Insular Celtic as a Language Area

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The north-west of Europe, in spite of its underlying differences of linguistic heritage – Goidelic, Brittonic, Gallic; its varieties of Germanic; and the powerful intrusion of spoken Latin – is as it were a single philological province, a region so interconnected in race, culture, history and linguistic fusions that its departmental philologies cannot flourish in isolation (J.R.R. Tolkien, *Angles and Britons*, 30-33).

1. Introduction

In order to properly subclassify languages belonging to a single branch of a language family, we must know not only which isoglosses they share, but also whether those isoglosses represent shared innovations, rather than archaisms, and also whether they are exclusive, i.e. not shared by other, perhaps extinct, languages of that branch. Moreover, the exclusive shared innovations must not be the result of language contact occurring after the initial separation of the sub-classified languages. That the genetic subclassification of the Celtic languages is still an open matter[1] is due not only to the fact that Gaulish, Lepontic, and Celtiberian are not attested well enough to clarify their relations to the Insular Celtic

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[1] In broad terms, two theories are competing: (1) The traditional view, defended, among others, by K.H. Schmidt (e.g. Schmidt 1977) and J. Koch (1992) classifies British together with Gaulish (and Lepontic, which is probably just an early offshoot of Gaulish) into Gallo-Brittonic, while the Goidelic languages remain as a separate branch of Celtic. (2) An alternative theory, defended by K. McCone (cf. e.g. McCone 1996, 2006, especially p. 171 ff.) and supported by P. Schrijver (Schrijver 1995), sees British and Goidelic as a separate Insular Celtic branch, while Gaulish and Lepontic are viewed as the Continental Celtic branch. Celtiberian, as is becoming increasingly clear, is almost certainly an independent branch on the Celtic genealogical tree, one that became separated from the others very early.

(IC) languages, but also to the fact that it is unknown which shared innovations of IC are inherited from a putative common IC protolanguage, and which are more likely to be the result of later language contacts. The exact relationships of Gaulish, Lepontic and Celtiberian to IC will probably remain unclear until more documents are discovered in those languages. However, we should seriously seek to distinguish between genetic inheritance from subsequent contact to explain the origin of common features of British and Goidelic. This is attempted in the rest of this paper.

2. The Sociolinguistic Conditions favourable to spread of Structural Features

Was there ever a period in the history of the Insular Celtic languages during which those languages were spoken in sociolinguistic conditions favourable to creation of language areas? In order to answer that question, we may compare what is known about the early history of Britain and Ireland with the attested cases where language areas originated.

A comparative analysis of conditions under which language areas are most likely to arise shows that the following two factors facilitate the areal spread of contact-induced changes:[2]

(1) widespread bilingualism, or even multilingualism, with regular patterns of exogamy between groups in contact. This has been observed in many areas where structural features have spread across existing language boundaries, e.g. in the Caucasus, in the Balkans, and in the Içana-Vaupés region in NW Amazonia,[3] where a language area is in the process of formation. It is through the language of bilingual speakers that structural patterns spread from one language into another. This process should not be confused with pidginization, which occurs in situations where full bilingualism is not developed.

(2) the absence of a sharp sociolinguistic division between high and low varieties of the languages in contact. In medieval Balkans, the languages of the lowlands Slavic agriculturalists, and those of the highland pastoralists speaking various forms of Balkan Romance and Proto-Albanian were of roughly equal status. Similar social patterns exist in other regions where areal phenomena have spread, e.g. in the Arnhem Land of Australia.

The sociolinguistic situations in which languages in contact are likely to converge structurally are not necessarily the same as those in which large-scale borrowing of lexical material takes place. We know that there are many loanwords

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[2] For a more detailed account of the comparative sociolinguistic conditions favourable to spread of structural features, see Matasović (2005: 138 ff.). For different types of language contact, see also Thomason & Kaufman 1988.

[3] Cf. Aikhenvald 1999.

from British into Goidelic, and vice versa. Goidelic loanwords in British include W *brat* "cloak," *cochl* "mantle, cloak," *cerbyd* "chariot," *macwy* "youth, page," *dichell* "trick, deceit," *cnwc* "hill". British loanwords in OIr. include words such as OIr. *moch* "early," OIr. *foich* "wasp," OIr. *mér* "berry," OIr. *sant* "desire, greed," etc. Such loanwords do testify to intensive language contact, but they are not as numerous as, e.g., Old French loanwords in English. In sociolinguistic situations where bilingualism is widespread and durable, lexical borrowing is not as common as in situations where the two languages in contact are of radically unequal status,[4] and where their speakers are separated by sharp social barriers. In such situations, learning of the second language is imperfect, or does not occur at all, but borrowing of lexical material from the higher variety into the lower one can have massive proportions.[5] Where there are no such sharp social barriers, learning of two or more languages is much more effective, and speakers do not need to borrow lexical items from one language into another.

In Early Britain and Ireland, after the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410 A.D., the dominant type of bilingualism seems to have been one in which at least Goidelic and British were idioms of roughly equal status. Code-switching must have been frequent, as well as exogamy, with children growing up in mixed marriages speaking early forms of British and Goidelic, and in some cases also Vulgar Latin, equally fluently. This type of situation facilitated the spread of structural features, but not necessarily of lexical material.

