Early La Tène burials
c. 480–400 BC

Bohemia

Mosel-Rhine

Marne

*Hallstatt
C élites*
c. 720–600 BC

Hallstatt D élites
c. 600–480 BC

c. 400 BC

Brennos I

Rome c. 390 BC

56N

52N

48N

44N

40N

36N

8W

4W

0

4E

8E

12E

Celticization by Iron Age Invasions
The Central-European Model

600 km

limit of Ancient Celtic name evidence

Wroclaw

c. 360 BC

Moravia

Eastern Middle La Tène burials

La Tène finds
in the Pontic Steppes

Transdanubia

c. 320 BC

Tisza

Transylvania

Olbia c. 200 BC

Brennos II 290-278 BC

278/7 BC

Tylis

278/7 BC

Delphi 278 BC

16E   20E   24E   28E   32E
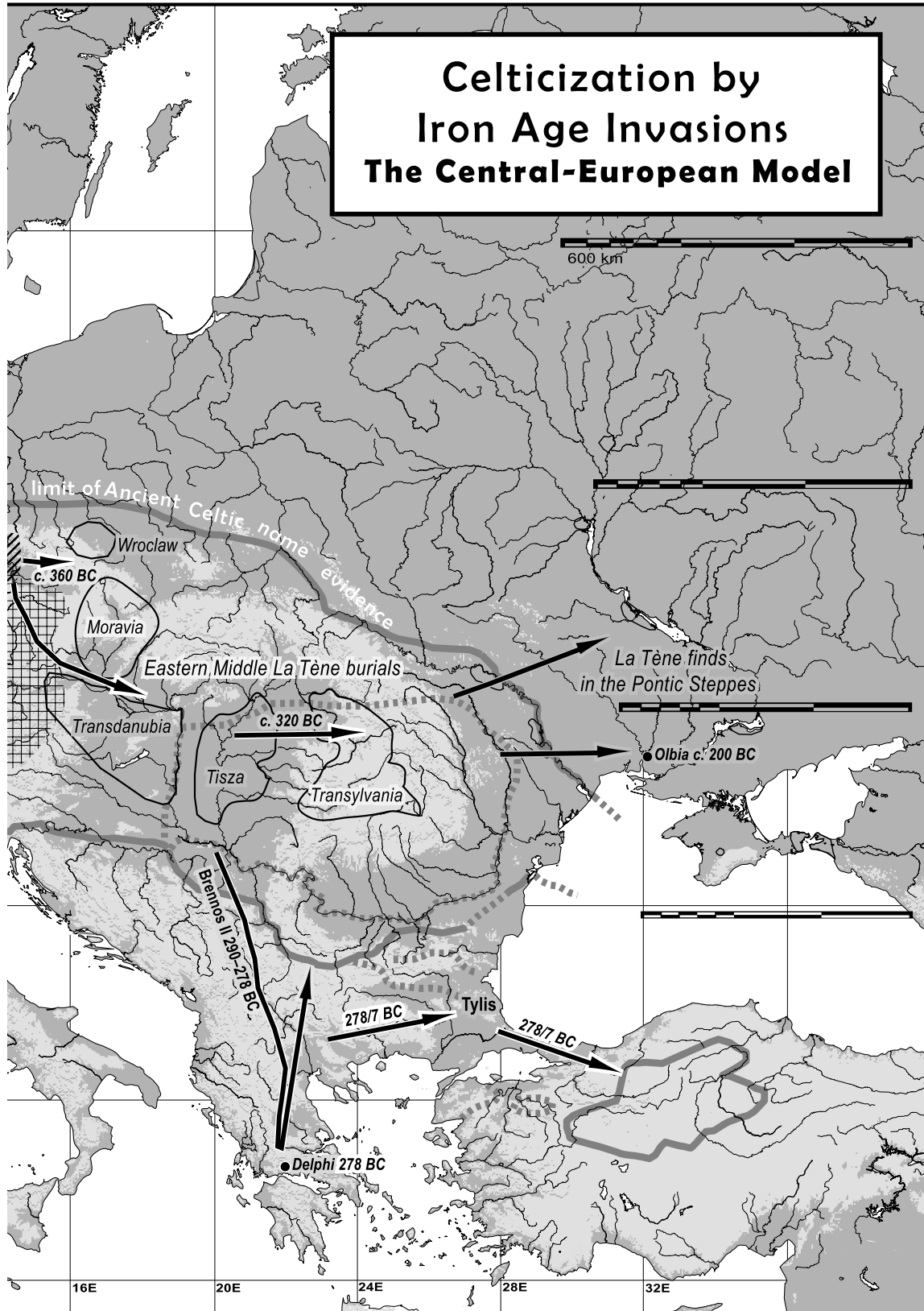
Appendices

The following text is based on Celtic Studies Lectures given in spring 2008 under the terms of the bequest of Charles James O'Donnell: 'Was the Atlantic Zone the Celtic Homeland? Early Linguistic Evidence' (University of Edinburgh 24 April), 'People called Keltoi, the La Tène Style, and Ancient Celtic Languages: the Threefold Celts in the Light of Geography' (Swansea University 29 April, Bangor University 6 May, Aberystwyth University 13 May).

