

Was Galatian Really Celtic?

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Summary

Saint Jerome's AD 386 remark that the language of ancient Galatia (around modern Ankara) resembled the language of the Treveri (around modern Trier) has been misinterpreted. The "Celts", "Gauls" or "Galatians" mentioned by classical authors, including those who invaded Greece and Anatolia around 277 BC, were not Celtic in the modern sense of speaking a Celtic language related to Welsh and Irish, but tall, pale-skinned, hairy, warrior peoples from the north. The 150 or so words and proper names currently known from Galatian speech show little affinity with Celtic but more with Germanic.

Introduction

In AD 386 Saint Jerome wrote:

Apart from the Greek language, which is spoken throughout the entire East, the Galatians have their own language, almost the same as the Treveri.

For many people this short remark is the linchpin of a belief that ancient Celtic speech spread far outside its Atlantic-fringe homeland, reaching even into the heart of Anatolia, modern Turkey. However, we wish to challenge the idea that Galatians spoke a language that was Celtic in the modern sense of being closely related to Welsh or Irish.



Galatia was the region around ancient Ancyra, modern Ankara, in the middle of Turkey. Anatolia (otherwise known as Asia Minor) has seen many civilisations come and go over the millennia. Around 8000 BC it was a cradle of agriculture and the Neolithic revolution. The whole family of Indo-European languages originated somewhere in that region. We favour the idea that they grew up around the Black Sea all the way from northern Anatolia, past the mouth of the river Danube, to southern Russia and Ukraine.

Over the time words were written down, Anatolia's languages included Hittite, Luwian, and Phrygian, plus Greek on the Aegean coast. Alexander the Great swept through, then Pompey added all of Anatolia to the Roman Empire, and Galatia became a Roman province. Greek, and to a lesser extent Latin, remained the prestige, written languages of Anatolia until they were supplanted by Turkish, a non-Indo-European language, after AD 1080.

The Galatians, as people, traced their ethnic origin to a mass immigration in 277/276 BC, as described below. They are best known now because of Saint Paul's epistle to them, and some of the clearest summaries of their history can be read in places such as [bible-history](#) or the [Catholic Encyclopaedia](#). During their history, Galatians adopted a succession of new religions, including the many Christian sects that so concerned early church fathers like Eusebius and Sophronius, as well as Hieronymus, otherwise known as Jerome.

Why Believe Jerome?

The fundamental reason for doubting Jerome's remark about languages is that the modern city of Trier is in Germany. It lies in the Moselle valley, where country people still speak a German dialect similar to Luxemburgish, probably related to the language of the Ripuarian Franks who took over in AD 459. Before that it was *Augusta Treverorum*, one of the top four cities of the Roman empire, with an [eventful history](#) in imperial and early Christian affairs.

Because the *Treveri* lived west of the river Rhine, the Romans treated them administratively as part of *Gallia Belgica*. Pomponius Mela described them as the "most renowned" of the *Belgae*, perhaps because they provided some of the Roman army's best cavalry. Modern writers often assert that in Roman times the *Belgae* were mostly Celtic (for example see pp 195-200 of Koch, 2006), but this runs counter to the views of classical writers.

Julius Caesar wrote (at the start of *De Bello Gallico*) that:

All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, the third by those who in their own language are called Celts, in ours Gauls. All these differ from each other in language, customs and laws. The Marne and the Seine separate [the Gauls] from the Belgae. Of all these, the Belgae are the bravest, because they are furthest from the civilization and refinement of [our] Province, and merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which tend to effeminate the mind; and they are the nearest to the Germans, who dwell beyond the Rhine ... The Belgae rises from the extreme frontier of Gaul, extend to the lower part of the river Rhine; and look toward the north and the rising sun.

Cassius Dio (53,12) wrote:

some of the Celts, whom we call Germans, had occupied all the Belgic territory along the Rhine and caused it to be called Germany

Strabo (4,3,4) wrote:

along the Rhine dwell the Treveri this side of the Rhine. Next after the Treveri are the Nervii, who are also a Germanic tribe.

Tacitus (*Germania* 28) wrote:

The Treverians and Nervians are very proud of their Germanic origin, considering that the nobility of this blood distinguishes them the laziness of the Gauls.

So what language(s) did the people of ancient Trier really speak? Because we suspect that Treverian was a Germanic language, we started this research wishing to challenge Jerome's reliability as a witness. For a start, how good were his language skills? Jerome was born at *Strido Dalmatiae*, near modern Ljubljana, so his first language is uncertain. To the south people spoke Illyrian; to the north lay Noricum, where the language was either Celtic or Germanic, depending on whom you believe. Jerome's second language was Latin; his third was Greek; his fourth was Hebrew; and he probably had smatterings of several more. Judging by modern multi-lingual people, he should have been technically more than competent to recognise the Galatian and Treverian languages as similar.

Jerome stayed in Trier for part of AD 370, during his whirlwind tour of Gaul, when he would mainly have spoken Latin with urban or church people. Later he visited *Ancyra* (modern Ankara), the capital of Galatia, briefly in AD 373, when he would have interacted mainly with church people speaking Greek. He also spent several years living near Antioch further south in Anatolia. It seems highly unlikely that such an intellectually curious person would fail to speak to ordinary Galatians enough to recognise how they spoke among themselves.

This article started life as a book chapter, which grew very long because it needed so much detail to back up its argument. Publishing it in a traditional peer-reviewed journal on paper would take several years, so for speed we are posting it on the Internet, where readers can skip rapidly over parts that bore them, yet specialists can check all our sources.

Self-publishing online is risky. People may think this article is intellectually second-rate, spawned by petty nationalism or sheer nuttery. However, the Internet allows hyperlinks, use of colour, and references slanted towards what is available online and in English, rather than buried in academic libraries and in German or Greek. Above all, we can update the article constantly.

If you can suggest any way to improve this article, please write to info@proto-english.org and explain. We will update the text and (if you wish) publicly thank you. Good advice in fields where we don't know enough – ancient Greek accents, Welsh grammar, Anatolian epigraphy, historical phonetics, etc – will be much appreciated.

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By modern standards, Jerome was not an objective reporter of facts. For a warts-and-all biography, see Scheck (2010). He was deeply involved in the power struggles for control of Christendom, which pitted the central authority of Rome against various separatists, and which swirled particularly fiercely around *Ancyra*. Like most ancient authors, Jerome was a shameless plagiarist, not always crediting or checking his sources. For example, he quotes almost verbatim a phrase from Pliny (*oppidum Tartesson, quod nunc vocatur Carteia*), which also turns up in Strabo and Pomponius Mela.

Jerome was deeply interested in word etymologies for the sake of his Bible translations, and he was too willing to believe the prolific Roman writer Varro, whose work was not always accurate. And Jerome sounds distinctly credulous in this sentence:

the Attacotti, a British tribe, eat human flesh, and ... cut off the buttocks of the shepherds, and the paps of the shepherdesses, and consider them as the only delicacies of food

Maybe that passage hints at scribal copying errors. In his own lifetime, Jerome was forced by illness to use a secretary.

Despite trying hard to shake Jerome's testimony, we end up accepting that he was a brilliant scholar and almost certainly a reliable observer. It therefore seems highly likely that he was not just noticing a few words or country-bumpkin accents, but that the Treverian and Galatian languages were indeed similar.

To understand Jerome properly, one needs to read a lot more of his writings than just that one sentence. For the record, here it is in the original Latin: "*Galatas excepto sermone, quo omnis oriens loquitur, propriam linguam eandem pene habere quam Treviros*". One wonders why the Galatians had a *sermo* but the Treverians had a *lingua*.

Translated versions inevitably contain subtle distortions, due to the prejudices of the translator or the prevailing orthodoxy, and Jerome himself remarked how important it is to check any translation against its original language. He was a perfectionist, correcting existing Greek-to-Latin translations, and using classical not vulgar Latin for his own writing. Appropriately, we had to make some small but vital corrections to this published English translation (Cain, 2010) to bring it into better conformity with the original Latin text of an excerpt from the preface to book 2 of Jerome's commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians.

That incredibly scrupulous investigator of antiquities Marcus Varro, as well as his imitators, have preserved for us many noteworthy details about the Galatians. ... I shall quote the opinion about this people that our own Lactantius recorded in the third volume of his work addressed to Probus: "From ancient times the Gauls were called Galatians due to their shiny complexion, and the Sibyl refers to them as such. This is what [Virgil] meant when he said, 'Their milky-white necks are decked in gold', though he could have used the word 'shiny'. It is clear from this that the province where the Gauls arrived and intermingled with the Greeks was called Galatia. For this reason the region was named Gallo-Graecia and afterward Galatia."

... The Phocaeans founded a colony at [Marseilles]. According to Varro, they spoke three languages: Greek, Latin and Gallic. ... It is no wonder that Paul called the Galatians foolish and slow to understanding when Hilary, the Rhone river of Latin eloquence, and himself a Gaul born at [Poitiers], called the Gauls unteachable in the hymns he composed. The fact that Gaul is so rich in orators has to do not so much with the hard work of the region as it does with the sheer loudness of its rhetoric, especially seeing that Aquitania vaunts its Greek roots and the Galatians originated not from the Greek world but from the more savage Gauls.

... Anyone who has visited Ancyra, the capital city of Galatia, knows, as I do, by how many schisms it has been ripped apart and with how many doctrinal differences it has been blotted. I say nothing of Cataphrygians, Ophites, Borborites, and Manichæans; for these are familiar names of human woe. Who has ever heard of Passaloryncitæ, and Ascodrobi, and Artotyritæ, and other portents – I can hardly call them names – in any part of the Roman Empire? The traces of the ancient foolishness remain to this day.

I must make one remark, and so fulfil the promise I made at the beginning. In addition to Greek, which the entire east speaks, the Galatians have their own language and it is almost identical with that of the Treveri; and if through contact with the Greek they have acquired a few corruptions, it is a matter of no moment. The Africans have to some extent changed the

Phoenician language, and Latin itself is daily undergoing changes through differences of place and time.

What shines through this text (and much more that he wrote) is that Jerome was deeply interested in languages and different peoples, but implicitly acknowledged that he did not know everything first-hand. Notice his mention of a Gallic language inland from Marseilles and that Aquitanians (closer to Bordeaux) were proud of their Greek roots. However, what really caught our attention is that he quotes approvingly from the early Christian intellectual Lactantius to the effect that the name Galatian came from the Gauls' shiny complexion.

A Working Hypothesis

Ancient literate people around the Mediterranean had hazy ideas about people and geography further north. Words for 'Celtic', 'Gaulish', and 'Galatian' have no generally accepted etymologies and Collis (2003) documented how inconsistently they were used by ancient authors in Greek and Latin. The word 'German' was not much used before Julius Caesar.

Cunliffe (2008) makes sense of the complexity thus:

There has been much confusion about the use of the word 'Celt'. To early Greek writers like Hecataeus and Herodotus it meant peoples living in the west of Europe over against the Atlantic Ocean. But as time went on, the words 'Celt' and 'Gaul', which were often used synonymously, tended to be applied more generally to the barbarians of western Europe to distinguish them from the inhabitants of eastern Europe, who were banded together under the general name of 'Scythians'. When, therefore, the Roman and Greek worlds began to come into direct contact with migrants from west central Europe they classed them all as Celts or Gauls, though whether the migrants considered themselves to be ethnically one people is unknown. According to Julius Caesar, however, writing in the mid-first century BC, the tribes then occupying the part of France between the rivers Seine and Garonne did specifically call themselves Celts. Clearly the concept of the Celts was variously interpreted by ancient writers. ... the historians Livy and Polybius [used the word Celts] as a general term to refer to the tribes of west central Europe who migrated towards Mediterranean lands in the second half of the first millennium BC.

Wolfram (1990) put it like this:

Greek ethnography ... differentiated among the northern barbarians only the Scythians from the Celts, or at most had mentioned the Celto-Scyths in between the two. Only the Roman Caesar saw from personal experience that a third group of peoples existed as a separate ethnic identity between the Celts and Sarmatian-Scythian steppe peoples.

Let's run with this analysis, plus Jerome's remark. The early Greek word for milk was γαλα, which developed into γαλακτος and Latin *lactis*, hence English words such as 'galaxy' and 'lactic'. Also the Greeks had a mythical character called Γαλατεία by Homer and Hesiod or Galatea by Ovid. Rightly or wrongly, the name Galatea was thought to mean milky-white: hence Ovid's "*Oh lovely Galatea, whiter far than falling snows*" of about AD 8.