There is a vast amount of evidence for the presence of Goidelic-speaking communities in Britain in the period ca. 400-600 A.D. Those communities thrived chiefly in Wales, and, to a lesser extent, in Cornwall, i.e. precisely in those areas where the British languages survived the expansion of Anglo-Saxon. The evidence in question consists of historical records pointing to the immigration of *Déisi*, an Irish tribe, to Wales, which was facilitated by the weakening of the Roman military presence there in the late 4th century. There are also historical records confirming the existence of Irish kingdoms in Dyfed and Gwynedd in the Early Middle Ages,[6] and the presence of Goidelic-speaking population in Wales is confirmed by the Ogam stones. They are mostly bilingual in Primitive Irish and Latin, and are found chiefly in SW Wales and in Cornwall.[7] Roughly co-extensive with the distribution of the Ogam stones are the place names of Goidelic origin in Britain. The widespread plurilingualism of these communities

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[4] See Thomason & Kaufman 1988.

[5] This was the case in the languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund*, which all borrowed a large number of words from Turkish, while not being affected structurally by that language in any significant measure.

[6] There are Irish names in the regal lists of the kingdoms of Gwynedd, Dyfed, and Brycheiniog, cf. Snyder (2003: 192 ff.).

[7] Jackson (1953: 153-154) gives the following distribution: "two [Ogams] in Argyllshire opposite north-eastern Ireland, six in the Isle of Man, forty in Wales, six in Cornwall, two in Devon, and a stray at Silchester in Hampshire; a total of fifty-seven, of which forty-four are accompanied by a Latin inscription".

can be inferred from the existence of such inscriptions as *MEMORIA VOTE-PORIGIS PROTICTORIS* (in Latin) / *VOTECORIGAS* (in Ogam),[8] where a typical British name such as *Voteporix* was "translated" into Goidelic as *Voteqo-rīks, in the Gen. sg. *VOTECORIGAS*.

The presence of a British-speaking population in Ireland is also well-attested. We know, from the writings of St. Patrick,[9] that there were British warlords in Ireland in the 5th century, and itinerant British monks and priests were probably omnipresent there during the period immediately after St. Patrick's mission.[10] The question of whether there were British tribes, or even a pre-Goidelic British population layer, in prehistoric Ireland, has been often discussed.[11] The problem remains unsolved, but most linguists would agree that there is some good evidence of British place names, and, especially, tribal names in Ireland in early sources such as Ptolemy.[12] For example, the tribal names *Manapioi*, *Ganganoi*, and *Brigantes* are attested in Ireland and in Britain and/or on the Continent. Although the available archeological evidence cannot either prove or disprove the presence of British tribes in Ireland, the distribution of La Tène archaeological material, which is chiefly limited to the northern half of the island, could, perhaps, be used as an argument in favor of the thesis that there was some influx of British-speaking populations from Britain in the La Tène period.[13] If there were speakers of British Celtic in Ireland in the late prehistoric period, their settlements were probably geographically limited to the eastern and, perhaps, northern parts of the island, where language contacts with the Goidelic-speaking Celts were taking place.

3. Contact-induced Changes in Insular Celtic

Are there any phonological and grammatical features shared by British and Goidelic, for which we can show that they developed as a result of language contact, i.e. after the initial separation of the two branches? To answer that would mean to establish whether it can be demonstrated that British and Goidelic acquired some common phonological and grammatical features after they had already developed as clearly different languages (or groups of closely related languages); this can be done if one can reconstruct a reliable relative chronology of

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[8] *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* 358, McManus (1997: 65).
[9] Cf. Matasović 2004 and the literature adduced therein.
[10] David Dumville claims that, in this period, "we must suppose that significant numbers of British clergy were committed to pastoral work in Ireland. Furthermore, we have seen reason to think that there was a British community in Ireland which arose partly from slave-raiding, but perhaps also from commercial and other natural relationships between neighbouring islands" (Dumville 1993: 138).
[11] Cf. O'Rahilly 1946, and for a sceptical assessment of his views, Greene (1966: 132 ff.).
[12] For a recent overview, see de Bernardo Stempel 2000.
[13] See Raftery (1994: esp. 225-227). Demonstrably British provenance has been assumed for the findings uncovered on Lambay Island, off the eastern coast of Ireland (ibid.: 200).

linguistic developments for both British and Goidelic. Such a relative chronology exists inasmuch as the sound changes are concerned,[14] but it is much more difficult to establish for the morphological and syntactic changes.

On the other hand, maybe we can show that some features shared by British and Goidelic are exactly those that are easily acquired in situations of language contact. This would not, of course, prove that those features were indeed acquired, rather than inherited from Proto-Insular Celtic, but it would show that we *do not have to* posit Proto-Insular Celtic to account for them. If we can show that there was intensive borrowing of structural features between branches of IC, then all common features of British and Goidelic are just as likely to have developed through contact, as they are likely to have been inherited. Additional arguments are needed to prove the case.

In what follows, I provide a list of changes that affected both branches of Insular Celtic, but for which there is no evidence that they should be dated to a putative Proto-Insular Celtic period. As will become apparent, many of these changes have clear parallels in the developments that occurred in Vulgar Latin during the same period. The list below is not intended to be exhaustive, but merely illustrative.