THE modern concept of the Celts equates three categories of evidence:

- (first) people called *Keltoí* by the Greeks,
- (second) the ancient Celtic languages, and
- (third) the Hallstatt and La Tène archaeological cultures.

To locate the origins of the Celts in time and space, the last category has been given priority, which gives priority to central Europe, specifically the lands about the Alps and the Watershed Zone where the great rivers come together—the Danube, Rhine, and Marne and Seine, Loire, Rhône and Saône, and the Po. The key period is the Early Iron Age, about 750–400 BC.

The traditional Celtic studies narrative has therefore tended to view Britain as peripheral, a zone of secondary expansion. Like Ireland, Armorica, and the Iberian Peninsula, or Galatia in the east—Iron Age Celtic Britain is often represented as one spoke of several emanating from the central European hub.

Although this model is not often spelled out in words in this way, it is an accurate description of many maps drawn to show Celtic expansion, in which radiating black arrows still seem to imply invasions or mass migrations, even though the 'Invasion Hypothesis' has been obsolete for forty years in British archaeology. The Iron Age central-European model of Celticization is such an ingrained habit of thought—underpinning innumerable orthodox subtheories—that neither maps nor

explicit words are necessary and alternative explanations tend to be overruled quickly on the basis of any number of things that we think we already know.

The main point that I want to make in this lecture is that for two of the three components of the synthetic Celts—namely, as people called Keltoí and as speakers of Ancient Celtic languages—there is earlier and better evidence in the Atlantic west than in the central European Watershed Zone. Therefore, we should no longer associate those three traditional indicators of Celticity so closely as to assume that the Celtic languages must have originated in the same time and place as the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures. In fact, a shift of focus from Iron Age central Europe to the Atlantic Bronze Age is indicated as the more meaningful starting place for a new narrative Story of the Celts. Such a new account of Celtic origins will have more to do with the exchange of ores, ingots, and prestige metalwork and less with expansionist warbands—though both factors were present in both periods.

The proposed paradigm shift would affect how we understand early Britain in a number of ways. Not only would Britain have become Celtic, in the sense of Celtic-speaking, at an earlier date than usually allowed, but probably by different mecha-nisms and possibly from a different direction. West Britain, as well as remaining Celtic speaking longer, possibly became Celtic speaking earlier.

After uncoupling Hallstatt and La Tène from the Celtic proto-language, there is no longer any a priori reason to rule out the possibility that Britain was an integral part of the region in which Celtic first evolved from Indo-European. In other words, the question 'when did the Celts come to Britain' may have built into it an assumption that is no longer valid.
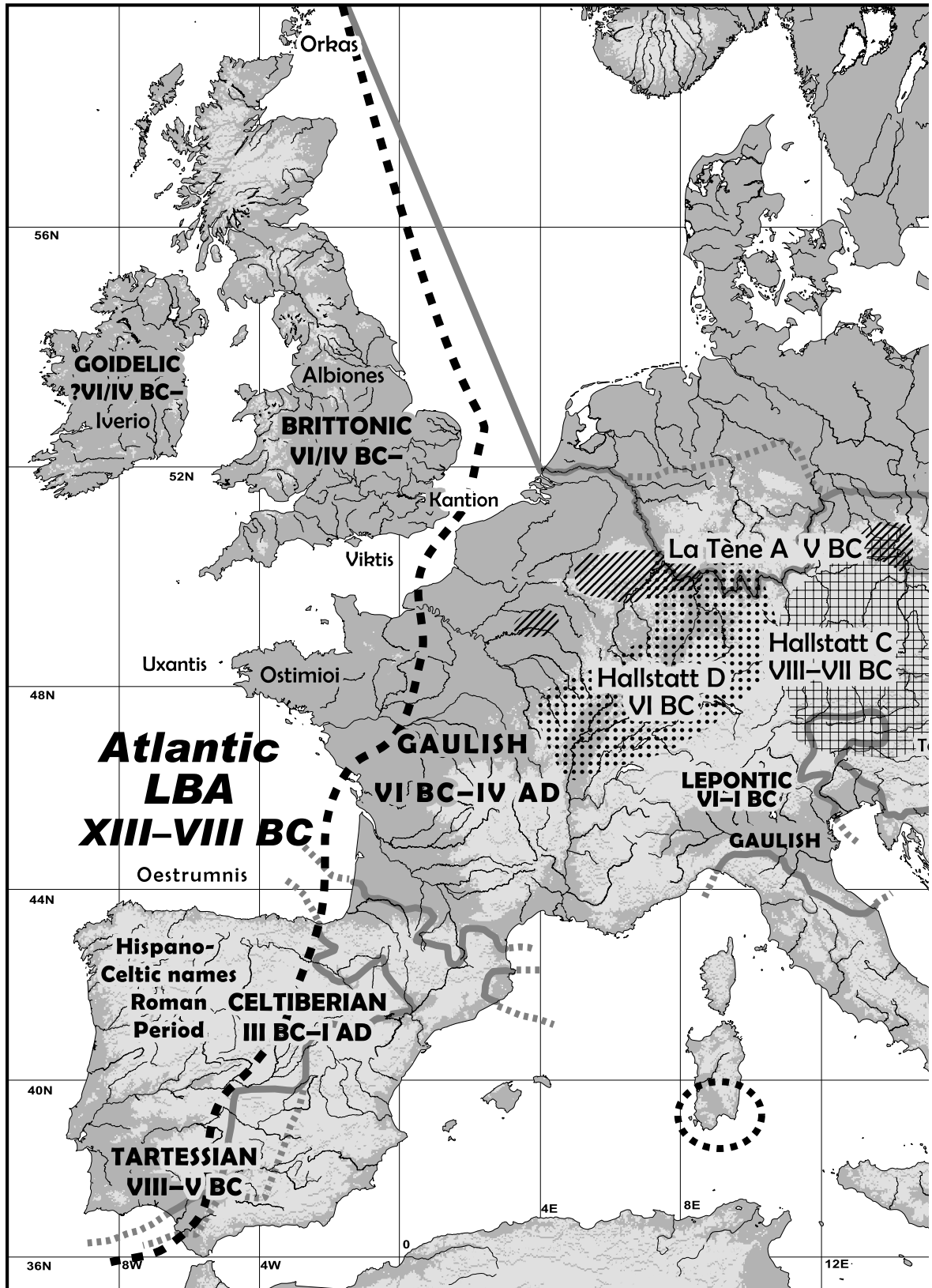
You've now heard my conclusions. Let's proceed to the evidence, starting with Herodotus's famous statements about the Keltoí. Writing around 430 BC, he stated that they inhabited the lands near the source of the river Ister, that is, the Danube.