We therefore propose the following three-part working hypothesis:

1. The Greek word γαλαται 'Galatian' originally meant 'milky-white' and was used as a general term for all people who came from further north in Europe.
2. The palefaces who became Galatians were not Celtic speakers in the modern sense, but were in fact closer to Germanic.
3. Galatian speech resembled Gaulish only insofar as they were both Indo-European languages, and reconstructed "Gaulish" is heavily contaminated with Germanic words.

A working hypothesis does not need to be right or wrong in order to be useful. It just needs to help people think clearly about a problem. In science, there is no such thing as eternal truth. The most one can ever say about a particular theory is that it fits observed facts well.

The Celtic Invasion

South-east Europe and Anatolia were the stamping grounds of some of history's greatest generals, including Pompey and Alexander the Great. Some battle sites, such as Adrianopolis or Thermopylae, were fought over repeatedly down the centuries. The numbers of troops involved in ancient battles, even if inflated in historians' accounts, could be astonishingly large, and testify to strong population pressures and major tribal migrations. At least four major incursions of warriors from the north, loosely called "Celts", impinged upon the literate societies of Rome, Greece, and Byzantium.

In 279 BC an army led by Brennus (a second instance of that name or title) attacked deep into Greece. Livy (writing in AD 26) described that army as:

Gauls, a vast horde of men, whether moved by shortage of land or hope of plunder, Later, Pausanias put their numbers at 213 thousand and remarked that Celts as a race were the tallest of people. However, they were defeated near Delphi and their remnants marched off to try their luck elsewhere. They split up, so that a contingent of 20 thousand, of whom no more than 10 thousand were armed, arrived at the Hellespont and crossed to the Asian side, Anatolia. There:

since there were three tribes, the Tolostobogii, the Trocmi, and the Tectosages, they split up into three divisions, according to the states ... which each held as tributaries.

In AD 78 Pliny the Elder wrote:

Galatia lies above Phrygia, and includes the greater part of the territory taken from that province, as also its former capital, Gordium. The Gauls who have settled in these parts, are called the Tolistobogi, the Voturi, and the Ambitouti; those who dwell in Maëonia and Paphlagonia are called the Trocmi. Cappadocia stretches along to the north-east of Galatia, its most fertile parts being possessed by the Tectosages and the Teutobodiaci. These are the nations by which those parts are occupied; and they are divided into peoples and tetrarchies, 195 in number. Its towns are: Ancyra among the Tectosages, Tavium among the Trocmi, and Pessinus among the Tolistobogi.

Who Were Those Galatian Tribes?

As Jerome pointed out, several prehistoric peoples (Greeks, Phoenicians, etc) sailed long distances to set up colonies around the Mediterranean. In general, judging by later, fairly benign, military takeovers by northerners (Macedonians in Egypt, Burgundians in Gaul, Vandals in north Africa, Normans in Sicily, British in Malta), incoming elites spread their language only a limited distance or duration into surrounding indigenous populations.

The Galatians eventually fell into that pattern too, but evidently they maintained a distinct language for at least the 665 years between the tribal movement under Brennus in 279 BC and Jerome's comment in AD 386 – a remarkable achievement considering the numbers involved. On Livy's figures, 20 thousand Gauls, not all armed, originally took control of Galatia, an area that had been well populated for millennia. So the Gauls must have intermarried heavily with locals. When Rome conquered Galatia in 189 BC the Gauls had become, in Livy's words, *degenerates, of mixed race, and really Gallogrecians*.

Ancient historians' accounts of tribal migrations need to be taken with a large pinch of salt. That 277 BC arrival of some Galatian ancestors from northern Europe could well have been just one historically remembered highlight out of a gradual and multi-ethnic process. Indeed, Campbell (2009) critically examined the ancient historians' accounts and modern historians' attempts to make sense of the alleged invaders' numbers of troops and likely routes of travel. He ended up dismissing the whole episode as more of a smash-and-grab raid than a tribal migration and does not believe that a single incursion of warriors around 277 BC was responsible for founding Galatia. Furthermore, no large contingent of migrants or even of raiders ever sets off on a long journey into the unknown, but travels where early scouts come back with favourable reports.

Ethnic groups often cherish a semi-mythical ancestry to explain their presence in a particular area and difference from their neighbours. Before the mobile warrior bands and tribal migrations of the Iron Age stirred up European populations, the north–south gradient in physical appearance would have been stronger than today. Natives of Anatolia would have found it natural to remark on northerners’ height, plus skin, hair, and eye colours. Livy described the Galatians as having *tall bodies and long reddish hair*, while Strabo (4,4,2-3) commented on the large physique of Gallic/Gallatic warriors.

We (and Jerome) wish to interpret Γαλαται as ‘palefaces’, an exonym (tribal name applied by outsiders) descriptive of physical appearance. Presumably before the Galatians intermarried with locals, they stood out as blonde and blue-eyed, much like Circassians in the Caucasus, or maybe the *roxolani* ‘pale Alans’, or even the *non Angli sed angeli* attributed to Pope Gregory.

It would also make sense to accept the idea that Κέλτοι meant ‘tall people’, a name related to Latin *collis* and Greek κολωνή ‘hill’. How Mediterranean people perceived northern Europeans was well summed up in AD 452 by Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carmina* 12) referring, slightly in jest, to some Burgundians as seven-foot giants (*septipedes Gigantes*), who were hairy, noisy gluttons, smelling of rancid butter. Much the same attitude perhaps lay behind the story of Jutes settling in Britain, who look suspiciously like the supernatural giants of Norse mythology, the *Iötnar*, and Beowulf’s *eotenas* and *eotena cyn*, or the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’s *Iutnacynn* and Bede’s *Iutarum*.

Can we deduce anything about the ethnicity of the Galatian founders, before looking at their language? For a full account of Galatia see Darbyshire, Mitchell and Vardar (2000). Useful Internet-accessible texts in English include Strobel (2009), Yörükan (2009), and Coşkun (2006). To summarise brutally, almost everything known about the early history of Galatians as Celts comes from classical authors writing in Greek or Latin, while later evidence from stone inscriptions and the writings of early church fathers portrays Galatians as Hellenised but increasingly Romanised components of the eastern Roman Empire. As far as we know, neither archaeology nor genetics has yet shed any direct light on the ethnicity of Galatians.

Of the three tribes supposed to have founded Galatia in 276 BC, only the *Tectosages* were mentioned by ancient authors in areas outside Anatolia. Ptolemy mentioned *Tectosakes* on the Silk Road in modern Kazakhstan. Caesar wrote (50 BC) that *Volcae Tectosages* had seized fertile parts of the Hercynian forest (north of the Danube, from Germany across to Romania) but were not Germans and came from near Provence. Strabo (about 0 BC) wrote that the *Tectosages* lived around Toulouse, and had expelled a dissident group that migrated into Galatia. Pomponius Mela again mentions them (AD 43) at Toulouse. Justinus quoted a Celtic writer Pompeius Trogus (1st century BC) to the effect that *Tectosagi* returned to Toulouse with loot stolen from Greece, which brought them bad luck. Modern historians tend to discount these to-and-fro stories and guess that *Tectosages* started out in central Europe and migrated southwards in two directions.

Let’s focus on those *Tectosages* around Toulouse in the south of France. Prehistoric *Tolosa* (a name of unknown etymology) controlled the important Bronze-Age trade route trans-isthmus from the Mediterranean (up the river Aude from Narbonne), through the Carcassonne gap, to the Atlantic (down the river Garonne to Bordeaux). West of *Tolosa* lay *Aquitania*, where the pre-Roman language was probably an early form of Basque. To its south and east the coast was sparsely populated until speakers of Greek and Iberian set up trading and fishing ports, followed by the Romans founding Narbonne in 118 BC. In 106 BC the *Cimbri*, a mostly-Germanic confederation of tribes, invaded and *Tolosa* supported them. So the Romans captured *Tolosa* and made it one of the major (Latin-speaking) cities of the province of *Gallia Narbonensis*. Around Jerome’s time, Ausonius (*Ordo Urbium Nobilium* 19) mentions *usque in Teutosagos paganaque nomina Belcas* ‘as far as the Teutosages, of rustic name Belcas’. This hints that Ausonius, who grew up in Bordeaux and wrote with direct knowledge of Toulouse, was interpreting the tribe as Belgic, with a Germanic name for ‘people speakers’. From AD 418 the Kingdom of Toulouse was ruled by (German-speaking) Visigoths, whose counterparts across the Pyrenees were probably responsible for the large

fraction of Spanish and Portuguese surnames that are actually Germanic. In short, there is no real reason to believe that many *Tectosages* near *Tolosa* ever spoke Celtic.

The Galatian Language

If our working hypothesis is correct, there must be something badly wrong with the list of 120 or so words and proper names from the Galatian language that are widely accepted, in authoritative sources such as the encyclopaedia of Koch (2006), as being linguistically Celtic. Some kind of methodological error has occurred, perhaps through cherry-picking of data, or perhaps by wrong identification of the language(s) concerned.

In an ideal world, someone would post online a huge database of all possibly Galatian proper names, each one tagged with its likelihood of being Hittite, Greek, Latin, Celtic, Germanic, etc, plus of course all its variant spellings, the evidence linking it to Galatia, and so on. In practice, all lists of Galatian material already published have been pre-selected in some way. It looks as if past scholars have done a good job of screening out words and proper names that conform with known Roman or Greek practices. Nevertheless, in dealing with Galatian material, everyone seems to have asked “*Which words can we explain in Celtic?*” rather than “*Which explanation in any Indo-European language best fits the evidence?*”

A short book by Freeman (2001) provides the best currently available list of Galatian proper names, plus a few ordinary words. He relied on three main sources:

1. Classical and early Christian texts typically exist in medieval manuscript copies-of-copies, from which master versions were derived by pre-1900 scholars, often in Germany. Then English translations were often published in the Loeb Library series. Nowadays, most of the key texts are available online, particularly through the [Perseus Digital Library](#).
2. Previous books about the Galatians are often long and in German, notably by Stähelin (1907), Weisgerber (1931), and Bosch (1967).
3. The decipherments of stone inscriptions are often described in hard-to-obtain journals, but have mostly been summarised in a catalogue by Mitchell, French & Greenhalgh (1982). Online epigraphic catalogues, notably the [Epigraphik Datenbank Clauss-Slaby](#), are just beginning to come to grips with data from Asia Minor.

To the limited extent that we can check the work of Freeman and his precursors, it seems impressively reliable in reporting original spellings and in excluding Greek and Latin names. Within Freeman’s list we can discern some false positives (notably where a purely Greek explanation seems to have been ignored or rejected), plus some false negatives (where we do not know his reasons for excluding them, or which have come to light more recently). However, the really big methodological problem with Galatian language elements lies in their assignment to particular language families

The Gaulish Language

Modern France is not linguistically homogeneous. Well over 10% of modern French people grew up speaking another language at home: Occitan, Catalan, Corsican, Basque, Breton, Flemish, Franconian, Alsatian, and numerous variants, plus a host of dialects distinct from Parisian French, and the languages of recent immigrants, such as Arabic. In 1794 a survey concluded that, out of the population of France, 46% spoke French hardly at all, 40% or so could understand it to some extent, and only 11.5% spoke French perfectly. Napoleon himself grew up speaking a form of Italian, and the Buonaparte family could trace its ancestry via Lombardy to Germany and Scandinavia.

Julius Caesar famously wrote that ancient Gaul was divided into three parts that spoke distinct languages: Celtic, Belgic, and Aquitanian. And there was a fourth part, modern Provence, already heavily Romanised by his time and evolving from Ligurian towards Occitan speech. Later, when the western Roman empire fell apart, the territory that became France was carved up into a series of Germanic kingdoms (Frankish, Burgundian, Visigothic, Norman) that mostly chose to speak the creolised Latin that later evolved into French.

With that background, it is extraordinary that Gaulish is invariably treated as a single, fairly homogeneous, and purely Celtic language. Furthermore, “Gaulish” is regarded as being almost the same as the languages of ancient Britain, southern Germany, and Galatia. The French historians and linguists involved in reconstructing Gaulish are not fools and freely admit that this single-language concept is a compromise forced on them by the very limited amount of plain text written in Gaulish that has been discovered.

The most authoritative source for ancient Gaulish is the dictionary of Delamarre (2003). Some lecture notes posted online by [Stifter](#) are [very useful](#). Books by Lacroix (2003, 2005, 2007) explain current French thinking about Gaulish influence on proper names. Other key books that define thinking about ancient Celtic languages include Jackson (1953), Evans (1967), Rivet and Smith (1979), Koch (2006), Sims-Williams (2006), and Falileyev (2010).