3.1. Phonological Changes

3.1.1. The Lenition of Voiceless Stops

This development cannot be posited in Common Insular Celtic,[15] because the outcomes are different in British and Goidelic: in British, the voiceless stops become voiced between vowels, while in Goidelic they become voiceless fricatives. What is common to IC developments is that in both cases lenition applied across word boundaries. It is as if both languages at the same time developed a rule prohibiting the occurrence of voiceless stops between vowels; such a rule could initially have developed in bilingual communities, and subsequently spread to monolingual speakers of both languages.[16] After the phonetic lenition of stops, and the

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[14] See McCone 1996.

[15] This point is admitted by Kim McCone (1996: 97), the major proponent of Common Insular Celtic. He concedes that the lenition/aspiration of voiceless stops is an independent process in British and Goidelic, affecting both branches at roughly the same time (in the fifth century).

[16] Sims-Williams (1990: 233-236), who believes that the British lenition (voicing) of voiceless stops predated the Goidelic lenition (spirantization) of voiceless stops, does not give any absolute dates for these processes. He only claims that the Goidelic lenition had to occur after a significant number of Christian Latin loans entered the language, because it affected words like *Cothriche < Patricius*. It may well be that lenition (understood as a prohibition against voiceless stops between vowels) started in British and thence spread to Goidelic at a later stage, but it is not impossible that the processes could not have been simultaneous in both languages.

subsequent apocope of final vowels, the results of word-initial lenition were grammaticalized, producing the system of consonant mutations.[17] This development had to be independent in British and Goidelic, because it presupposes earlier independent lenition, but there had to be some sort of causal connection. This conclusion cannot be avoided, because consonant mutations are typologically so rare[18] that it would be extremely improbable that they developed in two neighbouring languages at approximately the same time, yet completely accidentally. The most likely explanation is that consonant mutations, as a type of morphophonemic rule, first developed in bilingual communities speaking early forms of British and Goidelic. The rules turned out differently in the two languages, because their phonological systems were already significantly different from each other.

Lenition is also attested in VL, and it is of the British type, with voiceless stops becoming voiced between vowels, and voiced stops becoming voiced fricatives. This lenition took place only in western VL dialects, and in the dialects of Italy north of the line La Spezia – Rimini. It is usually dated in the 4th century, but it may well have occurred in different parts of the affected area at slightly different periods.[19] However, this process did not apply across word boundaries in VL, so that word initial stops remained unaffected, at least in the recorded Romance idioms.

3.1.2. Raising / i-Affection

In Goidelic, the articulation of stressed short mid-vowels (*e* and *o*) is raised to *i* and *u*, respectively, if there was a high vowel (*i* or *u*) in the following syllable, as in Lat. *cocīna* > *kogina > *kugina > OIr. *cuicenn* "kitchen". This change is attested in some Ogam monuments, e.g. we have QRIMITIR "of the priest" < *qremiterī* with raising. A similar change occurred in British at more or less the same period, but there only *i* caused the raising of the articulation of vowels in the preceding syllable, and the low vowel *a* was affected, too (unlike in Goidelic): PBr. *bardī* (Npl. of *bardos "bard") > MW *beirdd*. Jackson dates *i*-affection to late fifth and early sixth century (1953: 603-4), and it would appear

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[17] It remains possible, indeed probable, that lenition was a process which developed in several stages, one of which could be even Proto-Celtic, as McCone 1996 thinks (cf. also Sims-Williams 1990, for a convincing argument that lenition of voiced stops in British predated the lenition of voiceless stops in both British and Goidelic). However, the *morphologization* of consonant mutations was certainly not Proto-Celtic, and the morphologization of lenition/aspiration of voiceless stops cannot even be Proto-Insular Celtic.

[18] Except in Insular Celtic, they are found only in some West African languages, such as Fulbe, and in the isolated Nivkh language, spoken in Siberia.

[19] For the dating of lenition in VL, see Tekavčić (1970: 165). The connection between the IC lenition and the similar processes in VL was first suggested by Martinet (1955, ch. 11). Tovar (1978: 424 ff.) argues for an earlier date, at least for Hispania (2-3 c. A.D.), but his examples have been doubted, or explained otherwise (Rohlfs 1963: 426).

unlikely that this process is independent of Old Irish raising, which occurred at approximately the same time.[20]

Similar phonological processes took place in VL as well, but they were not as general as in IC. In VL, Lat. *i* in hiatus, as well as the original long final *-ī*, caused the raising of *e* in the preceding syllable (e.g. Lat. *bestia* > VL *bistia* > Fr. *biche*, It. *biscia*, Lat. *venī* > OFr. *vin*). [21]