§2.34. I am willing to believe that [the Nile] rises at the same distance from its mouth as the [Danube], which has its source amongst the Keltoí at Pyrēnē and flows right through the middle of Europe, to reach the Black Sea at Miletos's colony of Istri. The Keltoí live beyond the Pillars of Hercules, next to the Kunēsioi who are the most westerly people of Europe.
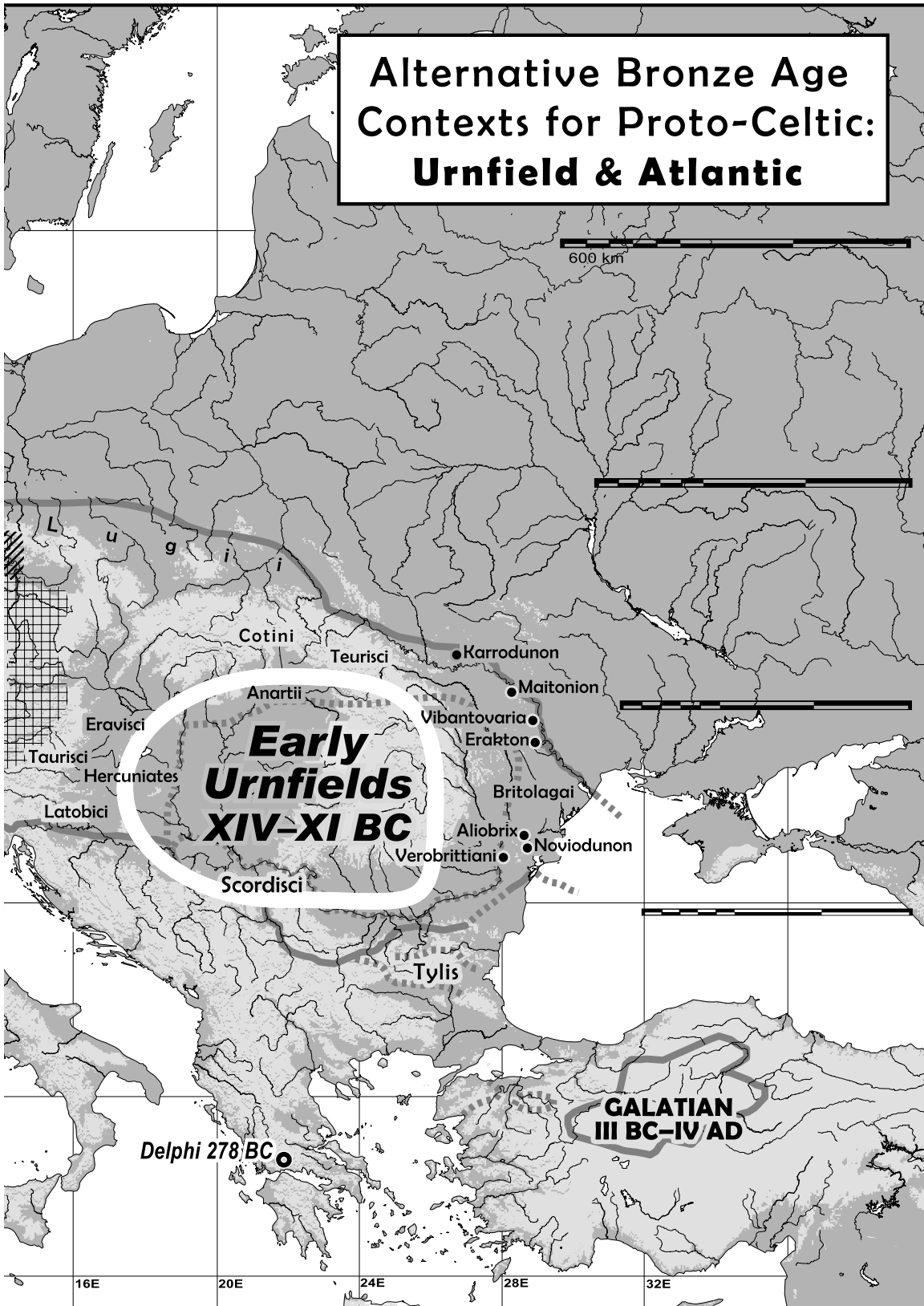
§4.48. . . . the [Danube], that mighty stream which, rising amongst the Keltoí, the most westerly, after the Kunētes, of all the European nations, traverses the whole length of the continent before it enters Scythia.