We do not for one moment claim to compete with these authors in knowledge of historical linguistics or modern Celtic languages. Nevertheless, we think they have all fallen into a huge methodological trap and have become complicit in what amounts to a kind of imperialist grab by Gaulish for the lexicon of middle Europe. France has been so powerful for so long (economically, culturally, and archaeologically) that its way of thinking has become imprinted on parts of Europe that were culturally very different.

The dictionary of Delamarre (2003) appears to cite all 120-odd Galatian elements of Freeman (2001) among the 6000 or so data items used to reconstruct Gaulish. If our hypothesis is correct, that represents 2% contamination with non-Gaulish items. That does not sound like much until one realises how many more data items were harvested from other areas (Belgica, Pannonia, etc) that also may not have been Celtic-speaking in antiquity. In other words, reconstructed Gaulish is at least partly a huge monument to circular logic.

This criticism does not invalidate a modern Gaulish dictionary as an aid for translating Galatian names. Nor does it imply that people living in ancient Gaul would have been baffled by the words reconstructed for Gaulish. After all, modern English speakers have no trouble understanding sputnik, mañana, inshallah, and nom de plume. However, it does mean that matching Galatian names with Gaulish dictionary entries reveals very little about the ethnicity of Galatians.

Even scholars from a Germanic background have fallen for the Gaulish takeover. Here is an explanatory comment on a list of definitely [Germanic first-century names](#):

Most Germanic names of this period appear to have been at least partially Celtic in derivation.

And a senior linguist wrote this just 16 years ago:

One can safely say that the La Tène Celts were located in central Europe in a band stretching from eastern France across to approximately present-day south-west Poland. ... It is accepted that the Celts occupied central Europe in the first millenium BC ... The fixing of stress can be postulated to have occurred by about around 500 BC at a time when both Celtic and Germanic were spoken in central Europe (Hickey, 1995)

Few scholars would still defend the concept of a central European homeland of the Celtic language. Cunliffe and Koch (2010) championed the idea of “Celtic from the West”, which Cunliffe (2013) has firmed up into an explicit working hypothesis that Celtic originated from an “Atlantian” lingua franca among bronze-trading people of the seaways from Portugal to the Orkneys in the period 4500 to 3000 BC. But where did the old doctrine come from?

The late 1800s were infected with nationalism. America had its Manifest Destiny. Britain sent its Celtic citizens around the world to build an empire. Germany had recently unified and was still seeking its place in the world. France hankered for a defensible frontier along the Rhine all the way to the North Sea and settled for invading North Africa instead. And so on. That was the era when pioneer scholars, such as Alfred Holder (1896), investigated the Celtic languages and drew up a huge list of ancient proper names that could be considered more or less “Celtic”.

In Paris, Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville, whose key 12 volumes [can be read online](#), had a theory that early Germanic peoples were technologically and ideologically inferior to Celtic peoples. According to that theory, various words for weapons, legal concepts, etc started life among Celtic speakers (in central Europe) and were passed on to other languages as loanwords. This theory has been utterly demolished: for example Elston (1934) lists many of the linguistic issues involved. However, its malign influence lingers on.

Lots more on that theme below, but now let's turn to the Galatian language. We use phrases like "diagnostically Celtic" to mean something that is characteristic of the language family of Welsh, Irish, etc but not of other language families that might have been present in Anatolia (Greek, Latin, and Germanic, plus possibly Slavic and Indo-Iranian). That contrasts with "pan-European", used to mean something that probably existed in several language families, including Celtic. And the abbreviation PIE stands for Proto-Indo-European, a reconstructed language from which most languages in Europe and southern Asia appear to have evolved. OE stands for Old English or Anglo-Saxon (Bosworth & Toller, 1898), from which we often take examples to illustrate possible Germanic links.

Ordinary Galatian Words

Just 18 words are known that might have been part of the Galatian language and were not proper names. Freeman (2001) described 15 of them as "possible vocabulary", which often meant they were associated with *Galatai* somewhere in Europe, not necessarily in Anatolia. Freeman declared just three words as definitely Galatian, and he immediately dismissed one of them because it was used in Greek before the Celts arrived: *υς* 'kermes oak'.

His other two were **τασκος** and **δρουγος**, compounded together into the name of a Christian sect, the **Τασκοδρουγίται**, who were described by the anti-heresy campaigner Epiphanius, just after Jerome's visit to Ancyra, thus:

Their word for 'peg' is tascos, and drungos is their word for 'nostril' or 'snout'. And since they put their licking finger, as we call it, on their nostril when they pray, for dejection, if you please, and would-be righteousness, some people have given them the name of Tascodrungitai, or 'nose-pickers'. (Panarion 4, 48).

Tascos or *tasgos* is usually translated as 'badger' and recognised in ancient personal names (notably *Taximagulus* and *Tasciovanus* in Britain, *Tasgetius*, *Tasgillus*, etc in Gaul, and *Tadhg* in Ireland) and in modern French place names such as Taissy or Theizé. However, words like English *dachshund*, from German *Dachs* 'badger', show that there was also an equivalent Germanic root, plus probable cognates in Sanskrit and other languages. Much discussion has ping-ponged back and forth about which language lent the root to the other, what was the ultimate PIE root, and how a single species of European badger picked up so many names. To begin to understand the issues one must read 6 pages of Lacroix (2007) and 36 of Katz (1998, 2002), but it seems clear that *tascos* was what linguists call a wander-word and cannot be considered diagnostically Celtic.

The word *δρουγος* is well attested in late Greek and Latin as a type of a military unit in the eastern Roman empire, a 'troop'. It probably descended from a PIE root **trenk-* that also led to English 'throng' or Irish *drong* 'gang'. However, neither Pokorny (1959) nor Delamarre (2003) cite any linguistic or sense-development links to make *δρουγος* a snout, though Welsh has *trwyn* 'nose', and a Celtic word for 'promontory' gave rise to place names such as Troon in Scotland. Furthermore, *tascos* has no obvious cognate in Greek or Latin, nor any obvious linguistic link with *πασσαλος* 'peg', picked up by Jerome in calling the sect *Passaloryncitae*.

The most likely explanation of this mystery is that Epiphanius was using a smutty joke to malign some heretics whom he regarded as fair game for mud-slinging with half-truths. His real target was a mainly Phrygian sect called the Montanists, and the context suggests that he had never actually seen any Tascodrungites, who may not even have been Galatian, but had evidently adopted a variant form of Christianity. Loyalist believers would have found it hard to resist a little pun that made fun of heretics' name. Most early Christian writers were fond

of word-play and of not-always-accurate etymological guesses. For example, just look at the contrived puns of Gildas, a near contemporary of Epiphanius.

Many ancient tribes were named after animals, and Lacroix (2007) suggested that the Tascodrugites were an Anatolian clan named the ‘badger throng’, like Pliny’s *Atasgoduni*, or similar to Strabo’s Βεβρυκες ‘beaver people’. Modern Turkey is famous for its cave dwellings and badgers would be a very appropriate simile for their ancient occupants. How might a churchman twist their name? The evangelist Mark was *truncus* ‘mutilated’, the closest word in Latin to *drugos*. However, *truncus* was also slang for ‘blockhead’ (or ‘drongo’ in modern Australian). Likewise, the closest words to *tascos* in a classical language would be Latin *tactus* ‘touch’ and Greek δακτυλος ‘finger’, from which a prurient mind could shift to πασσαλος ‘peg’, but also slang for ‘penis’. Far-fetched? Yes, but so is the nose-picker story. The bottom line is that there is no solid reason to consider *Τασκοδρογίται* linguistically Celtic.

The best known Galatian word is **δρυνεμετον**, which Strabo described as a place where the tribal elders assembled. The element *dru* ‘tree’ (especially oak tree) is routinely claimed as Celtic, but in fact the World Tree was a universal theme of early religions around the world. One well-known example was the Yggdrasil of Norse mythology and sacred oaks were particularly important to Germanic peoples, as several instances of Thor’s Oak imply. The Bible has many cryptic mentions of terebinths or oaks (notably Genesis 18). The words true, tree, druid, dryad, and tar seem to be linguistically related. This may be not just because trees were perceived as steadfast and reliable, but also because [glue obtained from resinous trees](#) was such an important stone-age technology.

The element *nemeton* is well attested across Europe, not just in Celtic areas of France but also in the Germanic tribe *Nemetes*, and is usually translated as ‘sacred grove’. Tribal assemblies in sacred places were a pan-European phenomenon. For example, within Britain one could point to structures like Woodhenge, much earlier than Celtic languages are likely to have crystallized, or to the way that Anglo-Saxons gathered in *hundreds* and used *leah* ‘clearing’ as one of the commonest elements in place names.

This logic alone would suffice to show that **δρυνεμετον** is not diagnostically Celtic, but there is more. Pokorny (1959) attributed *nemeton*, together with plausible Celtic cognates like Old Irish *nemed* ‘sanctuary’, plus Latin *nemus* and Greek νεμος ‘woodland glade’, to a PIE root **nem-* ‘to bend’ deduced from Sanskrit words. In so doing, he implicitly accepted that temple worshippers bow down, that ancient instances of *nemet-* were Celtic, and that his ‘bend’ could be split off from the far more productive sense of PIE **nem-* as ‘allocate’, which shows up in the Greek verb νεμω, which meant something like ‘apportion’, especially as done by the gods – hence Nemesis – and in German *nehmen* or OE *niman* ‘take’. English speakers find it strange that a single word should combine notions of giving and taking, but ancient peoples saw matters differently, which is why host and guest are basically the same word. It follows that νεμος, *nemus* and *nemeton* may not have evolved from a primary sense of woodland or of obeisance to gods, but rather from a sense of inhabiting and sharing.

Another complication needs at least to be borne in mind. The sexual exuberance of ancient societies was not widely understood when *nemeton* was declared Celtic for woodland grove. English ‘grove’ is a euphemistic translation for Old Testament references (notably in 2 Kings, 21 to 23) to some kind of female sanctum for the fertility cults that existed across the ancient Middle East, from biblical times up to the early Christian fathers like Jerome. Similarly ‘pillar’ is often code for a phallic symbol. Nowadays anyone can see formerly hidden erotica such as murals from Pompeii (Clarke, 2003) or the Turin Erotic Papyrus from Egypt, while the sexual practices that annoyed biblical prophets (Akerley, 1998) have been clarified by archaeology at places such as Ugarit.

Nemeton probably meant much the same as another common ancient name, *Mediolanum*, whose correct translation has only recently been understood as ‘middle ground’, a neutral meeting place at the border between two tribal territories. 14 modern place names in France that are thought to derive from *nemeton* all lie close to ancient tribal boundaries (Lacroix,

2007, pp 194-203). Galatian *δρυνημετον* clearly also meant a border meeting place, because its first element *δρυ-* resembles English *thrum*, old German *drum* ‘edge piece’. *Vernemetum*, in England, later an Anglo-Saxon [moot site](#), shows the geography particularly clearly.

Hesychius of Alexandria wrote a huge lexicon of unusual Greek words, probably around AD 450. In it he explicitly translated *καρνυξ* as ‘Galatian trumpet’. However, the word is not distinctively Celtic and the instrument was once widespread through [much of Europe](#).

Hesychius translated *λειουσματα* or *λεγουσματα* as ‘Galatian type of mail armour’. We have not seen a Celtic explanation, but it is easy to explain as Germanic: for example in Old English one would point to the past tenses of OE *lecgan* ‘lay’ and *smitan* ‘smear’, plus the words *smith* and *smooth*.

Hesychius translated *βαρδοί* as ‘Galatian poets’. Latin *bardus* and English ‘bard’ have long been considered loan-words from Celtic, and not related to some confusables in other languages, notably the Germanic root that led to ‘beard’, Lombard, etc. However, Hesychius probably took his word from Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, whose texts were describing the customs of Gaul in a rather loose geographical sense, including Belgae and possibly Germans. Diodorus also mentioned *λαγκια* as a Gaulish lance (hence Latin *lancea*), which is sometimes cited as Galatian.

Hesychius described as Galatian a slightly mysterious *εντριτον* or *εμβρεκτον*, which is almost certainly Greek for something like a snack soaked in wine. He also mentioned *ιορκες* as a kind of deer, but that was probably related to Greek *δορκας* ‘gazelle’ and Latin *aries* ‘ram’. He also mentioned *λενγι* as a Galatian ‘unit of length’, which looks like English ‘league’, usually said to come from Gaulish. And, mysteriously, he equated *αδες* with *ποδες* ‘feet’, which is reminiscent of the way that Celtic languages dropped initial P.