3.1.3. Lowering / a-Affection

In Goidelic, *i* and *u* are lowered to *e* and *o*, respectively, when the following syllable contained the low vowel *a* (or *ā*), cf. OIr. *fedb* "widow" < **widhwā* (Lat. *uidua*), OIr. *domun* "world" < **dumnah* < **dubnas* (Gaul. *Dumno-rix*). In British, a similar change occurred, cf. *gwen* "white" (f.) < **windā*, but *gwyn* "white" (m.) < **windos*.[22] There only stressed *i* and *u* were lowered, and the lowering was caused only by original long *ā* (and by the final *-a* in Latin loan-words). The change is certainly not Common Insular Celtic, since it must post-date raising in Goidelic, and raising is not a Common Insular Celtic sound change. Forms both older and younger than lowering occur in Ogam: the genitive sg. of the word for "hound," Proto-Celtic **kunos* (cf. Greek *kynós*) occurs as -CUNAS (before lowering) and as -CON- (after lowering). In British, *a*-affection is dated to the first half or middle of the fifth century by Jackson (1953: 576), in which case it would have predated the Goidelic lowering, which must, in turn, have been posterior to raising (see above), because of the developments observed in words such as **molinā* "mill" > **mulinā* (raising) > **mulenā* (lowering) > OIr. *muilenn*. Had the development been otherwise, we would have had **molinā* > **molenā* > **molenn*. Thus the relative order of lowering / *a*-affection and raising / *i*-affection is exactly the opposite in British and Goidelic. This is possible if we are dealing with two sound changes spreading across the established language barriers from two directions. I find it likely that lowering / *a*-affection spread from British to Goidelic, while raising / *i*-affection occurred first in Goidelic, and thence spread into British.

3.1.4. Apocope

In both Goidelic and British final syllables were apocopated, but the processes are somewhat different: in British, all final syllables were lost, but in Old Irish some closed syllables with long vowels did not undergo apocope, e.g. the accusative plural ending (PCelt. **wirūns* > OIr. *firu* "men") and the 1sg. abso-

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[20] Jackson (1953: 143) dates OIr. raising to the second half of the fifth century. For British *i*-affection, see Schrijver (1995: 257 ff.).

[21] Rohlfs (1963: 228), Tovar (1978: 435) with many examples.

[22] Cf. Morris-Jones (1930: 90 ff.), Jackson (1953: 598 ff.), Schrijver (1995: 255 ff.).

lute present ending of certain verbs, e.g. PCelt. *berūn* > OIr. *biru* "I carry"). There are some instances of the preservation of final syllables in British, but they are nearly always found in Cornish and Breton, the languages that developed from dialects which were presumably less in contact with Goidelic than the British dialects of Wales, cf. PCelt. *brātīr* "brother" > OIr. *bráthir*, OCo. *broder*, MBr. *breuzr*, but MW *brawd*. In Old Irish, apocope is dated to the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries (Jackson 1953: 143, McManus 1997: 88), while in British it is more difficult to date, but it could have occurred at approximately the same period. Jackson (1953: 631) opts for a gradual loss of the final syllables extending from the late fifth century to the second half of the sixth century.[23] In the works of Taliesin and Aneurin, the core of which goes back to the late sixth century, there are no traces of the final syllables. We can conclude, then, that the loss of the final syllables is likely to have been another instance of contact-induced change in British and Goidelic.

3.1.5. Syncope

In Goidelic, syncope is a completely regular process, affecting every second syllable of a polysyllabic word, counting from the last syllable (after the syncope). In all probability, it occurred at the very end of the Ogam period, i.e. probably in the middle of the 6th century.[24] Most Ogam inscriptions still have pre-syncope forms, e.g. CATUBUTTAS (Gsg.) which yielded *Cathboth* in Early Old Irish, with apocope of the last syllable, and syncope of the second syllable. In British, syncope was not as regular: it affected only the unaccented composition vowels, e.g. Gildas' *Maglo-cunus* > MW *Maelgwn*, and some other unstressed internal syllables; Jackson dates the syncope of composition vowels to the middle of the sixth century (1953: 650), and the other instances of syncope to the late sixth century. Thus, it would appear that the British and Goidelic syncopes were roughly contemporary.[25]

Syncope is not completely regular in VL, but unstressed internal syllables were often syncopated, and this is attested by British loanwords, e. g. *populus* was pronounced *poplus*, hence W *pobl*; similarly, *monumenta > monmenta >* W *myn-*

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[23] Cf. also Koch (1983-4), who accepts Jackson's dating, but argues that the loss of case inflexion in British predated the loss of final syllables.

[24] Cf. Jackson (1953: 143). This date has been doubted by James Carney (1989); in view of the existence of non-syncopated forms in some archaic OIr. poetry, it remains possible that syncope was a two-stage process, the first step affecting polysyllabic words, and the second step affecting trisyllabic words only. If this were true, the second stage of syncope would be roughly contemporary with the second stage of syncope in British.