[adapted from translations of de Sélincourt]

References to Keltoí on the upper Danube coincide well with the established

Orkas

56N

GOIDELIC
?VI/IV BC–
Iverio

Albiones

BRITTONIC
VI/IV BC–

52N

Kantion

Viktis

La Tène A V BC

Uxantis

Ostimioi

48N

Hallstatt C
VIII–VII BC

Hallstatt D
VI BC

*Atlantic
LBA
XIII–VIII BC*

GAULISH

VI BC–IV AD

LEPONTIC
VI–I BC

Oestrumnis

GAULISH

44N

Hispano-
Celtic names
Roman
Period

CELTIBERIAN
III BC–I AD

40N

TARTESSIAN
VIII–V BC

4E

8E

36N   8W   4W   0   12E

Alternative Bronze Age Contexts for Proto-Celtic: **Urnfield & Atlantic**

600 km

L u g i i

Cotini

Teurisci

Anartii

●Karrodunon

●Maitonion

Eravisci

Vibantovaria●

Erakton●

Taurisci

Hercuniates

Latobici

Britolagai

Aliobrix●

Early Urnfields XIV–XI BC

●Noviodunon

Verobrittiani●

Scordisci

Tylis

GALATIAN III BC–IV AD

Delphi 278 BC ○

16E　　20E　　24E　　28E　　32E

theory of central-European origins, bringing us close to Hallstatt itself and such important Hallstatt and Early La Tène sites as the Heuneberg hillfort and Dürrnberg-bei-Hallein. And many modern writers have drawn attention to this apparent confirmation. Unfortunately, the passages themselves alert us to the likelihood that Herodotus was profoundly ignorant about the upper Danube. He wrote that the river was as long as the Nile, flowed across the whole of Europe, and that its source lay beyond the Straits of Gibraltar and near Pyrene, a name apparently connected with the Pyrenees. One possible explanation is that he knew of people called Keltoí on both the upper Danube and in the Iberian Peninsula, but being unaware of the course of the river, he assumed these were the same group and that the Danube therefore began in Spain. Given this level of geographical confusion, fine tuning and second guessing today cannot rehabilitate these passages as solid evidence for Keltoí in the centre of Europe in the 5th century BC.

In these same passages, Herodotus gives much clearer information about the other Keltoí in the extreme south-west, where they lived next to the Kunēsioi or Kunētes, the westernmost people in Europe. From later sources we know that the Kunētes inhabited the Algarve and that their eastern limit was at or near the river Anas, now the Guadiana, which forms the southern border between Portugal and Spain. According to Trogus Pompeius (44.4), the Cunetes inhabited the forests of the Tartessians. Thus, we can place this group of Herodotus's Keltoí exactly where later classical sources located the Celtici, in south-west Spain. Before 350 BC Ephoros likewise wrote that *Keltikē* extended as far south-west as Gades near Gibraltar. According to Strabo (3.3.5), other tribes also called *Celtici* (Greek *Keltikoi*) inhabited north-west Spain and shared a common origin with the Keltikoi on the Anas in the south-west [cf. p. 101 above].

In tending to ignore the Keltoí who were certainly in the far south-west in favour of those doubtfully at the source of the Danube, there has also been a general tendency to overlook the fact that *Kunētes* looks like a Celtic name. We may compare it to the place-name *Cunētio* in Roman Britain, or Old Welsh *Cinuit*, the name of the founder of the leading dynasty of Dark Age Strathclyde. This same *Cynwyd* is also a place-name in north Wales. [Cf. pp. 98–9 above.]

Unlike the upper Danube, Herodotus was apparently well informed about the kingdom of Tartessos in what is now south-west Spain and southern Portugal. This is not surprising, since Greek imports were common in the rich orientalizing archaeological culture of Early Iron Age Tartessos, about 775–550 BC. These finds include ceramics and other manufactured luxuries from Cyprus, Phokaia, Rhodes, Samos, and Attika, alongside Phoenician imports from Tyre and Tyre's colonies in north Africa and southern Spain. A key factor was Tyre's colony at Cádiz (Phoenician *Gadir*) near the Straits of Gibraltar and on the southern edge of Tartessos.