Pausanias wrote that the army of Brennus, before any of it moved to Anatolia, used a *τριμαρκισιαν* ‘three-horse fighting unit’ built around the word *μαρκαν* ‘horse’. These can be explained using Germanic **mark^haz* ‘horse’, whose descendants include English ‘mare’, just as well as by Celtic **marcos*.

Several authors mentioned *κοκκος* as a Galatian word for the gall of the kermes oak, from which a red dye was extracted. However, Theophrastus, who died before Galatia was founded, used that word in Greek.

Pliny also mentioned *adarca* as a medicinal agent that grew under reeds in Italy. Dioscorides wrote that it occurred in Galatia, but without necessarily referring to Anatolia. Fascinating though this material may be – it sounds much like ergot – no Celtic explanation has been suggested that is more convincing than in other languages, notably Basque *adar* ‘branch’.

The Greek word *μανιακης* ‘torc’ was used for necklaces and armbands worn by Persians and by the Gauls who fought against Rome in 224 BC, whose equipment was described as *Γαλατικ-* by Polybius (2, 29-31). A Greek word for ‘maniac’ and a Latin word for ‘twisted’ seem somehow appropriate for gold bling worn into battle by otherwise-naked warriors!

To summarise this section, 18 words have been suggested as having existed in the ancient Galatian language. Many, but not all, might have been understood in ancient Gaul.

However, not a single one looks unequivocally Celtic in a linguistic sense. Most of them look like the common heritage of European languages and the Roman Empire. That means it is necessary to confront proper names head-on.

Proper Names

It is dangerous to deduce from proper names (of individual persons, tribes, gods, or places) what languages the people concerned spoke at home. However, when proper names are the only evidence available, the danger must be faced and nowadays “name studies” is considered a serious academic discipline in its own right. Here we shall try to avoid using jargon (such as onomastics, toponymy, tatpuruṣa, etc) and instead use specific examples to highlight some issues that matter for Galatia.

Most people go through life with names that someone else chose, when they were very young, when they attained some official position, or whatever. Historical figures are often remembered by titles, or under names given to them by foreigners, which were quite different from their real names. Think of Arminius (victor in the Teutoburg Forest, probably really a Herman), Geronimo (real name Goyahkla), Genghis Khan (real name Temujin), Augustus (originally Octavian), and many more. When people do choose their own name, it is often to hide their ethnic origin: think of Stalin, Mountbatten, Freddy Mercury, Jon Stewart, Kirk Douglas, and many more.

Given names often diverge from ethnicity – just look at us two authors. Anthony is written as if it were Greek, from *ανθος* ‘flower’, but it actually comes from the Latin family name *Antonius*, whose early origin is mysterious, perhaps Etruscan, most easily analysed as Germanic. Michael is officially Michel, the French spelling of an originally Hebrew name, but we use the English spelling when writing in English. Neither of us gains any clue to our own ethnic mixtures (English/Welsh and Flemish/Walloon) from our given names.

Precise spellings of names may be informative (as with Michael/Michel/Miguel/Mikhail), but then one must ask who actually wrote down the name. Allegedly there are 112 ways to spell Ghaddafi and over 25 recorded variants of Shakespeare. Grammatical structure may also be revealing. Ancient names were often two-part compounds, frequently on a grandiose or militaristic theme, such as father-of-the-nation or mighty-slasher. With Galatian compound names it is not *a priori* certain which language they were built in, but sometimes the order of the elements may give a hint. If the more adjective-like word comes first a Germanic origin is more likely. For example, compare Bluebeard and Barbarossa. However, two or more languages can get scrambled together, as in the famous English place name Breedon Hill. Also, ancient languages used grammatical endings very heavily.

To illustrate the situation with Galatian names, imagine finding a hard-to-read mention of Man Mountain. Or maybe it was really written as Man’s Mountain. Then a book translates the name as Mountain Man. Then another inscription turns up, which looks like Man-o-Mountain, for which at least four distinct meanings can be imagined. This example may sound silly, but it illustrates the real difficulties with Galatian names. We expect to be criticised for making naive guesses at name meanings, but if you know better, don’t just snigger. Write in and explain how your logic leads to a better translation.

Proper names can lose their original meaning, either by spreading outside their home region or else by outlasting their component parts. Who now realises that Harry came originally from ‘home ruler’, or that Bill and Liam both started out meaning ‘resolute helmet’? Place names show the problem of defunct language even more acutely. A large fraction of English place names started out as sober, functional descriptions of local hills, rivers, swamps, fields, etc (Gelling & Cole, 2003) that have ceased to have obvious meanings because modern people no longer need a dozen different words to describe types of marsh, shapes of valley, hillside landmarks, etc.

Place names varied far less across the Roman Empire than people’s languages, as discussed by Rivet (1980), for example. It is debatable how far this resulted from fashion among local people, a particular class of backroom imperial administrators, or conventions among literate Romans and Greeks. Solopov (2005) discussed the structure of Roman-era place names.

Much the same issues apply to tribal names, except that names are even more commonly applied by outsiders (compare Welsh and *Cymraeg*) or vary depending on point of view (compare Allemand, Deutsch, Немецкий, Tedeschi). It is sobering to realise that there are no 100% accepted etymologies for the names English, French, American, German, Russian, and Belgian. Let’s see if we can do any better for the 13 names of tribes (or clans or regional groups) in Galatia listed by Freeman.

Tribal Names

Of the three main founding tribes of Galatia, the **Tectosages** have been most discussed. A consensus seems to have formed that Old Irish *techtaigidir* ‘seek to establish land claim’ is the best parallel, which makes Caesar’s *Volcae Tectosages* into ‘sparrow-hawk possession seekers’ or maybe ‘hawkish claim-jumpers’. This is strange, because so many less comical alternatives exist outside Celtic. The element *tecto* has two likely PIE roots: **(s)teg-* ‘cover’ and **tek-* ‘make’, represented in English by protect and textile, respectively. For the element *sag*, there are at least three possible PIE roots: **sag-* ‘track’, **sak-* ‘sanctify’, and **seg-* ‘attach’, represented in English by seek, sacred, and sack, respectively. Greek τεκτων ‘carpenter, craftsman’ plus σαγη ‘pack’ would make *Tectosages* ‘itinerant craftsmen’. However, τεκτων actually comes from a root for weaving or braiding, while Greek σαγος ‘soldier’s cloak’ was explicitly described by Polybius as worn by Βοιοι and other “Celtic” tribes fighting against Rome. So the *Tectosages* were most likely ‘cloak weavers’ and the name could have been constructed in Greek, Latin, or other languages. The one-off spelling *Teutosages* by Ausonius looks suspiciously like a Germanic twist into ‘people speakers’.

For another founding tribe, the **Τολιστοβογιοι** (or Τολιστοβοιοι, etc), no plausible Celtic etymology has yet been suggested. The element **bogio*, also in the Galatian name *Αδοβογιωνα* and maybe other ancient names such as the *Costoboci* tribe, was interpreted by Delamarre (2003) and Evans (1967) as Gaulish for ‘smasher, swaggerer’. This is unconvincing, as is our own previous analogy between Τολιστοβογιοι and OE *tollsaete* ‘toll booth’ plus OE *bogian* or *bugian* ‘inhabit’. We wonder if βογιοι was a variant of βοιοι or *Boii*, the tribe who gave rise to the names Bavaria and Bohemia, plus probably Bologna and Bolzano, and contributed to the name *Boiorix*. PIE **b^heug-* ‘to swell’ developed in Germanic towards French *bague* ‘ring’ and OE *boga* ‘bow’. Slavic толстый ‘thick’ is related to τυλος ‘swelling’, Welsh *twlch* ‘hillock’ and Scottish place names beginning with Tull-, and possibly the Roman name *Tullius*. So the Τολιστοβογιοι were probably ‘thick bow people’.

For the third founding tribe, the **Τροκμοι** (or *Trocmi* or *Trogmi*) we have not seen any viable Celtic etymology. One possible explanation lies in the biblical *Togarmah*, regarded by early Christian and Jewish writers (including Jerome) as the patriarch of various tribes, including Phrygians and Turkic peoples, which might be appropriate for the *Trocmi* as the easternmost Galatian tribe. In fact, Τροκμοι looks Greek, compounded of τροχος ‘wheel’ plus an ending like that in dogma, sigma, drachma, etc. Also German *trocken* ‘dry’ would suit the lands of the Τροκμοι. The **Τρωκναδες** of a later bishopric might come from a similar source.

The name **Ambitouti** obviously unites two pan-European elements **ambi-* ‘around’ and **touti* ‘people’, discussed below.

The **Αιγοςαγες** tribe were a follow-up migration in 218 BC. Celticists like to analyse their name as a compound of **ago-* ‘battle’ and **sac-* ‘seeker’, but it looks like straightforward Greek for ‘goat-skin cloaks’, beginning with αιγετος ‘goat-ish’ (as in the Aegean Sea), though there are other possibilities. A single mention of **Ριγοςαγες** by Polybius looks like a spelling variant of Αιγοςαγες or perhaps Tectosages.

A single mention of **#νοβαντηνοι** (where # denotes an unreadable letter) on an inscription of AD 166 makes people think of the ancient British *Trimovantes*, a name often claimed to be Celtic, even though it is straightforward Latin for ‘three renewings’, a perfect match to the three river estuaries of their homeland, Essex. Perhaps #νοβαντηνοι were people living just outside Galatia, around the extensive estuary where the river Sakarya reaches the Black Sea.

A single mention of **Οκονδιανοι** on a late inscription is often likened to the *Vocontii* tribe, whose homeland lay in south-east France, between the river Rhone and the Alps, and for which Celtic translations based on ‘twenty’ or ‘two hundred’ have been discussed. However, Οκονδιανοι looks suspiciously like a compound of Greek οικος ‘home’, the root of English ‘economy’, and διανοια ‘thought’.

The **Τόσιωποι** were mentioned by Plutarch in the first century BC. One suggested Celtic interpretation was ‘badger eyes’. There are many plausible translations in other languages, notably a compound of Greek τῶς ‘lots of’ and ὠπῆ ‘view’.

The name **Toutobodiaci**, mentioned by Pliny (5,42), contains three word elements that are commonly, but wrongly, claimed as distinctively Celtic: *tout* and *bod* discussed below, plus *-acus* ‘people’ (also an active suffix in Latin and in Greek –ακος).

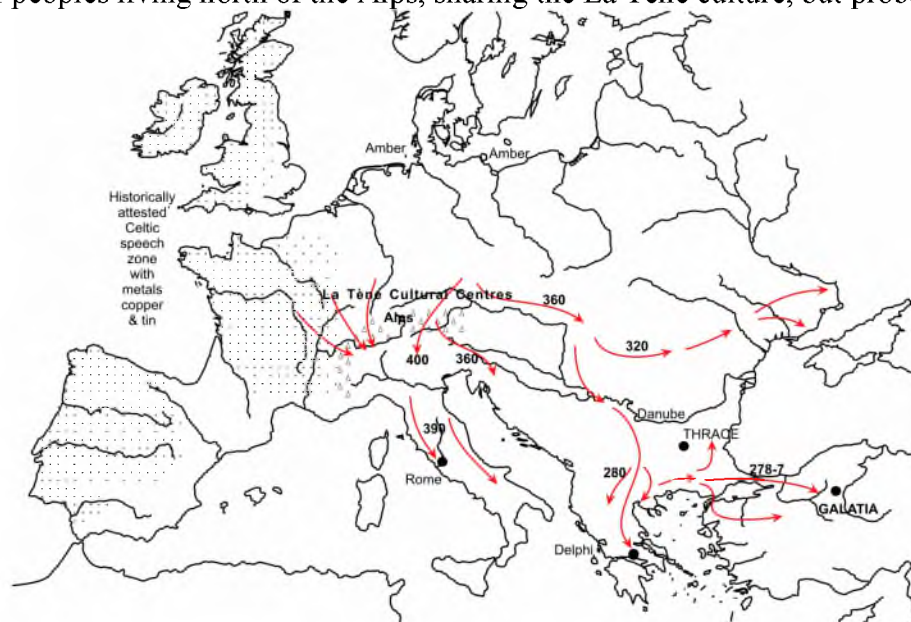
The name **Voturi** was mentioned by Pliny. Freeman draws attention to the personal names *Voturios* and *Voturia* on inscriptions, which he describes as Gaulish, though an abbreviation *VOT* was common throughout the empire and is usually interpreted as a Roman (formerly Etruscan) family name *Voturius* related to *Veturius*. OE *wop* ‘sound’ and *wod* ‘mad’ exemplify perhaps the best of many Germanic possibilities.