[25] However, Sims-Williams (1990: 246) thinks that the syncope of composition vowels could be much older in British. However, the earliest example for syncope in British, noted by Sims-Williams and Jackson, is doubtful: the name of the Breton priest *Catihern*, recorded ca. 511 A.D., might be derived from *Katu-tigernos "battle-prince" not by syncope, but rather by haplology.

went.[26] Examples of syncope can be observed already in the inscriptions from Pompeii (1st century A.D.), e.g. in *domnus < dominus*, *Felicla < Felicula*, etc.[27]

3.2. Morphological

3.2.1. A common morphological innovation was the creation of conjugated prepositions ('prepositional pronouns') from earlier prepositions followed by inflected forms of pronouns: in both British and Goidelic, personal pronouns merged with prepositions into so-called conjugated prepositions. Basically, when a preposition governs pronominal dependents, it is conjugated for person. However, the forms of conjugated prepositions are different in British and Goidelic, even if the prepositions themselves are etymologically cognate, cf. OIr. *ó*, MW *o* "from" < PCelt. **aw*:

	OIr.	MW
1. sg.	*úaimm*	*ohonaf*
2. sg.	*úait*	*ohonat*
3. sg. m.	*úad*	*ohonaw*
3. sg. f.	*úadi*	*oheni*
1. pl.	*úainn*	*ohonam*
2. pl.	*úaib*	*ohonawch*
3. pl.	*úadib*	*ohonunt, onadunt*

A common paradigm cannot be reconstructed for Proto-Insular-Celtic, so a contact-induced innovation must be assumed, especially since conjugated prepositions are typologically rather rare in Eurasia.

3.2.2. The Loss of Case Inflection of Personal Pronouns

Conjugated prepositions must have been created at the time when personal pronouns were still fully inflected in Goidelic and British. Subsequently, the inflection was lost in this word-class in both branches (and in British, this loss of inflection was extended to all pronouns, nouns and adjectives). The loss of case inflection of personal pronouns then gave an impetus to the creation of the infixed object markers, another parallel development within IC.

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[26] Jackson (1953: 84).
[27] See Rohlfs (1963: 25).

3.2.3. The Creation of the Equative Degree

Besides the more usual positive, comparative, and superlative forms of comparison, both Old Irish and Middle Welsh have a separate equative degree, which means "as X as," where X is an adjective in the equative degree. Typologically, the equative degree is rather unusual: other IE languages do not have it. However, the rules of formation of the equative are not the same in Old Irish and Middle Welsh: in Old Irish, it is formed by adding the suffix *-ithir* to the stem (e.g. *sinithir* from *sen* "old"),[28] while in MW the equative is formed either by adding the suffix *-het* (e.g. *cadarnhet* "as strong as"), or by adding the prefix *cy(f)-* (e.g. *cyfliw* "of the same colour as"). Some adjectives have both the suffix and the prefix, cf. *kynduhet* "as black as" (*du* "black"). Since the formations of the equative are clearly different in the two languages,[29] it is preferable to treat their development as a result of language contact. Moreover, no equative forms have been discovered in the extant Continental Celtic corpus. Such phenomena are attested in well-studied language areas; for example, the comparative constructions in the languages of the Balkan area are very similar and usually explained as resulting from language contacts. (Standard Literary) Croatian still preserves the inherited Slavic synthetic comparative and superlative, while the closely related Serbian Torlak dialects adopted the Balkan-type analytic formation of these forms.

3.2.4. The Creation of the Imperfect Tense

Both British and Goidelic have a special imperfect tense, no traces of which were found in the Continental Celtic languages so far. Although there are some divergences in the use of the imperfect in the two branches,[30] there can be little doubt that the parallels in the formation and use of the imperfect in British and Goidelic are accidental.

However, most of the endings of the imperfect in British and Goidelic are not etymologically related, so the Proto-Insular Celtic imperfect cannot be reconstructed.[31] This becomes clear if we compare two paradigms of the conditional in OIr. and MW of the PCelt. verb **kar-* "to love":

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[28] There are a few irregular forms, e.g. *móir* "as great as" from *mór* "great".

[29] McCone (1994: 125) would derive OIr. *-ithir* and MW *-het* from Insular Celtic **-isetero-*, but fails to explain both the loss of **-ero-* in British and the palatalized quality of *-r* in OIr. Cf. also Bergin 1946.

[30] In OIr., the imperfect is used for an action repeated in the past, while in British its use is much broader, but always includes the repeated ("consuetudinal") action in the past.

[31] Cf. Thurneysen (1946: 372), McCone (1986: 240 f.), McCone 2006.

	OIr.	MW
1. sg.	*no-carainn*	*carwn*
2. sg.	*no-cartha*	*carut*
3. sg.	*no-carad*	*carei*
1. pl.	*no-carmais*	*carem*
2. pl.	*no-carthae*	*carewch*
3. pl.	*no-cartais*	*cerynt*

3.2.5. The Creation of the Conditional Mood

Both Old Irish and Middle Welsh have the conditional mood, and the rules of formation of this verbal category are parallel: imperfect endings are added to the same verbal stem which is used with future time reference. In the case of Old Irish, this means the future stem, which is formed in a variety of ways,[32] while in the case of Middle Welsh, the conditional is formed by adding the imperfect endings to the present stem, because the separate future tense was lost in British.

Since the imperfect is in itself an Insular Celtic innovation, it goes without saying that the conditional, which presupposes the existence of the imperfect forms, must also be an innovation.

In Vulgar Latin as well as in Insular Celtic, a new conditional mood was created from the imperfect of the verb *habēre* and the infinitive, cf. French *je ne savais pas s'il vous le dirait* (< *dicēre habēbat*) (Rohlfs 1963: 197). Uses of the imperfect of the verb *habēre* with conditional sense are attested already in Late and Vulgar Latin, cf. *Amare te habebat Deus si fateraris* (Pseudo-Augustine, Sermons, 5th century, quoted in Tekavčić 1970: 137).