As well as information on a species of Tartessian weasel (4.192), Herodotus

provides accounts of two remarkable Greek voyages to Tartessos. The first was led by a ship's captain named Kolaios, who sailed from Samos between 650 and 638 BC. Kolaios returned from metal-rich Tartessos with silver worth 60 talents, a tenth part of which was spent to commission an enormous bronze ritual vessel (4.152).

The second expedition came from Phokaia, when this Greek state was under threat from the Medes of western Iran during the 550s BC.

§1.163 [The] Phokaians were the earliest of the Greeks to make long sea voyages: it was they who discovered the Adriatic Sea, and Tyrrhenia, and Iberia, and Tartessos ... When they came to Tartessos they made friends with the king of the Tartessians, whose name was Arganthonios [Ἀργανθώνιος]

[trans. Godley].

Arganthonios is a transparently Celtic name or title, meaning something like 'agent of divine silver' (**Arianhonydd* if the name existed in Welsh today). *Arganthonios* is, in fact, the only clearly Celtic personal appellation in all of Herodotus's Histories. The basis of the fabled wealth of Tartessos was metals, silver most especially, but also gold and copper, and tin transhipped from Galicia, Brittany, and Cornwall. It was need of great quantities of silver, demanded as tribute by the Assyrians, that had impelled sailors from Tyre in what is now Lebanon to Tartessos.

According to the Roman historian Velleius Paterculus, the Tyrians founded Gadir 80 years after the Trojan war, or about 1100 BC [see p. 16]. Phoenician metalwork occurs together with Atlantic Late Bronze Age types in the Huelva deposition of about 950 BC. But the Phoenician colony of Gadir is not archaeologically detectable until about 770 BC, early in the Tartessian Orientalizing Phase of the Iberian First Iron Age. In 573 BC, Babylon conquered Tyre, and there was afterwards a downturn of eastern luxuries reaching the Tartessian aristocracy, which explains Arganthonios's eagerness, about 20 years later, for the Phokaians to found a colony 'anywhere they liked' in Tartessos.

As well as the etymology, a further indication that *Arganthonios* 'Agent of Divine Silver' might be a title or office rather than a mere name is Herodotus's improbable statement that Arganthonios ruled Tartessos for 80 years. Since the Phokaians' visit came near the end of this long reign, one possible explanation is that the Tartessian potentate who had enriched Kolaios 80 years before was also called 'Agent of Divine Silver' and Herodotus assumed that this was the same *Arganthonios*. Note that ARGANTODANNOS, meaning 'silver minister', was a Gaulish title and recurs on pre-Roman silver coinage.

For the present subject, the most significant import from the east was alphabetic writing. The first written language in western Europe occurs on roughly 75

inscribed stones concentrated in south Portugal and a further 15 from south-west Spain. This script and language are sometimes called simply 'south-western', referring to their location in the Peninsula, though that name also suits their situation in Europe overall. Alternatively, they are lately often called 'Tartessian', which is the correct historical and archaeological identification if we understand Tartessos to refer to a sizeable region rather than narrowly to that civilization's chief proto-urban concentration at Huelva. There are closely datable contexts for a few of the Tartessian inscriptions. However, many are associated with necropolises of the Iberian First Iron Age, about 800–550 BC. Some scholars see an admixture of Greek orthographic principles behind the Tartessian script, but the most obvious primary source was the Phoenician alphabet, and in some letter forms, specifically a version of the Phoenician alphabet in use about 825 BC. It is also relevant to the questions of origins and dating that the Tartessian inscribed stones continue a Late Bronze Age tradition of pre-literate funerary stelae depicting weapons, armed warriors, and sometimes wheeled vehicles, dancing figures, and lyre-like musical instruments.

Since the 1990s, the sounds represented by most of the letters of the Tartessian alphabet have been known. We don't have enough time to go into all the particulars of the writing system, but one key detail is that the voiceless and voiced stop consonants—*t* and *d*, *k* and *g*—are not distinguished. A second peculiarity is that the stop consonants have different forms depending on what vowel follows—thus *t*ᵃ, *t*ᵉ, *t*ⁱ, *t*ᵒ, *t*ᵘ—even though the redundant vowel is written afterwards: ΑΧ ΟⱵ ᴎⵙ ⵟΔ ⴸΔ [the consonant-vowel pairs are printed here in their more common right-to-left arrangement]. In other words, the system itself implies consonant qualities broadly reminiscent of the sound system of Goidelic.