The 12 Galatian *φηλη* ‘subtribes’, listed in various inscriptions or mentioned by Pliny, includes various obviously classical names, such as the **Sebasteni**, from Greek Σεβαστή ‘majestic’, equivalent to Latin Augustan. Two that are not obviously Greek or Latin were Μαρουραγηνι and Πακαληνι. To summarise this section, most Galatian tribal names look Greek or Latin, except for the Τολιστοβογοιοι and Toutobodiaci, which do not look particularly Celtic.

The Celtic Invasions

Many groups of warlike tribesmen from the north impinged on the early Roman Empire and were called Celts or Gauls (Κελτοι or Γαλαται) somewhat indiscriminately in Latin or Greek texts, but let’s examine the personal names recorded for the leaders of those warrior bands. A good place to start looking up the classical sources is [Attalus](#).

The map above shows how Cunliffe (2008) perceived the context within which Galatians migrated into Anatolia. During the favourable climatic phase around 500 BC, Rome was not the only ancient society with a rapidly growing population and a powerful military spirit. A range of peoples living north of the Alps, sharing the La Tène culture, but probably not a



common language, had prospered by controlling the exchange of goods from the north-west (notably amber and metals) versus manufactured goods and wine from the Mediterranean. Then they shifted from trading to raiding through the Alpine passes.

In 387 BC Rome was sacked by a Gaulish army of the *Senones* tribe, led by **Brennus**, infamous for saying *vae victis* ‘woe to the conquered’ (Livy, book 5). This experience left a psychological scar on the Romans that partially explains Caesar’s genocide in Gaul more than three centuries later.

The name (or title) Brennus appeared again in the incursion of 280-276 BC, this time written in Greek as **Βρεννος** by Pausanias, Polybius, and Strabo. A Gaulish army struck deep into Greece and was finally defeated near Delphi, when some of its retreating remnants went off to Anatolia to become the Galatians and others settled in Thrace (modern Bulgaria). For a detailed discussion of the logistics of that episode see Campbell (2009). The raiders probably started out from somewhere near modern Dimovo, in Bulgaria close to Romania and the river Danube. Any close link with Celtic-speaking tribes near the Atlantic is inherently unlikely. Strabo (4,1,13) wrote: *some say that the second Brennus who made an invasion against Delphi was a Prausan, but I am unable to say where on earth the Prausans formerly lived. Prussia? Persia? No one else knows, either.*

The name Brennus has inspired much speculation. Geoffrey of Monmouth's Brennius was probably pure fiction. PIE **b^hereǵ^h*- 'high' led, on the Celtic side, to modern Welsh *brein* 'king' and *bryn* 'hill', the *Brigantes* tribe, and probably to modern names like Brigid and Brian. On the Germanic side it led to OE *brego* 'prince', German *Berg* 'hill', and Burgundy. Then again there were characters like Bran the Blessed in Welsh mythology and various Irish kings with similar names, which are usually attributed to Celtic *bran* 'raven', perceived as a bloodthirsty bird. Germanic mythology has Hildebrand, in which *-brand* is usually explained as 'sword', possibly from PIE **b^hren-* 'stick out', but more likely from **b^hereu-* 'boil', which led to modern words like English brew and burn or German *brennen* 'burn'. *Brennstoff* 'amber' was one of the highest-value commodities traded towards the early Mediterranean over the Brenner Pass, through which the *Allamanni* would later invade Italy. And Tacitus later mentioned a *Brimmo* in AD 69 who was definitely Germanic.

If printed column-inches could decide the issue, Brennus was Celtic. If phonetic and geographical closeness count more, Brennus was Germanic. Maybe Brennus was a 'burner', someone who cleared forests to farm cattle. However, since he was famous for being a warrior leader, maybe his name really meant 'flaming sword'. Now let's look at other names reported by ancient historians for early Celtic/Gaulish/Galatian leaders outside Anatolia. For brevity we often do not discuss all possibilities, but just home in one plausible relative, often using Old English to stand in for the whole Germanic family.

Ακίχωριος or Cichorius was joint leader with Brennus in the early stages (280-279 BC) of the expedition that attacked Greece (Pausanias 10,19,8). The first element is 'sword' (Greek *ακίς*, Latin *acies*, German *Ecke*, English *edge*) as in names like Eckhart and Agilbert. The second element has multiple possibilities, but perhaps most likely for a battle commander is 'horn' (Greek *κερας*, Latin *cornus*, etc).

Βαθαναττος was leader of the *Scordisci* remnant of Brennus' invasion force that went off to Thrace (Athenaeus: *Deipnosophistae* 6, 232). Classical authors might have read his name as 'high born', compounded of Greek *βαθος*, often translated as 'deep', but in magnitude not direction, plus Latin *natus* 'born'. However, Germanic 'daring in battle' makes better sense, with first element like OE *beadu* 'battle', and second element like OE *néðan* 'to venture'. Compare *Byrhtnoth*.

Κομβουτις was a deputy commander under Brennus (Pausanias 10,22,2). This sounds like a Greek interpretation as 'hairy herdsman' (*κομη* 'hair' + *βουτης* 'herdsman') of a Germanic original 'battle commander' like Tolkien's fictional Gundabad (*gunDa-* 'war' + *beuðanan* 'command'), or the historical Radegund and modern Gunther.

Ορεστοριος was a deputy commander under Brennus (Pausanias 10,22,2). Greek *ορεστερος* 'of the mountains'. Perhaps 'highlander'. Or maybe a Germanic compound, like horse-Thor.

Κερεθριος led a contingent of invading Gauls into Thrace in 278 BC (Pausanias 10,19,6). Greek *κερας* 'horn' plus *θριξ* 'hair' suggests 'horned and hairy'.

Κομοντοριος was the first Gaulish king in Thrace (Polybius 4,45). Maybe he was 'long-haired' (*κομαω* 'let hair grow long' or Latin *comans* 'long-haired') or a Germanic warrior based on *gunDa-* 'war' + Thor (war god). Note also *κωμη* 'unwalled village'.

Καμβανλις was a precursor of Brennus in leading the BC 279 Gaulish invasion as far as Thrace (Pausanias 10,19,5). A bit like Greek κομβολυτης ‘cutpurse’, but might come from Germanic *gunPa-* ‘war’ + *bald* ‘bold’.

Βολγιος or Belgius was another leader of the push into Thrace (Pausanias 10,19,7 etc.). His name, like that of the *Belgae* tribe, is usually explained as from PIE **b^helg^h-* ‘swell’, giving a meaning like ‘boastful’ or ‘furious’.

Λουτουριος or Lutarius was one of two leaders of the migration into Galatia. This looks very like a Frankish name (most likely meaning ‘lauded by the army’) that showed up in kings’ named *Chlothar* or in bishop *Leuthere*/Leutherius, and evolved into Lothar or Luther. Caesar mentioned Lucterius as a Cadurci leader, and Lugotorix in Britain. One attested Gaulish word was *lutura* ‘vigorous’.

Λεοννωριος or Lonorius was another leader of the original immigration. Maybe a Latin version of Germanic Leonard. Lions survived in parts of Europe well into Roman times.

Ανηροεστος was one leader of a contingent of Gaesatae (‘spearmen’) mercenaries, who fought alongside the Boii and Insubres against the Romans in 224 BC (Polybius 2,22). They were not from Galatia but probably from what would later be called Burgundy. Greek ανηρ ‘man’ plus εστια ‘fireplace’ suggests something like ‘homebody’.

Κογκολιτανος was another leader of the Gaesatae in 224 BC (Polybius 2,22), with a name that obviously combines Greek κογχος ‘mussel’ and λιτανος ‘praying’. Κογχος could describe a range of items shaped like a seashell (hence English conch and concave), including a helmet, but its most likely meaning here is ‘purple’, the colour of royalty obtained from various molluscs most commonly called murex. Suggestions based on a hypothetical Gaulish **conco* ‘claw’ and **litanos* ‘wide’ (by Celtic loss of initial P from the same PIE root as English plain, platter, and flat) are unconvincing.

Βοιορις was leader of the *Cimbri*, a Germanic tribe who came south to defeat the Romans in 105 BC. We discuss the *Boii* above and *-rix* below. His allies, the *Teutones* are sometimes claimed to have had a leader *Teutobod*, who was killed by Romans at the battle of Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC, but he may be invented since we have failed to find a primary source.

The general pattern of these continental “Celtic” leaders is clear. They appear to have had middle-European (closer to early Germanic than to Celtic) names that got remembered in ways that look vaguely domestic or unflattering in Greek.

Name Elements from Multiple Languages

When the Celtic Overlordship theory was still in vogue, and people still believed in a central European Celtic homeland, several words acquired a false reputation for being distinctively Celtic. The prime offender that concerns Galatia is *-rix* ‘leader’ or ‘king’. The biggest single reason why people describe Galatians (and *Belgae* at the other end of Jerome’s comment) as Celtic is the number of names that end in *-rix*. Galatia had *Adiatorix*, *Aioiorix*, *Albiorix*, *Aldorix*, *Ateporix*, *Bitorix*, *Boiorix*, *Brogoris*, *Connacorex*, *Epatorix*, *Eporedorix*, *Gaizatorix*, *Olorix*, *Sinorix*, and *Smertorix*.

Many modern writers unthinkingly assume that an early *-rix* name is solid evidence that its bearer was a native Celtic speaker. This idea is wrong, but it will take some space to explain why. Fairly obviously, Latin *rex*, Sanskrit *raj*, Old Irish *ri*, Gothic *reiks*, and the name ending *-rix* are cognates, and mean something like ‘king’ or ‘leader’. However, the sequence of sound changes reconstructed for Germanic languages does not allow *reiks* to have descended directly from the same PIE root as the other ‘king’ words, but only as a loan-word via Celtic.

Even if this phonetic argument (dating from 1884) is valid, all it establishes is that no known lexical word in any language exactly matched *-rix*. Presumably it was just the conventional Latin way, influenced by *rex*, to write down a name element that was widely used in middle Europe but did not sound natural in Latin. Imagine how modern English speakers would

struggle to write down *van Goch*, *Rijksmuseum*, *Reichstag*, or *rijsttafel* spoken in native Dutch or German.

Pokorny (1959) perceived the PIE root of *-rix* as a verb **reg-*, with a core meaning well expressed by some of its descendants in English: regulate, direct, and right. As soon as one enquires into the exact meanings of *rex*, *rajah*, etc, matters get very [complicated](#). Societies differed in how they chose leaders, who could have priestly, judicial, or military functions. The Gothic bible of Ulfilas (around AD 360) used *reiks* for just one of two Greek words for ‘king’. Why is there no cognate in Greek, Iranian, etc? Or even in English (apart from loan-words) despite its plethora of near synonyms: king, thane, despot, earl, noble, warlord, etc. Modern German *Reich* and its English equivalent in *bishopric* mean ‘that which is ruled’, not ‘ruler’. A later complication came from the *riches* that accrued to rulers.

There seems to be no clean answer from linguistics – certainly not enough to establish a Celtic origin of obviously Germanic names like Frederick or Heinrich. But what about the historic record? Possibly the earliest recorded *-rix* name that can be firmly pinned down to a Germanic tribe is *Boiorix* of the Cimbri (105 BC). Rulers’ names with endings that were usually Latinised to *-ricus* and Anglicised to *-ric* must go back to the earliest common origin of the Germanic tribes since they appeared across Europe from the earliest written records of the tribe concerned. This naming tradition seems to have far deeper roots than in Welsh, Breton or Irish name lists.

The exact dates, spellings and even identities of early *-ric* rulers are highly debatable, but here is a partial list:

Visigoths: *Athanaricus* (AD 369) and *Alaric* (395)
Vandals: *Gunderic* (407) and *Gaeseric* (born 389)
Burgundy: *Gunderic* (born 436) *Chilperic* (crowned 474)
Ostrogoths: *Ermaneric* (died 376) and *Theoderic* (born 454)
Franks: *Ascaric* (about 300) and *Childeric* (born about 440)
Gepids: *Ardaric* (about 450)
England: *Cynric* (550), *Ecgric* (636), *Eormenric* (540) *Theodric* (580)
Denmark: *Horik* (800)

The earliest *-rix* names were carefully listed and discussed by Evans (1967, pp 243-249). In principle it should now be possible to update that discussion by using a modern database of [epigraphic inscriptions](#). We made a brief start on this huge task and were immediately struck by the preponderance of female epitaphs. Most contain Latin *-trix* formations, such as *victrix* ‘victorious’, *genetrix* ‘mother’, *ornatrix* ‘maid’, *nutrix* ‘nurse’, *adiutrix* ‘assistant’, *meretrix* ‘whore’, and many more. These occupational names carried over into personal names too.

