

CHAPTER 6

Identity



At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

Discuss the identity of a European region in detail using the following headings:

- **Draw a sketch of and recognise the area on a map.**
- **Name the ethnic groups in the region.**
- **Name the religious groups in the region.**
- **Name and briefly describe music/art/festivals unique to the region.**
- **Describe migration into/out of the region.**
- **Discuss any changes in the boundaries within the region.**

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KEY THEME

Discussion of identity involves a variety of cultural factors including nationality, language, race and religion.



6.1 The Celtic region

There are seven separate Celtic nations in Europe that are related by a common history and culture. People in these areas identify with what has become known as Celtic culture, which began to develop as early as 1200 BC. The Celtic nations we see today are the result of the migration of Celtic tribes and their settlement in different areas of Europe.

Location of the Celtic nations

The Celtic nations in Europe are shown on the map in Fig. 1. They include Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall (in England), Brittany (in France) and Galicia (in northwestern Spain).



Fig. 1 The seven Celtic nations in Europe.



Find out more about the Celts? Log on to:

<http://cybersleuth.kids.com/sleuth/History/Europe/Celts>

Remember: A nation of people shares a common culture.

Boundaries between the Celtic nations

These are a mixture of physical and political boundaries.

Political boundaries separating the Celtic nations

Scotland and Wales are separated by political boundaries within the UK. Cornwall is an administrative region within England and has a county boundary separating it from other counties.

In France, Brittany is an administrative *Région* in France and contains many *Départments* within it. (You have learned about administrative regions in France in *Planet and People Core Book*, Chapter 14, page 265-266)

Galicia is a Spanish province and has a provincial boundary to identify it within Spain.

Physical boundaries in Celtic regions

The main physical boundary separating Celtic regions is the sea. Both Ireland and the Isle of Man are islands separated from other areas by the Irish Sea. The Isle of Man is a sovereign nation voluntarily associated with Britain but has never been a part of Britain.

Ethnic groups/Races in Celtic regions

An ethnic group is a population of a particular race, nationality, religion and culture. As an ethnic group, the Celts are spread across different countries but are linked by similarities in their languages, religious festivals, music and dance. They share the same general Caucasian racial traits. (See Chapter 1, page 2)



Fig. 2 This Roman coin of 48 BC is probably the closest we'll get to knowing what an ancient Celt looked like.



Celtic religion

Today, people in the Celtic regions of Europe are mainly Christian, but in the past Celtic tribes worshipped their own gods alongside the Roman gods in Britain and mainland Europe. These minor gods and goddesses were associated with natural landscape features like rivers and springs and several deities were common to all Celtic regions, e. g. Crom Dubh, the Celtic god of the harvest.

In Celtic society there were two privileged classes, the druids who combined the roles of priest and magistrate, and the warriors who led the people in war. The druids officiated at religious ceremonies and were consulted on all aspects of the worship of the gods. They met every year to decide legal disputes. The druids taught that the soul does not die but passes from one body to another. Today across the Celtic nations common myths and legends occur. The Arthurian legend is found in Wales and Brittany.

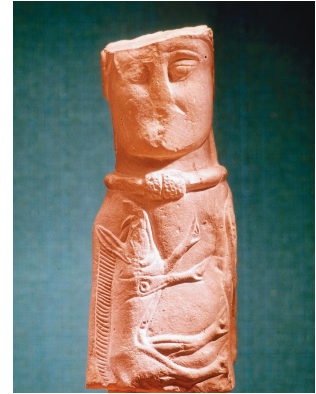


Fig. 3 This carving of a Celtic god has a torque and wild boar on it.

Celtic music, art, festivals and sport

All Celtic regions share similar dances, art, music and festivals. There are similarities between Scottish and Irish dancing and the Manx Sword Dance is related to the Scottish dance of the same name. Breton dances are similar to those found in Galicia in northwestern Spain.

An understanding of the seasons was central to all Celtic celebrations and four major festivals were recognised. In Ireland these are celebrated as Samhain (Halloween, 1 November), Imbolg (Spring, 1 February), Bealtaine (Summer, 1 May), and Lughnasa (Harvest, 1 August).

Wales celebrates Eisteddfod, a festival of music, art, poetry and dance. In Brittany the Fête de Cornouaille celebrates the origin of Celtic culture in the Breton region. Every year people of all Celtic nations celebrate their shared culture at the Pan Celtic Festival.

Irish Celtic music festivals (fleadhs) usually include competitions for pipe and fiddle playing as well as dancing and singing. Celtic art is a distinctive form with frequent use of animal designs and intricate gold filigree spirals on items such as jewellery, swords, crosses and chalices.