José Correa, a classical philologist from Seville, had proposed that the inscriptions contained Celtic proper names and titles. No one until now has unreservedly agreed with this idea, and Correa now regards Tartessian as an unclassified language. In the light of the early references to Keltoí in the south-west and the Celtic names *Kunētes* and *Arganthonios*, as well as many further Ancient Celtic place- and group names recorded in the region in Roman times, I decided that the possibility that the language of the Tartessian inscriptions was Celtic was worth re-examining. At present, the established list of Ancient Celtic languages is as follows:

- Lepontic (the oldest, attested in northern Italy from about 500 BC),
- Celtiberian in east-central Spain,
- Gaulish in France and central Europe,
- Goidelic (the ancestor of Scottish Gaelic and Irish),
- Brittonic or British (the ancestor of Welsh, Breton, and Cornish),
- and Galatian (in the east, about Ankara in central Asia Minor).

Having studied the inscriptions for about a year now, I think that the Tartessian language should be added to this list. It is therefore the first attested of the Celtic languages. It is also about 2,000 kilometres west of Hallstatt and 1,500 from La Tène. Tartessian has affinities with Celtic names attested in Galicia as well as with Celtiberian—as might be expected—but also with Gaulish and even Gaelic and Brittonic. It is the longer, most complete, and best preserved inscriptions where Celticity is most apparent. And most of the elements—names, common nouns, verbs, and prepositional preverbs—are not rare but occur in the core vocabulary of one or more of the other Celtic languages.

EXAMPLES FROM THE TARTESSIAN INSCRIPTIONS AND TENTATIVE TRANSLATIONS

[J.7.2] O٩MY‡M٩OYⵕⴷⴷA٨٨A*l ٩A≣‡A‡▢ [read right-to-left] b°ot°oHar . . . kᵃaŕner-ion ire 'BodwoHar . . . the man whose stone funerary monument is built'.

[J.1.4] A٨٩O⊦ ‡O⟩l٩YYMYⵕⵕO‡ [read right-to-left]]sekᵘui uurkᵉe otᵉerkᵃa . . . '. . . has made a grave for [?S]egos . . .'

[J.1.1] YMY‡‡MYⵕ A⊟O٩O ٩Aⴣ‡٩O⊟MY‡ ▢‡٦‡Ⲭ YMYMMⵕⵕA٨O[⟩l]ⵕAYOYAY ‡Ⲭ‡٦O⊟٩A٨M YMAⵕA‡Δ‡▢A٩MYY‡▢‡Ⲭ‡٦ [read right-to-left beginning here] lok°ob°o niirab°o t°o aŕaiui kᵃaltᵉe lok°o/n ane naŕkᵉe kᵃakⁱiśiin/ k°olob°/o ii tᵉ'-e·ro-bᵃar/e(bᵉ)e tᵉa/śiioonii 'invoking the divine Lugoues of the Neri people, for a nobleman of the Kaltai/Galtai: he rests still within; invoking every hero, the grave of Taśiioonos has received him.'

[J.18.2] O٩Aⴣ‡٩OO⊦ [read right-to-left] tᵉ'-ee·ro-bᵃare '[this grave] has received him/it.'

[J.4.1] ‡ΔO٩‡AⲬ**[l]**A٩Aⴣ٩Aⴣ‡OY l YⵕY⊟OYAⴣ٩AY l OYY‡AY‡MY‡⊟M [read right-to-left beginning here] ib̲°o-iion asune uarbᵃan ekᵘuŕine obᵃar bᵃara**[ ]**tᵃa oret°o 'For the ones whom I [this grave] carry, for Asuna, the supreme one, for Ekurini (Ekvorīgnī "Horse Queen") . . . deliverance (lit. running under)': cf. Gaulish *Assuna*; Welsh *ebol*, *Mynydd Epynt*, Old Irish *ech* 'corse'; Welsh *rhiain* 'noble lady' < 'queen'; **oret°o** 'run under' > 'deliver'; Gallo-Roman EPONAE REGINAE 'to the Horse-Goddess Queen', Welsh *Rhiannon*.

[J.5.1] ⴔYΥ‡O⊟‡ [left-to-right, other lines right-to-left] ist̲ᵃa | ib°o rinoeb°o anakᵉenakᵉ:e | ib°o 'to these indigenous queens (goddesses).'

[J.19.2] ᴎ↑ᴎO)ᴎᴧAᴎꟼᴎ‡ᴧ‡‡ [read right-to-left] **ooŕoir naŕkᵉentⁱi** 'Ooŕoir (Vorviros): they [the components of the burial] are bound unmoved.'

[J.19.1] ᴎᴎᴎO)ᴵ **** A⏐ ϡOꟼᴎ‡ᴧ‡‡OᴎAϡᴎᴴᗠAX‡Oᴎꟼᴎᴎꟼ [read right-to-left]]**l̲iirnestᵃakᵘun bᵃane ooŕoire bᵃ**[are naŕ]**kᵉenii** 'For the wife of Ooŕoir (Vorviros), of the kindred of [?L]ir-ned-s- (?"those dwelling nearer the sea"). [This grave] has received [her]. May they stay unmoved.'

[J.18.1] ‡AϡO)ᴵAᴧA ☆ᴎⵔ‡◻ **bᵒotⁱi*ana kᵉertᵒo** . . [read right-to-left] 'Bōdiana, daughter of the artisan. . .'