3.3. Morphosyntactic and Syntactic

3.3.1. The rigidization of VSO order of clausal syntactic elements, and the harmonic orders of phrasal elements within the NP (e.g. Noun – Genitive or Noun – Adjective).[33] The evidence for word order in Continental Celtic is rather

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[32] See Thurneysen 1946 and McCone 1990.

[33] As pointed out clearly by Isaac (2007), the VSO order on the clause level is correlated with N-Gen. and N-Adj. orders within the NP by Greenberg's word order universals, so we should view the rigidization of word order in both the clause and the NP as different aspects of a single development.

limited, but neither Gaulish nor Celtiberian had the rigid VSO order found in OIr. and MW.[34]

Of course, the VSO order is rare in Europe, and VL certainly shows no evidence of developing features of the VSO type. However, what Insular Celtic has in common with the VL developments is the rigidization of word order. While the Continental Celtic languages probably had rather free word order, just as Classical Latin did, the Insular Celtic languages developed a rather rigid VSO order just at the time when Vulgar Latin tended towards a fixed SVO word order (still dominant in most Romance languages). It is conceivable that the VSO order in Medieval IC is just a compromise between the conflicting tendencies in the development of fixed word order in VL and Early IC. Virtually all accounts of the evolution of fixed VSO order in IC agree that it involved (at least) two separate steps. The first one was the restriction against full NP's as hosts to enclitics (also called Vendryès' Restriction[35]). This means that only verbs and sentence-initial particles (e.g. PIE *nu > OIr. *no*) remained as possible hosts. Since the second ("Wackernagel") position of enclitics in sentences was presumably inherited from PIE via Proto-Celtic, IC sentences containing enclitics (E) could have one of the following structures:

> V-E (S O)
> V-E (O S)
> P-E S V O
> P-E V S O
> P-E O V S, etc.

Moreover, in sentences without any enclitics, free word order was still possible, i.e. SVO, as well as VSO and SVO were still possible. Verb-initial structures could have been generalized at this stage, presumably by extension of the V-E S O patterns, and the previously existing structures in which the object preceded the subject (P-E S O V) could have been eliminated because they are impossible in VL, which tended to become a rather rigid SVO language at the same time. It is still unclear whether the marked P-E O V word order[36] found in certain poetic and legal OIr. texts (usually the so-called *retoirics*) represents an archaism, or is rather a late development made possible only by *licentia poetica*.

Word order is one of the features that are most likely to be changed due to areal influences. It has long been noted that basic word order patterns characterize whole language areas. For example, the SOV order is characteristic of the languages of different families spoken in the Indian Subcontinent, as well as of

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[34] See the review of the evidence in McCone (2006: 28 f.) With respect to genitives and adjectives the author concludes "The overall impression is that postposing of an adjective and preposing of a genitive were the norm" (2006: 29).

[35] Cf. Isaac 2007 and McCone 2006.

[36] E.g. *no-m Choimmdiu coíma* "may the Lord preserve me" (*Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* II, 290: 11).

genetically very diverse languages of the Caucasus. Verb-initial syntax is characteristic of the languages of Mesoamerica, and the SVO pattern is characteristic of SE Asia and large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Several instances of shift of basic word order types due to areal pressures have also been documented, e.g. the change of VSO to SOV in Ethiopian Semitic due to the influence of Cushitic, or the parallel development in Akkadian because of the Sumerian influence. If there are no independent reasons to posit VSO order for Proto-Celtic, or Proto-Insular Celtic,[37] then it appears likely that this basic word order pattern developed in one IC branch under the influence of the other, rather than completely independently. Indeed, there are indications that the VSO order in British is relatively recent, not just because of many instances of SVO structures in Early Welsh, but also because most deviations from the VSO order occur in Breton (already in Old Breton), precisely the language that was spoken in the region where Goidelic influence was weakest.[38]

3.3.2. The Creation of Preposed Definite Articles

Definite articles exist in British as well as in Goidelic, but there are reasons to believe that their creation from demonstrative pronouns is recent, and independent in both branches. OIr. *in*, OBr. *in* and MW *y(r)* are almost universally derived from a common proto-form **sindos* (fem. **sindā*) (Schrijver 1997: 44). Although there are some difficulties in deriving the MW form from the prototype, it is possible that MW article *yr* (OW *ir*) owes its *-r* to rhotacism, which might or might not be a regular phonetic development in unaccented monosyllables.[39] However, even if the forms are etymologically cognates, the British article betrays its relatively recent pronominal origin, because it can be dependent on prepositions, cf. MW *y rodei pob dim o'r archei y brenhin* "that he would give every thing of that which the king requested," (*The Text of the Bruts from the Red Book of Hergest*, 286.12).