Then there are names that look Aquitanian (Basque), such as *Baigorixo*; short names like *Prix* or *Rixa*; incomplete names expanded using debatable assumptions; and other odd cases. Out of the entire corpus, only 50 to 100 inscriptions mention names like *Biturix* or *Dumnorix* that possibly applied to early leaders or to ordinary people later named after them. Did they occur preferentially in Celtic heartland areas? As far as we can tell – no. The safe conclusion to draw is that *-rix* was widely used across Europe and has no diagnostic value for declaring a name Celtic or Germanic.

Much the same conclusion applies to several other name elements. ***Ambi-*** is a good example. The idea that German *Amt* ‘office’ came from Latin *ambactus* ‘servant’, which in turn came from Celtic **ambi* ‘around’, has a long pedigree. However, the PIE root **amb^hi-* ‘around’ has many descendants, including Latin *ambi*, Greek ἀμφί, Anglo-Saxon *ymbe*, etc.

Similarly, there is no justification for believing that **touta* ‘people’ existed first in Celtic forms ancestral to Old Irish *tuath*, and that forms in Germanic languages (Dutch, teutonic, Theodoric, Dietrich, etc) started life as loan-words from Celtic. Latin *totus* ‘whole’ is cognate and suggests how the word evolved to mean a tribe bigger than a village.

The ending *-maros* ‘great’ was common in Galatia: *Brogimarus*, *Catomarus*, *Chiomara*, *Combolomarus*, *Rossomara*, *Smertomarus*, *Smertomara*, *Tectomarus*. It might be Celtic, but

it is not diagnostic. Cognates in early Germanic languages include OE *maeran* ‘to proclaim, celebrate’, and it shows up Germanic names from Chlodomer (Frankish AD 495) and Godomar (Burgundian around AD 500), to later Adhemar and Hathumar, down to modern Waldemar and Vladimir. There is also a possible confusion from *mare* ‘dream spirit’ found in *cauchemar* ‘nightmare’ etc.

Ancient references to names built with *-rix*, *-marus*, *touta-*, etc occurred centuries before the main evidence for use of comparable names among clearly Germanic tribes. Maybe that gap was long enough for Celtic words to get built into Germanic rulers’ names? However, in the period AD 353 to 378, Ammianus cited names *Athanarichus*, *Hermanaric*, *Munderichus*, *Viderichus*, and *Vithimiris*, plus variant spellings dropping an H. By the time of Jordanes (AD 551) long genealogies had been constructed for Gothic leaders with names (some perhaps fictional) like *Filemer*, *Gelimer*, *Thiudemer*, *Valamir*, *Vidimer*, *Berich*, *Geberich*, *Theodoridus*, *Alaricus*, *Amalaricus*, *Aoricus*, *Ardaricus*, *Ariaricus*, *Athalaricus*, *Eurichus*, *Eutharicus*, *Friderichus*, *Gadaric*, *Gyzericus*, *Halaricus*, *Hunericus*, *Retemeris*, *Segericus*, and *Vetericus*, plus variant spellings.

The ending *-tarus* showed up in *Bogodiatarus*, *Brogitarus*, *Deiotarus*. This was presumably the Galatian equivalent of Latin *taurus* ‘bull’, well known from the Minotaur in Crete, Taurobolium in Rome, Taurus mountains in Turkey, etc.

The elements *boud* and *bod* have long been favourites with Celticists because of the romantic myth that *Boudicca* was Celtic for Victoria. As we show in a detailed paper now making its way towards publication, there were many roots like *boud* and *bod*, of which none concerned victory but the main one concerned cattle.

The ending *-gnatus* (in *Bitognatus*, *Cassignatus*, *Eposognatus*) may have meant a family relationship, for which Delamarre (2003, p180) accepts the specific meaning, implied by a Latin gloss, of ‘son’ in *lingua gallica* (whatever that meant). That would make *-gnatus* the Galatian equivalent of Greek *-γεντος*, Latin *genitus* ‘offspring’, English ‘kind’, and much more. The vowel A does not make *-gnatus* distinctively Celtic, because Latin *natus* and *gnatus* ‘born’ are common in inscriptions, with *gnatus* the less common but probably earlier form. However, this may not be the end of the story, since in Greek *γνωτος* meant ‘kin person’ but also ‘well known’, which is also the sense of related words in Celtic languages.

Another possible relative of *-gnatus* occurs in the word juggernaut. Sanskrit *natha* ‘lord, protector’ is probably cognate with Goth *nipan* ‘to help, to support’, whose relatives in other Germanic languages often have an initial G, such as Old Dutch *ginatha*, modern Dutch *genade* and German *Gnade*, which mean ‘mercy, favour’. In Old English *genedan* meant ‘to compel’, but its modern relative ‘need’ has largely lost that sense of compulsion, and retains mainly the sense of deficiency. This is another way, as with *nemeton* mentioned above, that ancient ideas about reciprocal obligations make certain words seem strange to modern eyes.

The claim that *epo-* always comes from **epos* ‘horse’ and is diagnostically Celtic needs to be treated with caution, if only because horse-related words are so diverse. English alone has cavalry, equine, foal, hippic, horse, mare, pony, stallion, etc. Some Celtic language words for horse contain a letter B, but not P, for which the only direct evidence is that many Gaulish names begin with EP-. But their Germanic cognates, such as OE *eoh* ‘war-horse’, do not have a P either. To find a P one needs to go to early Greek: *Επειος* who built the Trojan Horse, according to Homer. (The initial H that led to *hippo-* words was a later development in Greek.) It is also troubling that one of the commonest words in the Greek language was *επος* ‘word’, with derivative *επονομαζω* ‘apply name to’ and of course English ‘eponym’.

Maybe the goddess *Epona* is the key to this puzzle, since she is mentioned in ancient texts far more than any other *Ep-* names, and is frequently represented in icons, often riding side-saddle. *Epona* has been recorded all over the Roman Empire, but most strongly from Gaul. It has therefore been argued (unconvincingly) that her name was Celtic and her cult was spread by Gaulish soldiers. On balance, we suspect that everything to do with *epo-* was part of general European religion (possibly associated with a solar chariot goddess) and should not be linked to any particular language.

Many other name elements will be considered one-by-one below, where mostly the meaning is uncontroversial, much the same whether it came via Celtic, Germanic, Greek, Latin, or whatever. On the whole, we place little reliance on precise spellings, because so many links line the chain from an original person's spoken name to what can be seen in writing now. The really critical question is whether any Galatian name elements can be identified that have clearly different interpretations in Celtic from those in other European languages.

Possibly Diagnostic Name Elements

If the most frequent elements of Galatian names are not diagnostically Celtic in the way that they have been portrayed in the past, are there really no elements in Galatian names that occur frequently and offer a decisive choice between Celtic or Germanic etymologies? Or does it all come down to a statistical argument over a mass of name elements that occur once or twice and are probably not Greek?

How about the element **brog-**, which occurs in Βρογίταρος, Brogitarus, Βρογοίς, Εριγοβρογίς, Petobrogen, Σουωλιβρογηνος, and perhaps Ecobrogis and Tembrogis? The standard Celtic interpretation (Evans, 1967, pp 158-160) is that *brog-* was a Gaulish cognate (with M/B exchange) of the word that gave rise to English margin, Mercia, etc, and therefore it meant 'borderland'. Most authors consider that the issue is settled by a phrase, in a marginal note to Juvenal 8,234, that *ideo autem dicti Allobrogae, quoniam brogae Galli agrum dicunt* 'they are called *Allobrogae* because the Gauls say *broga* for district'. However, the *Allobrogae* lived just south of modern Geneva (Gaesatae territory) and allied with a king called *Tutomotulus*, so it is far from certain that they spoke Celtic. Also the date and reliability of that note-writer are uncertain, and Celticists conveniently fail to cite old German *Brühl* 'good pasture' and Russian берег 'shore' as cognates, though they do invoke Celtic **brogilo* to explain numerous place-names such as Breuil.

OE *brego* 'governor' (also spelled *breogo*) has cognates in other Germanic languages. It might be related to OE *broga* 'monster, terrible', but more likely to OE *beorgan* 'to protect'. This offers more comfortable translations than 'borderland' for the personal and tribal names listed by Delamarre (2003, pp 39,90,91). For example Βρογίταρος would be 'great ruler'. With place names there is a worry over precise spellings and possible confusion from other *br-* elements including early forms of bridge.

Another element that might be of diagnostic use is **bogi-**, which was discussed above with regard to the Tolistobogii and also occurs in Αδοβογιωνα.

Personal Names

Here follow the personal names cited as Galatian by Freeman (2001). We leave out the person's dates, family relationships, variant spellings, and firmness of attachment to Galatia, which are given by Freeman. Our alphabetical order puts Greek K and X with Roman C. We accept the nominative singular forms deduced by previous workers, but ignore the accents and breathing marks they put on Greek letters, many of which were originally in capitals without accents. Name elements discussed above, such as *-rix*, are mostly ignored here.

The abbreviation XDpp means "translation suggested by Xavier Delamarre (2003) on page pp". We generally give these Celtic suggestions first, out of respect for the decades of general acceptance that many of them have already enjoyed. Non-Celtic alternatives generally come second, and range from very tentative guesses to very solid suggestions. Readers must judge which possibilities look best – and please suggest improvements!

The sheer size of English vocabulary, plus its appetite for Greek and Latin roots, makes it a convenient source of examples. They do not necessarily indicate that OE was especially close to Galatian.

Other unusual abbreviations:

♂ or ♀ = name borne by a man or a woman, respectively

☺ or ☹ or ☐ = name recorded in texts, or stones, or coins etc, respectively

☼ = name of a god, four of whom are treated as honorary persons here

Αδιατοριξ or Adiatorix ♂♂☼☼ XD32 '*riche en désirs*' from Gaulish **adiant-* 'eagerness'. We prefer Latin *aedituus* 'temple custodian', whose function as keeper of a sacred fire shows up in the obsolete English word *ad* 'funeral pyre'. Remember that this section ignores repeated elements, such as *-rix*, already discussed in detail.

Αδοβογιωνα ♀♀♀☼☼ XD81 'great swaggerer'. Taking *bogi-* as meaning 'bow' and *-ona* as indicating a goddess name would make her an early Princess Diana (the huntress).

Αιοιοριξ ♂☼ XD36 'old'. Compare Scots aye, and English aeon from Greek αἰων, though there are other Greek possibilities.

Αλβιοριξ ♂☼ XD37 '*roi du monde*', assumes Celtic sense development towards sky from words like Latin *albus* for 'white', whereas Germanic developed that root towards swans and elves. Maybe 'white-haired king', though in Gaul a mountain-top god is more likely.

Αλδωριξ ♂☼ A meaning 'old king' is easy to accommodate in Germanic.

Ambitoutus ♂☼ XD294 (in Syria) resembles the Ambitouti tribe discussed above. Literally 'around people'.

Αμβοσυνιος ♂☼ perhaps 'around pigs' with a pan-European second element, like English 'sow' and 'swine'.

Αρδη ♀☼ XD52 'high'. Same as Greek ἀρδην 'lifted up high', with cognates in most European languages. No more Celtic than the Trevirian name *Arda* or the Ardennes forest.

Αρτεινος ♂☼ XD55 'bear'. Welsh *arth*, Greek αρκτος, etc all come from a PIE word for 'bear', and the names of some fierce animals were subject to ancient taboos, so Αρτεινος cannot be confidently assigned to any one language family. King Arthur is considered mythical by Koch (2006) but might have come from the Roman family name Artorius. Artemis was an important goddess in and near Greece.

Αρτικνος ♂♂☼ XD55 'bear'. See Αρτεινος above. Also shows up in χωριονΑρτικνιακον 'place of Artiknos' people'.

Ατεποριξ ♂♂☼☼ XD259 'horseback king' with *ad* + *epos*, but see above about *epo-*.

Αυειωρ ♂☼ XD61 '*riche en désirs*'. More likely some kind of family member, like Latin *avia* 'grandmother', English avuncular and atavistic, Welsh *ewythr*, and OE *eam* 'uncle'.

Βηπολιτανος ♂☼ XD312 overrules Freeman's 'broad face' and suggests 'loud voice' from Gaulish **uepos* 'voice, speech', from the same PIE root as Greek επος 'word', Latin *vox* 'voice', English whoop, etc. Gaulish **litano* 'wide' might show Celtic loss of initial P, from the same PIE root as English plain, platter, and flat. Argument for a uniquely Celtic origin seems unconvincing, not least because of the Greek word λιτανος 'praying'.