[J.53.1] ⋈ ᴧꟼAꟼAᴴOᴧᴦ↑ᴦᴴ‡ϡAᴦ‡ꟼϡA‡OXAᴦAKOᴦⵔᴦꟼAᗠA ᴧAᴎOXAᴦA [read left-to-right] ᴴOᴦϡA⎤‡Dᴧ‡⋈ [right-to-left] **kᵒtᵘuaratᵉe tᵘnt̲ⁱitᵉsbᵃan orbᵃa setᵃa lakᵉentⁱi raᗠa kᵃaśetᵃana kᵒoŕbᵉo b̲ᵃarleᴴ** 'The inherited resting place that is most ?auspicious has safely conveyed [her]. They [the components of this burial] lie down. Raᗠa, the priestess/tin-magistrate, daughter of Korbos . . .': cf. Welsh *gwared* = Tartessian **oretᵒo** < *wo-reto-* 'run under'; **tᵘn(?kⁱ)itᵉsbᵃan** = *tynged* + *-af* Hispano-Celtic ᴛᴏɴɢᴇᴛᴀᴍᴠꜱ 'most auspicious man'; Old Irish *orba* 'heir, inheritance'; Old Irish *síd*, Welsh *gorsedd*, Old Welsh *asedd* 'Celtic war-chariot'; Gaulish *cassidannos* 'tin/bronze minister', ᴀʀɢᴀɴᴛᴏᴅᴀɴɴᴏꜱ 'silver minister, moneyer'; Old Irish *Corb, Corb-macc* > *Cormac*.

[J.12.1] ᴴAϡᴎᴎⵔᴎO)ᴵᴧAᴎ⏐ᴍOᴎ‡ᴴᴴᴧAꟼᴎ [read right-to-left] Oꟼ‡ ϡAꟼOᗠAXAᴦOAᴴO [read left-to-right] **iru alkᵘu sieṣ naŕkᵉentⁱi mubᵃa tᵉ'-⏐e·ro-bᵃare Hᵃatᵃaneatᵉe** 'to the man/hero Alkos or Valkos: these lie unmoving. . . [The grave] has received him, for the wingèd one': for **Hᵃatᵃaneatᵉe**, cf. *Y Gododdin*: *aer e̲d̲e̲n̲a̲w̲c̲; aer seirchyawc* 'winged in battle, harnessed in battle'.

　

Tonight, this handful of examples will have to do to show that the oldest written language of western Europe can be read as Celtic without excessive ingenuity, that is, with little recourse to rare Celtic words or Indo-European roots otherwise unattested in Celtic.

How do we make sense of this additional evidence? The less disruptive course would be to retain the central-European model for Celtic origins, but move it back several centuries to allow the Celts time to radiate out farther from the epicentre at an earlier date. In other words, we could identify the Proto-Celtic community with the Urnfield Late Bronze Age of about 1350–750 ʙᴄ, rather than the Hallstatt Iron Age of about 750–450 ʙᴄ. We could thus retain the basic shape—

including most of the arrows—of the established 'Story of the Celts'.

But I sense that we are now past the 'tipping point' and therefore should consider a new paradigm. How do we avoid attaching the label 'Celtic' to the spectacular orientalizing culture of Tartessos, which was more certainly Celtic speaking and more certainly inhabited by *Keltoí* than Hallstatt?

Incidentally, in the Carpathian Basin, the home of the Urnfield Culture, Celtic place- and group names are thin, though it is surrounded by them.

The most ancient names of Ireland and Britain—*Iveriō* and *Albiōn*—are also relevant. Both are probably Celtic, though a Semitic etymology has been proposed for *Iveriō*, and they were in use at least as early as the date of the voyage of Pytheas of Marseilles about 325 BC and probably the expedition of Himilco of Carthage about 500 BC.

It is also suggestive that the Iberian Peninsula, as well as being the home of Celtiberian and Tartessian, had other Indo-European languages, similar to Celtic—in the way they formed the superlative, for example—, but retaining Indo-European *p* and, therefore, by definition not Celtic. So, it is in the west that we come closest to seeing Celtic evolving from Indo-European before our eyes.

One barrier to the hypothesis that Celtic spread from the Atlantic to the Watershed Zone is that we know—or think we know—that Indo-European, the parent language of Proto-Celtic, came from eastern Europe or western Asia. However, that doesn't mean that no Indo-European language ever developed on the periphery and then moved back towards the centre. In fact, none of the languages which replaced Celtic in the Watershed Zone is native to the region, but instead all came from homelands in more marginal regions of Europe and continue to occupy those homelands—Romance, Germanic, and Slavic. For Germanic and Slavic, their expansion into central Europe coincided with turmoil, contraction, and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the 4th to 6th centuries AD.

Around 1200 BC, something broadly similar occurred with the collapse of the great Late Bronze Age civilizations of the Aegean and Anatolia. In other words, at this point, the engine went into reverse. Economic power and cultural influence ceased to pulse outward from the Aegean. Peoples, cultures, and languages—such as Phrygian—were sucked down in from the barbarian hinterland into the troubles of the civilized world. The effects of the implosion were thus transmitted outward, into central Europe. Barbarian Europe's prolonged Late Bronze Age (about 1300–750 BC) thus provides a possible context for a language of the Atlantic west gaining ground in the Watershed Zone.