There do not appear to be any traces of definite articles in Gaulish. The forms *sinde* in *sinde ... brictom* and *indas* in *indas bnas* (both in the inscription from Larzac) are better understood as demonstrative pronouns.[40] It should be noted that definite articles often develop in situations of intensive language contact or

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[37] McCone (2006: 64) presents a rather subtle argument to show that Proto-IC was already VSO. His thesis is that copula must have been proclitic in Insular Celtic, because it underwent the IC change of **s- > Ø-* in clitics, cf. OIr. *it < *senti*. This would mean that the copula preceded the nominal predicate in Proto-Insular Celtic, just as it does in OIr., and this would in turn imply that Proto-IC was verb-initial. This may well be so, but one should not exclude the possibility that the copula could have been enclitic in earlier stages of British and Goidelic. Enclitic forms of the copula developed independently in Greek and Slavic, as well.

[38] See Koch 1987.

[39] See Lewis and Pedersen (1989: 218 f.).

[40] See Lambert (1995: 166).

koineization of a particular idiom. Familiar examples are the development of postposed definite articles in Macedonian and Bulgarian, under the influence of other languages of the Balkan linguistic area, or the development of definite article in Hungarian, presumably under the influence of German (other Finno-Ugric languages do not have articles).

The development of definite article has a clear parallel in VL, where definite articles were created from demonstrative pronouns, just as in Insular Celtic, e.g. VL *ille* > Fr. *le*, VL *illa* > Fr. *la*. This development is difficult to date within VL, but the evidence is consistent with the period 350-550 A.D.

3.3.3. The creation of particles expressing sentence affirmation and negation, cf. OIr. *tó* < *tod and W *do* "indeed, yes" (probably extracted from *naddo* "indeed not",[41] cf. OIr. *náthó*, *nathó* "no" < *ne-tod). We do not know how old these words are in Insular Celtic, but if the W form *do* presupposes the existence of *naddo*, then it cannot be older than the lenition of intervocalic voiced stops. This shows that, although etymologically identical, the affirmative particles are independent innovations in the two branches of IC.

In VL, the affirmative particles are created from Classical Latin *sic* (> It. *si*, Sp. *si*), as well as from compound expressions such as *hoc ille* "that he" > Fr. *oui*. This last development of the affirmative particle from demonstrative pronouns is completely parallel to the development in IC.

3.3.4. The creation of a periphrastic construction with the verbal noun (VN) and a preposition with progressive meaning. The object in this construction is a possessed noun (in the Genitive in Goidelic) governed by the VN, and the subject is construed with the verb "to be". Such a construction exists in both branches of Celtic, but the prepositions used with the VN are different. In OIr., the preposition *oc* "at" is used, cf. OIr. *ce ru-d-bói Iudas occ-a tindnacul som* "though Judas was delivering him up" (Wb 4b 13); in MW several prepositions can be used in this construction, the most common being *y* "to":[42] *val y bydant y kerdet* "as they were walking" (*The White Book Mabinogion*, 58.3). The constructions are so similar that this cannot be coincidental, but since the prepositions used are different, we cannot reconstruct such a construction to Proto-Insular Celtic.[43] Moreover, in Goidelic this construction is only possible with the substantive verb (*at-tá*), not with the copula (*is*), while there is no such lexical restriction in British. The most obvious explanation is that both branches developed this construction in a situation of language contact. We cannot be sure that this construction was impossible in Gaulish, or Celtiberian, but no examples are found in the extant corpora.

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[41] See Schrijver (1997: 11 f.).
[42] Lewis and Pedersen (1989: 316).
[43] McCone (2006: 36) also claims that this construction cannot go back to Proto-Insular Celtic, and notes a similar construction in Basque.

3.3.5. The creation of object markers (infixed pronouns): both British and Goidelic use infixed pronouns to denote the pronominal patient of transitive verbs, either in the active (as object), or in the passive (as subject), cf. OIr. *ní-m charat-sa* "they love me not" (Wb. 5c6), W *ef a'm llas i a'm nasiwn* "I was slain and my nation" (*Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, c. i 193). Although their use is fairly similar in OIr. and MW, the systems are actually rather different morphologically, OIr. distinguishing between three classes of infixed pronouns, while MW has basically only one set of forms. Although it cannot be proved that the creation of the system of infixed pronouns is a contact-induced change in British and Goidelic, I think this is a more likely hypothesis than the alternative view, that it had been inherited from either Proto-Celtic, or Proto-Insular Celtic. In any case, there is no real evidence for the use of infixed pronouns in Gaulish.[44] The creation of infixed object markers in IC is a natural consequence of the loss of case inflexion in pronouns (see above), and this development does not appear to have occurred in Continental Celtic.[45]

3.3.6. The use of ordinal numbers in the sense "one of..."; in Old Irish, *in tres fer* "the third man" can also mean "one of the three men," and other ordinal numbers can be used in the same manner; the same usage of ordinal numbers is found in Middle Welsh: *trydyd lledyf unben wyt* "you are one of the three ungrasping chieftains" (*Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, 49.12). This usage is so conspicuous that parallel, independent development can be excluded. However, we cannot prove that it was impossible in Proto-Celtic or Proto-Insular Celtic.