Βιτογνατος ♂☼ XD76 suggests Gaulish **bitu-* 'world' developing figuratively towards 'life'. We think that Latin *vita* 'life' needs less stretching. (B and V were almost interchangeable in much Latin and Greek writing.) Germanic meanings of 'prayer', as in German *bitte* 'please', or 'battle', as in OE *beadu*, are also plausible. All three possible interpretations of the first element fit slightly better with γνατος translated as 'lord protector' rather than 'son of', so maybe Βιτογνατος claimed to be 'battle lord'.

Βιτοιτος or Bitocus ♂☼ XD76 '?worldly'. See comments about Βιτογνατος above.

Βιτοριξ ♂☼ XD76 'king of the world', but see comments about Βιτογνατος above, and note a published [opinion](#) that this name should really be read **Βιτοκιξ**.

Blesamius ♂☼ XD71 'very powerful', like the goddess Belisama, about whom all the limited evidence points to the core Gaulish area. Maybe a superlative form of **bel-* that Pokorny (1959) translates as 'shining white', but Delamarre prefers 'strong'.

Βογοδιατάρος ♂☼ Freeman labels this a manuscript error (Strabo 12,5,2) for Βρογίταρος.

Βουσαγαρος ♂☉ XD79,175 ‘cattle mooer’ assuming Gaulish **garo* ‘cry’. This is nonsense, since the Greek word σαγαρις described a type of battle axe used by the tribes of central Asia and well known from archaeology. The initial **Βοι-** might refer to cattle, but we prefer plain ‘people’, leading to a complete translation like ‘battle axe person’.

Βοιω#ιξ ♂☉ XD81 ‘Boii king’, taking the Boii as a Celtic tribe named from **boios* ‘frappeur’, ‘terrible’. The Boii tribe were probably Germanic cattle farmers, but a link to a word for ‘bow’ is also plausible.

Βουδορις or **Βωδορις** ♂☉ Not Celtic. Greek ‘ox flayer’, perhaps leather worker.

Βουσσουριγιος ☼☉ An adjective used of Zeus in Galatia and Dacia. Freeman wrote “not to be confused with Greek Βυσσυργικος (<βυσσυργος ‘flax-weaver’)”. An element **busso-* has been interpreted as Celtic for ‘mouth’ in the name **Bussumaros** recorded in Thrace. However, compounds based on Βουσ ‘ox’ were prominent in Greek mythology, such as Athena Boudeia (Trümpy, 1994), and there are many Greek words that begin with ουρ-, such as ουρεω ‘watch’.

Βριγατος ♂♂☉ XD88 ‘vigorous’, based on Gaulish **brigo* ‘force’. Not diagnostically Celtic because there are so many other possibilities, especially within Germanic, represented by modern English bright, braid, etc. We prefer a translation related to OE *brego* ‘governor’.

Βρογμαρος ♂☉ XD 90 ‘has large territory’ or Germanic ‘famous ruler’.

Brogitarus or **Βρογιταρος** ♂☉☉ XD90 ‘frontier bull’, or Germanic ‘governor bull’.

Βρογορις ♂♂☉ XD90 ‘border king’, analogous with the later English ‘marcher lord’. OE *bregorice* ‘kingdom’ suggests that Βρογορις was ‘king of the realm’.

Καμμα ♀♀☉☉ Might be Celtic ‘bent’ or Latin ‘exchanged’ or Anatolian (Freeman, 2001).

Καουαρος ♂☉☉ XD111 ‘hero’ or ‘champion’. Same as Thracian king *Καυαρος*. Possibly traceable to PIE **keu-* ‘swell’, and related to Greek κυριος.

Κασσιγνατος or **Cassignatus** ♂☉ XD109 ‘son of bronze’. *Cassi* has been much discussed. It was probably originally ‘tin’ or tin-bronze, then helmets (its initial military use), swords, and coins, then part of tribal names. *Cassi* cannot be diagnostically Celtic because of Greek κασσιτερος ‘tin’ and the 3000 BC tin-making in Anatolia.

Κατομαρος ♂☉ XD110 ‘belligerent’. Majority opinion holds that *Catu-* was always Celtic for ‘battle’ and is cognate with OE *headu-* ‘war’. Our analysis of ancient *Catu-* names (paper in preparation) suggests that this idea is mistaken.

Centaretus or **Κεντοαπατης** ♂☉ XD116 ‘race winner’. First part = Gaulish **cintus*, like Greek καινος ‘first’, Latin *recens* ‘fresh’. Second part Gaulish **ritu-* ‘race’ a speculative cognate of Latin *rota* ‘wheel’. Greek κεντρον ‘goad’ plus απατος ‘cursed’ is far better. Saint Paul’s use of κεντρον in his account of God’s words “it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” was perhaps using an age-old phrase familiar to all middle-eastern farmers.

Χιομαρα ♀☉ OE *cyme* ‘beautiful’, hence perhaps ‘famous beauty’.

Combolomarus ♂☉ OE *combol* ‘military standard’, hence perhaps ‘famous battle flag’.

Κομινκα ♀☉ Greek κομη, Latin *coma* ‘hair’ plus a diminutive suffix might suit a lady.

Κονβατιακος ♂☉ XD46 ‘fighter’. A compound of *con* ‘with’ + *bati* ‘beat’ + *acus* ‘people’ could be constructed in several languages.

Κονκλαδος or **Κονκλατος** ♂♂☉ XD117 ‘sword-equipped’, *con* ‘with’ plus Gaulish **cladio* assumed for the name of a Celtiberian sword that Romans copied as their *gladius*. However, κογκος ‘royal purple’ and κλαδος ‘branch’ offer an alternative explanation.

Κοννακορηξ ♂☉ XD259 ‘sharp claw king’. Κογχος ‘royal purple king’ seems better,

Deiotarus or **Δηιοταρος** (etc) ♂♂♂♂☉ XD142,290 Perhaps the most archetypally Galatian name of all, borne by four kings from the 2nd century BC into Roman times.

Obviously it meant ‘divine bull’, compounded from two pan-European elements. Latin *deus* ‘god’ and *dies* ‘day’ illustrate how gods were linked with the sun and sky.

Δοβηδων ♂ ☉ XD35 ‘black flame’. Both proposed elements have descendants in many languages, besides Celtic, for example English has ‘deep’ plus ‘oast’.

Δομνειων ♂ ☉ XD151 ‘world’, a development of Gaulish **dumnos*/**dubnos* ‘deep’, with M/B interchange as in *Dumnonia* becoming Devon. We prefer ‘new home’, from Greek δομος + νεος or Latin *domus* + *novus*, while also noting OE *domne* ‘lord’ possibly from Latin *dominus*, and OE *-dom*, which survives in kingdom, freedom and Domesday. Also note **Δομνα**, daughter of Κατομαρος. The Roman emperor’s wife Julia **Domna** was probably a Syrian Arab.

Δομνεκλειος or Domnilaus ♂ ☉ XD194 ‘small and dark’ from Gaulish **dumnos* ‘deep’ (again) plus **lagu* ‘small’, perhaps cognate with Latin *levis* ‘light’. However, the ending looks Greek because κλειω can mean ‘close’ or ‘celebrate’ (as in Cleopatra). Hence perhaps ‘famous lord’ or ‘closed new house’?

Δυριαλος ♂ ☉ *Duro-* ‘door’ or ‘gate’ was pan-European, but at the start of place names was restricted to Belgic or Germanic-border areas. The PIE root **el-* that led to Greek ιαλλω ‘send forth’ might explain the second part. Perhaps ‘gatekeeper’?

Δυσαγαρας ♂ ☉ ‘slow mover??’ Looks Greek: δυς ‘not’ + αγαρρος ‘strong-flowing’.

Δυτευτος ♂ ☉ XD157,305 ‘clumsy’ from Gaulish **dus* ‘bad’ and **tuto-* ‘left’. We prefer to see the second element as **teuto-* ‘people’ and the initial *du* as either ‘two’ or ‘god’.

Εβουρηνος ♂♂ ☉, **Εβουρηνα** ♀ ☉, **Εβουρηανος** ♂ ☉. Celtic **eburos* ‘yew’ and Germanic **eburaz* ‘boar’ are equally plausible roots, just as for *Eboracum* (York) and many similar names. Lacroix (2007) is wholly in favour of sacred yew trees, but XD159 is more cautious, because of boar images on coins etc and the uncertain etymology of French *if* ‘yew’.

Επατοριξ ♂ ☉ XD163,259 ‘horseback king’ with *epos* + *ad*, but see above about *epo-*.

Επονη ♀ ☉ XD163. A version of the goddess Epona.

Επορηδοριξ ♂ ☉ XD163 ‘horse rider king’. This looks like a mistake for **Πορηδοριξ**, mentioned by Plutarch. See above about *epo-*. Eporedia was a town in NW Italy, now Ivrea, where **reda* is said to mean ‘cart’. Not necessarily Celtic.

Εποσογνατος or Eposognatus ♂ ☉ XD 163 ‘horse born’, or maybe ‘knows horses well’, like Greek ιππογνωνων, but taking the *-so-* in the middle as a Celtic intensive prefix. See above about *epo-* and about *-gnatus*. A pure Greek translation would be ‘son of the word’.

Γαιζατοδιαστος ♂ ☉ XD143,173. This obviously builds on the Latin words *Gaesatae* ‘mercenaries’, from *gaesum* ‘heavy javelin’. The root PIE word, perhaps **ghaiso-*, led to proto-Germanic **gaizaz* ‘spear’, whose many descendants in English include words like goad, personal names like Gerald or Garibaldi, and the place-name element gore. The second part is Greek: *-di-* ‘god’ or ‘through’, *αστος* ‘citizen’. Not Celtic.

Γαιζατοριξ ♂ ☉ XD173. ‘mercenary leader’. Not Celtic. See Γαιζατοδιαστος.

Gaulotus ♂ ☉ A Galatian leader in 189 BC. Maybe another Latin version of *Chlothar*?

Λοστοιεκο ♂ ☉ XD207 ‘tail’, maybe ‘penis’ or ‘spear’. Not definitely Galatian.

Μελγιννα ♀ ☉ XD223 ‘sweet-born’. The first element *mel* is pan-European. Μελγιννα looks like a wholly Greek name, with second element γυναι ‘woman’.

Ολοριξ ♂ ☉ XD241 ‘great king’ from Gaulish **ollos* ‘great’. Easier to interpret as Germanic ‘overall king’ like *Alaric*. Compare the *Allamanni* tribe or *Alorix* on a Pannonian epitaph.

Ορτιαγων or Ortiago (etc) ♂ ☉ XD243 suggests Gaulish **ortu-* ‘young animal?’ + **ago-* ‘fight’. The obvious Greek is better: ορτη (variant of εορτη) ‘feast’ + αγων ‘assembly’.

Ουαστεξ ♂☉ XD307 ‘divine’ on the assumption that this name is related to the ουσαις who *occupied themselves with sacrifices and the study of nature* (Strabo 4,4,4) alongside the bards and the druids among the Gauls. Brother of Βαρβολλας. To retain an S in the name, Latin *vastus* ‘empty’, English ‘waste’, might be better. This might make Ουαστεξ a ‘weakling’.

Ουνδιεινος ☼☉ A divine name associated with an Anatolian god and the place name Ουνδια discussed below.

Ροσσομαρα ♀☉ XD 260 parses the name as *ro-su-mara* ‘very-good-great’. Modern English ‘horse’ evolved from earlier *hros*, which became *Ross* in modern German. So a Germanic interpretation of Ροσσομαρα as ‘famous horse’ looks better.

Σενταμος ♂☉ XD270 ‘road person’? PIE **sent-* ‘go, feel’ developed at least as well in Latin, Germanic, etc as in Celtic.

Σινατος ♂☉ XD274 ‘linker’ based on Gaulish **sino-* ‘link, chain’, but **senos* ‘old’, like Latin *senex* or OE *sin-* ‘everlasting’ might be preferable.

Σινοριξ ♂☉ XD274 ‘linked king’, as for Σινατος, though we prefer ‘old king’.

Σκιγγοριος ♂☉ XD169 offers Gaulish root **excingo-* ‘attacking’ Unnecessary because of Greek σκιγγος, Latin *scincus* ‘skink’, a type of lizard much valued in ancient medicine, and OE *scin* ‘magic’ or *scencan* ‘to skink, to pour out drink’. So maybe Σκιγγοριος was some kind of priest involved in healing or pouring out libations.