I'll conclude with a distribution map of the Gündlingen swords. This type dates to about the 8th century BC. A generation ago, these swords were often cited as evidence of Hallstatt Celts coming as invaders from central Europe to Britain and Ireland. More recently, it is suggested that the Gündlingen type is of British origin.

Even so, I hesitate to close here by reversing the arrows of the familiar Story of the Celts to make them point from the Atlantic west towards Hallstatt. For *An Atlas for Celtic Studies,* our team plotted the archaeological evidence of Iron Age Europe and the early linguistic evidence together—without arrows. We now have new evidence in view—not just from the Canolfan's projects, but also Aberystwyth University's ancient Celtic place-name project and the constant advance of archaeology. We could just leave this evidence to air for a while before re-imposing a new superstructure of arrows or a new definition of the Celts.

Gündlingen Swords (VIII–VII BC)

• bronze   ✚ iron

600 km

Llyn Fawr
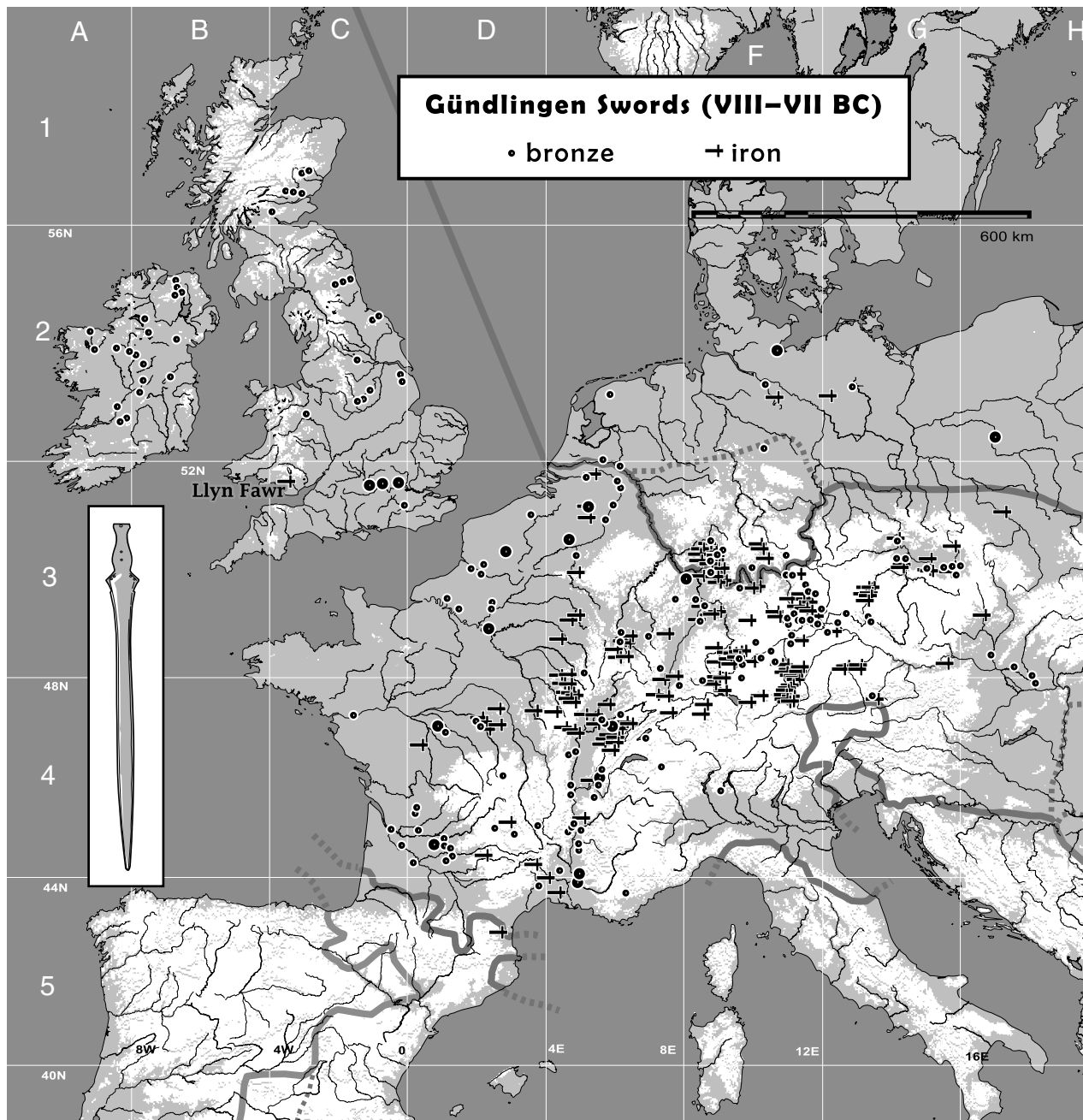
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