Hurling and shinty (a type of hockey played in Scotland) are modern Celtic sports. Hurling in particular is very popular in Munster the counties of Ireland such as Clare. 'Cornish Hurling' is played in Cornwall. This team sport is a street game played with a small silver-coated wooden ball that is passed by hand between players.



Fig. 4 Celtic design on a cross in Cong Abbey, Co Mayo.



Fig. 5 Eisteddfod celebrations are held all over Wales and singing competitions are the main focus of these festivals.



Celtic languages

The six Celtic languages are a subfamily of the Indo-European language and are themselves divided into two subgroups. Welsh, Cornish and Breton fall into one category called P-Celtic where the Indo-European 'kw' sound developed into 'p'. Irish, Scots Gaelic and Manx make up the other category known as Q-Celtic where the 'kw' sound developed into the 'q' then 'c' sound. All modern Celtic languages use the Roman alphabet and have words in common. They have only two genders: feminine and masculine.

	Irish	Scottish	Manx	Welsh	Cornish	Breton
Sunday	Dé Domhnaigh	Di-Domhnaich	Jedoonee	Dydd Sul	De Sul	Disul
Monday	Dé Luan	Di-Luain	Jelhune	Dydd Llun	De Lun	Dilun
Tuesday	Dé Mairt	Di-Mairt	Jemayrt	Dydd Mawrth	De Merth	Dimeurzh
Wednesday	Dé Céadaoin	Di-Ciadin	Jecrean	Dydd Mercher	De Mergher	Dimerc'her
Thursday	Déardaoin	Di-Ardain	Jerdein	Dydd Iau	De Yow	Diriaou
Friday	Dé h-Aoine	Di h-Aoine	Jeheiney	Dydd Gwener	De Gwener	Digwener
Saturday	Dé Sathairn	Di Sathurna	Jesam	Dydd Sadwrn	De Sadorn	Disadorn

Fig. 6 Days of the week in different Celtic languages.

Celtic migrations

The Celtic nations we see today are the result of the early migration of tribes from central Europe, particularly Switzerland and Austria. The expansion of the Roman Empire also influenced the distribution of Celtic tribes pushing them to the edge of Europe.

Many early Celtic tribal names can be found in present day names of Celtic regions. One tribe, known as the Pritani, arrived in Britain from Europe. This name was translated later into Latin as 'Brittania' or 'Brittani'.

The Celts migrated to Ireland from Europe, conquering the original inhabitants. They then travelled to Scotland and conquered the native tribe called the Picts. This settling of Scotland in the 5th century was the last wave of Celtic migration.

After the Romans left Britain in the 6th century many 'Britons' fled from Saxon invaders and settled in what is now Brittany – they became known as 'Bretons'.

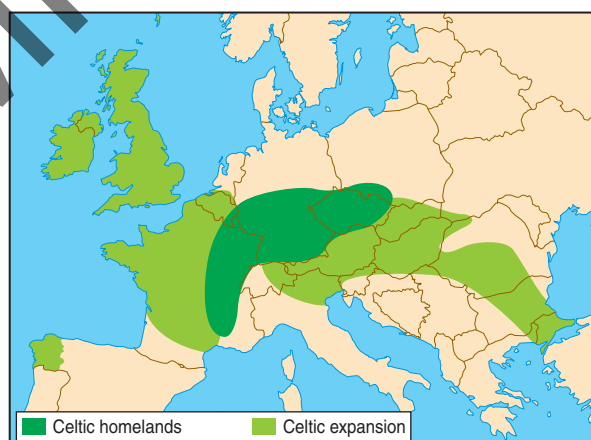


Fig. 7 The Celtic expansion began in central Europe and resulted in the creation of seven Celtic nations along the northwestern seaboard of Europe.

New boundaries in Celtic regions

There is an increasing political awareness among Celtic nations in Europe today. In several areas Celtic culture is used to assert a separate political identity. This is seen in the demands for increasing levels of self government in Celtic regions such as Scotland, Wales and Brittany.

Wales and Scotland have achieved a considerable amount of political and economic independence from England, with the creation of the Welsh and Scottish National Assemblies. There is also an active and peaceful Breton separatist movement in France.



questions

Chapter Revision Questions

1. Discuss Celtic identity under the following headings:
 - (a) The Celtic nations.
 - (b) Boundaries within and between the Celtic nations.
 - (c) Celtic religion – past and present.
 - (d) The Celtic 'race'.
 - (e) Celtic languages.
 - (f) Celtic festivals.
 - (g) The role of migration in the development of the Celtic nations.
2. Using the map, assess the cultural factors which link the identities of these regions.



Exam-Style Questions

3. Examine the culture and identity of a named population that you have studied. [80 marks]
4. Cultural identity is not limited by physical or national boundaries. Discuss. [80 marks]
5. Religion, language, race and culture can be used to identify cultural groups. Discuss this statement with reference to an example you have studied. [80 marks]