Σουωλιβρογινης ☼☉ A divine name dated to AD 157. We have not seen a Celtic suggestion, but Germanic languages begin many words with *sw-*. English *swollen* fits the sense usually attributed to *Belgae*, so maybe something like ‘angry ruler’ might fit?

Τεμρογειος ☼☉ Adjective used of a Phrygian god Μας in Phrygian territory.

Ζμερτων ♂☉ The element *smert-* in the north-Gaulish deities Rosmerta and Smertrios is usually translated as ‘carer’ (XD276), based on a PIE root **(s)mer-* ‘remember, care for’, which led to English ‘mourn’, Welsh *armerth* ‘provide’, and a Sanskrit word with initial S. Majority opinion favours this root because statues of Rosmerta suggest a benevolent goddess. However, a closer linguistic match comes from PIE **mer-* ‘rub, wipe’, whose descendants include OE *smeortan* ‘to hurt’ (hence modern *smart*) and Latin *mordere* ‘to bite’. If initial *ro-* came from another root, represented in modern English by *rue* and by *reck* ‘care’, Rosmerta could be Germanic for ‘cares for pain’. In Galatia, Greek cognates σμερδαλεος and σμερδνος ‘terrible to look at’ provide the best explanation of Ζμερτων.

Ζμερτουμαρος ♂☉ and **Ζμερτουμαρα** ♀☉ XD276 ‘famous carer’, but see Ζμερτων.

Ζμερτοριξ ♂☐ XD276 ‘carer king’ (cf *Caratacus*), but see Ζμερτων.

Now here are some Galatian names that were not in Freeman’s list. Suggestions welcome. Some are newly found, but in most cases we do not know why Freeman left them out. RECAM numbers refer to epigraphic records in Mitchell, French & Greenhalgh (1982).

Αντεσσικοπος, Αντεσεικομπος ☉ in RECAM 115 (with Artiknos) and 170.

Βαρβολλας, Βαρβιλλος ♂☉ Looks like a diminutive Latin of *barba* ‘beard’. ‘Little beard’ might suit the brother of Ουαστεξ ‘?weakling’.

Βειταμα ☉ (RECAM 258)

Bellon, Βελλα, Βελλαδου ☉ XD71 ‘powerful’, with alternatives in many languages. (RECAM 298, 230, 296). Attempts to claim these names as Celtic date back to Holder (1896).

French (2003) mentions conflicting opinions on the Celticness of these names:-

Βουγιωνος ♂☉ (French, 2003, p116) Labelled as Celtic by Holder (1896).

Βωκερες Source not yet identified. XD259 ‘loud king’. The word *boca* is firmly attested in Gaulish, and looks like Latin *bucca* ‘cheek’, with a huge number of relatives (such as English *belch*) all converging on a sense of verbal boasting.

Γαυδατος ☉ (RECAM 113)

Πεντομενος ☉ (RECAM 362) Perhaps PIE **rendʰ-* ‘tear’ plus Greek *μενος* ‘strength’?

Σατωνος ☉ (RECAM 498) Lots of possibilities, including Latin *sator* ‘planter, father’, Satan, satrap, and *σατον*, a Hebrew measurement.

Σαωκονδαρος ♂ ☉ In-law of Deiotarus (Strabo 12,5,3), son of Tarcondarius Castor, whose name shares the –condar- element. Language unknown.

Solovettius ♂ ☉ A Galatian leader in 167 BC. Compare the Roman family name Vettius.

Ταρκοδαριος Καστωρ or Tarcondarius Castor ♂ ☉ ☉ Supported Pompey against Caesar. *Castor* means ‘beaver’. A feeble Germanic suggestion might be a precursor of darken, meaning ‘conceal’, followed by a cognate of OE *daru* ‘harm’. Language unknown.

Τεκτομαρος XD76 ‘rich in possessions’ or Greek-influenced ‘great craftsman’, as discussed above under Tectosages. (RECAM 218)

Ζουβλος ☉ (RECAM 440)

Pure Greek (or Phrygian, Macedonian, etc) names include Amyntas (‘defender’), Απατυριος (‘orphan’), Artemidoros, Attis, Βοκχος (because French (2003) p 103 contradicts Bosch (1967) p98), Kallistratos, Diogneta, Eburianus (note 15 of Bosch 1967 declares it Anatolian), Κυρικκος (Strobel reports French (2003) incorrectly), Λυσιμαχος, Παιδοπολιτης, Stratonice.

Not yet tackled:

Cantuix & OnsoTex mentioned by Yorukan, without source

ατουιο Crimean Gothic don’t know where we got this!

Brikkon cited by Strobel with incorrect reference of RECAM II, 204

Dyitalos father of Amyntas

Place Names

Here are some place names in Galatia that Strobel (2009) and/or Freeman (2001) and others have labelled “Celtic”.

Eccobriga or Ecobriga has been claimed as a compound of Gaulish **ico* ‘peak?’ or possibly **ekwo-* ‘horse’ plus **briga* ‘height’. Unfortunately, the spelling in *-briga* comes from the Ravenna Cosmography and the Peutinger Table, which are generally less reliable than the Antonine Itinerary, which has **Ecobrogis**. That brog- element again! Its location, described by Yörükan (2009) appears to have been dictated more by strategic control of road and river routes than by the classic hill-fort situation of the largely-Iberian word *briga*. A Germanic ‘oak bridge’ would fit the local topography better, especially if the valley was more wooded and wetter in Galatian times.

Acitorigiaco shows on the Peutinger Table. It might contain a Gaulish element **acito-* ‘plain?’ (XD31). A compound of *ακις* ‘needle’ and *ριγος* ‘cold’ might suit people living on a hilltop.

Εργοβρογίς was a district mentioned in the 7th century. Compare Latin *erigo* ‘erect’ or ‘post (troops) on high ground’.

Ικοταριον was named on an inscription northeast of Ancyra. Greek *ικω* ‘come’ or Latin *ico* ‘strike’ would go well with *tarus* ‘sacred bull’.

ⁱ**Petobrogen** was the form written in the *Itinerarium Budigalenses*. Compare Latin *peto* ‘attack’, ‘entreat’, etc.

Σινωρια, Σινωρα, Σινωρηγα. A fort on the Armenian border. Compare *Sinope*, Greek goddess and place on Black Sea coast, and Greek *συνωρια* ‘borderland’. **Σιντοιον** was another fort in Armenia.

Τολαστοχορα (also Toloscorio) A χωριον ‘place’ of the Tolistobogii.

Tymbris, Tembrogius, Τεμβρίς, Τεμβρογγίος, Τεμβρίος. Old names for the river Porsuk. An element like *tem* appears in many river names, without ever being conclusively explained.

Ουνδία, Vindia. A single Gaulish root **uindos* ‘white, happy’ is confidently asserted as the base meaning of many ancient names that begin with *Vind-*, including *Vindobona* (Vienna) and *Vindolanda* on Hadrian’s wall. However, Rivet and Smith (1979) struggled to fit all the Roman-era *Vind-* names of Britain into that picture, and in fact the etymological situation is far more complex. There are other potential Indo-European roots, including the two senses in English of wind (moving air, and twisting around) plus Latin *vindex* ‘defender’. However, our best guess to explain *Ουνδία* would be from a Germanic word for foreigners living on the border, or perhaps nomads. One such word, Welsh, is often said to be related to names like Walloon, *Volcae* (Wolfram, 1990), and maybe Gaul. Another such word, Wends, from OE *winedas*, south-German *Winde*, was most used to describe Slavs later in history, and was possibly related to the tribal name *Veneti*. Interpreting *Ουνδία* as ‘border-nomads place’ would suit a Galatian name for a settlement built over the ruins of the former Gordion, famous for the Gordian knot, near the south-west limit of Tolistobogii territory.

To summarise this section, most place names of Galatia can be explained with Greek, Latin, or some vanished Indo-European language of Anatolia. For the few exceptions, Celtic roots are no more plausible than Germanic.

There are other Galatian place names about which we cannot yet write much. *Bolekaskos*, *Contiacos*, *Mordiacus*, *Orsologiakon*, and *Rosolodiano* have been described as possibly Celtic. *Amorium*, Γορβειους, *Malos*, Πεσσινους, and *Tavium* have been described as not distinctively Celtic. A few places are known as adjectives from people or gods discussed above. Δαδαστανα was outside Galatia proper. We know very little about: *Abbasium*, *Abrostola*, Αετας, *Aspona*, *Bloukion*, *Chorion* *Outisseon*, *Danala*, Πηιον, *Trocmeta*.

In Conclusion

This investigation began with a suspicion that Saint Jerome was somehow mistaken about a similarity between the Treverian and Galatian languages. It ends up declaring him correct but misinterpreted. The real error lies in some modern scholars’ perverse attachment to the concept of Galatian as a Celtic language in the east.

Modern Celtic languages (Welsh, Gaelic, Breton, etc) contribute greatly to reconstructing the proto-Indo-European base language from which Galatian sprang. So words used in early Irish and Welsh documents can often help to interpret a Galatian word or name. However, they are much less useful than Greek, Latin, and (amazingly) Old English.

When ancient Mediterranean writers referred to the Iron-Age peoples from further north and west in Europe as Celts, Gauls, or Galatians, they were not making a finely researched linguistic distinction. They would have focussed far more on functional characteristics: that those northerners were numerous, troublesome warriors, that they were tall and pale, and that they dressed and behaved in particular ways.

Exactly who founded the Galatian enclave in Anatolia, and when, is not clear from historical sources. If they came in a single incursion, after the attack on Delphi, that was probably from somewhere around the Iron Gates on the river Danube, just south of where Goths would later come from. On the other hand, if they drifted in over a longer period, Galatia’s founders might have been a mixed bag of Europeans, not much different from the tourists who visit modern Turkey, or from modern white Americans.

Roman-era Pannonia (shown red in this Wikimedia map) was full of names



ending in *-rix* and *-marus* (Meid, 2005). Those name-bearers were probably as much or as little “Celtic” as the Galatians.

We did not set out to attack the whole concept of a Gaulish language, and indeed the dictionaries of Delamarre (2003) or Falileyev (2010) supply plausible translations of many Galatian names. However, those translations are almost always much the same as in other European languages or else they look less plausible than alternatives based on Greek, Latin, or Germanic. It follows that our original three-part working hypothesis can be summed up in one even more provocative suggestion: **the entire concept of “Continental Celtic”, outside Iberia, Caesar’s Celtic part of Gaul, and some Celtic travellers inside the Roman Empire, is one huge fallacy that has led historians and linguists astray.**

Koch (2008) stressed how the Greek language expanded through seaborne trade and Latin expanded after Rome defeated Carthage and made the Mediterranean its *mare nostrum*. This makes us wonder what drove the expansion of Germanic languages. Was it a similarly rapid exploitation of the Baltic? Or maybe a similar expansion along the other great long-distance watery communication route of the rivers Danube and Rhine?

Archaeologists have received the idea of Celtic from the West less warmly than we expected. Both Celtic grammar (Isaac, 2010) and a gene that is common in north Wales (Oppenheimer, 2010) hint at links with the eastern Mediterranean. Perhaps one should be sceptical of the whole idea that the Celtic language family ever had a single focal origin and was radically separate from the Germanic and Italic families.

This article wishes to situate both the Galatian and Treverian languages in a band of related dialects stretching right across ancient Europe, whose later descendants included Anglo-Saxon, Frisian, Flemish, Franconian, Alsatian, Swabian, Bavarian, Alemannic, Crimean Gothic, and many more. Mixed in among them must have been many other dialects, some now completely lost, some perhaps with Slavic, Italic, Basque, or Magyar descendants. Classical authors essentially threw up their hands in horror at the sheer polyglot messiness of barbarian tribes and of course no language is ever free of loanwords. Modern authors should not seek order where none existed.

We do not wish to fall into the same trap as Celticists by asserting that ancient Galatian was firmly Germanic. If Old English is more helpful than Old Irish for translating Galatian names that does not make Galatian particularly close to Old English. Over 500 years separate Brennus, Luturius, and their followers from the first written traces of Germanic languages. This is a gap at least as large as between modern English and Chaucer’s Middle English. Nevertheless, English is a good parallel for Galatian: both had a Germanic base with a top dressing of vocabulary from French and Greek, respectively.

If by some magic of time travel a telephone line could be set up between Deiotarus the Great in Galatia and Cassivellaunus in Britain, would they understand each other? Probably not. However, if they sent each other emails instead (without switching into Latin) they could probably decode each other’s words – but without much help from Celtic.

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