antidote to the continuing misuse of the term “Celtic”.

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The Celtic Languages in North America:
Notes from the Field

In this and following issues of JCLL, the published articles will include accounts of the current state of teaching and learning of each of the modern Celtic languages the U.S and Canada. We have begun with Welsh and Scottish Gaelic. Volume 8 will include articles on Irish and Breton. These field reports have been funded by a mini-grant to NAACLIT from the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages in Washington, D.C. We are grateful to NCOLCTL for their assistance as well as to the authors who have provided the reports.

SCOTS GAELIC IN NORTH AMERICA: REPORT FROM THE FIELD.

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The basis for this report comprises my own first-hand experience, both in Canada and the U.S., together with information gleaned from teachers of Scottish Gaelic in regions, provinces and states throughout North America who responded to letters and phone calls of enquiry. Not all responded; and so, perforce, the account is more general than specific in some areas. On the whole, however, a picture emerges of considerable activity in certain parts of both countries, and of at least some activity in many states and provinces. Some of the teaching takes place in academic institutions, a great deal of it not; some of the teachers are native speakers, many are learners at varying stages of fluency. Among the latter, there is a high order of dedication, and a good percentage of them have attended Gaelic immersion sessions at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's, Cape Breton; summer sessions at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College in the Isle of Skye; the weeklong language and music sessions named Cèilidh, in South Uist; and/or weekend immersions in the US, offered chiefly under the auspices of Comann Gaidhealach Ainearraigaidh, and in Canada. This report reveals strong response amongst North American learners to the resurgence of Gaelic, with a networking process between them and institutions and initiatives in Scotland and Nova Scotia.