Following the hypothesis initially proposed by J. Morris-Jones (1900), several scholars have assumed that typologically unusual features found in Insular Celtic are borrowed from some unknown substratum, presumably belonging to the Afro-Asiatic family, where such features have also been attested. This hypothesis found some adherents in the following decades, such as Julius Pokorny, Heinrich Wagner and Orin Gensler, but it has been vigorously and convincingly criticized in recent works by G. Isaac and K. McCone.[46] Yet, it is one thing to claim that typologically unusual features of IC developed under the influence of a mysterious substrate, the nearest relatives of which are spoken thousands of kilometres away, and quite another to claim that they developed in languages spoken on neighbouring islands, at approximately the same time, but without any causal connection between these developments.

However, typologically unusual (or just areally rare), features shared by members of a language area do not have to be "original" in any of the languages of

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[44] Gaulish appears to have had "suffixed pronouns" (Lambert 1995: 66) similar to those found in Early Old Irish, but this is another matter.

[45] Schrijver (1997: 49 f.).

[46] See Isaac 2007 (this volume), McCone 2006, with full bibliographies. McCone (2006: 38) concludes: "The foregoing consideration of a number of arguably relevant phenomena leads to the conclusion that there is no compelling reason for positing an Afro-Asiatic substrate that exercised powerful syntactic pressure on the Insular Celtic languages".

the area. This is how features such as object doubling[47] and postposed articles of the Balkan languages probably came into being. When two languages interfere with each other in bilingual societies with frequent code-switching, the kind of structures that will develop from such interference is often unpredictable, and not necessarily one of the structures that already exists in one of the languages.

4. Conclusion

In the preceding section we have discussed several shared innovations of IC that cannot be attributed to the common ancestor of these languages (whether it is Proto-Insular Celtic or Proto-Celtic). The common phonological developments must be dated during the period 350-550, for which we have other independent evidence of language contact in the British Isles. The common morphosyntactic developments cannot be dated precisely, but the evidence does not contradict their having occurred during approximately the same period. Several historical explanations of these shared developments still remain theoretically possible:

1) There was a single substratum language on the British Isles, and IC acquired several common features from that substratum. That substratum may have belonged to the Afro-Asiatic family, or, far more likely, it may have shared some typological/areal features with languages of that family. However, this explanation seems rather unlikely, because there is no independent evidence for such a substratum (e.g. in the form of consistent patterns in toponymy in the British Isles).[48]

2) In the prehistoric period, there were several different substratum languages in Britain and Ireland; some of them influenced Proto-British, while others influenced Proto-Goidelic; at a later stage, during the period of intensive contact between British and Goidelic (ca. 350 - ca. 550 A.D.), many of these features spread from one branch of Celtic into the other, and vice versa. This hypothesis cannot be ruled out, and it would be more in accordance with the usual linguistic diversity in other parts of prehistoric Europe (compare, for example, the presence of many IE and non-IE languages in Pre-Roman Italy).

3) The features of the original substratum, or substrata, of the British Isles are irrecoverable, and Insular Celtic languages developed the features they share without any substratal influences. The only other member of the Insular Celtic language area, in the critical period of 350-550, was the dialect of Vulgar Latin spoken in Britain. The features that strike us as unusual from the point of view of "Standard Average European" actually arose as the result of interference of languages, the structure of which was not so unusual at all. This last hypothesis has a clear parallel in the development of the languages of the Balkan *Sprach-*

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[47] E.g. Macedonian *jas go zedov pismoto* "I took a letter," lit. "I it took the-letter".

[48] For a recent and very persuasive critique of the "Afro-Asiatic theory," see Isaac 2007 (this volume).

bund, which also share some features rarely found in other languages of Europe, but neither of which can be attributed to any unattested Balkan substratum.

To summarize my argument:

1. We know that between ca. 350 A.D. and ca. 550 A.D. there was intensive language contact on the British Isles. British and Goidelic, as already separate languages, as well as Vulgar Latin, and (at least since around 400 A.D. in Eastern Britain) Anglo-Saxon,[49] were all spoken in the British Isles during that period in sociolinguistic conditions favourable to language contact.

2. Common phonological developments show us that those languages influenced each other, and there is ample evidence for widespread bilingualism, perhaps even plurilingualism during that period.

3. Several features shared by the IC languages, but absent in other forms of Celtic and European languages, cannot, for reasons of relative chronology, be attributed to Proto-Insular Celtic.

4. A number of morphological and syntactic common innovations of Insular Celtic are similar to changes that are known to occur in language areas, as results of language contact.

5. Until the existence of an IC node on the genealogical tree of the Celtic languages is independently established, it appears methodologically more appropriate to treat the innovations mentioned in (4) as resulting from language contacts.[50] This approach seems more promising than attributing those innovations to Common IC, or to some (? Afro-Asiatic) prehistoric substratum for which there is no independent evidence.

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[49] I leave the question of the participation of Anglo-Saxon in the hypothesized Insular Celtic "Sprachbund" aside in this article. The matter has been treated extensively within the framework of Hildegard Tristram's "Celtic Englishes" project; for a clear summary, see Tristram 1999.

[50] A similar programmatic proposal is made by C. Watkins (1999: 11): "My modest proposal is to suggest that it may be very productive to consider Insular Celtic – British and Irish – as a definable *linguistic area* within Celtic, one in which differences perhaps due to genetic filiation may be and perhaps should be subordinate to similarities resulting from geographic, areal diffusion and convergence."

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