

## The earliest Greek sources on the Celts

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### Résumé

Les plus anciennes sources grecques concernant les Celtes.

Depuis la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> s. avant J.-C. jusqu'à la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> s. avant J.-C., les auteurs grecs fournissent la documentation écrite la plus ancienne concernant les Celtes. Ces sources sont souvent courtes, quelquefois fragmentaires, mais sont les premières à évoquer des sujets tels que les mouvements tribaux des Celtes ; les coutumes rudimentaires et les manières de faire, ainsi que les activités militaires. L'article fournit un recueil complet de ces sources grecques anciennes, y compris la version dans la langue d'origine, les traductions et les commentaires de chaque passage.

### Abstract

The Greek writers of the late sixth century to the late fourth century BC provide the earliest documentary evidence concerning the ancient Celts. These sources are often short and occasionally fragmentary, but they are the first to discuss such topics as Celtic tribal movements, banqueting and drinking habits, and military activities. The following paper is a complete collection of these early Greek sources, including original language texts, translations, and commentaries on each passage.

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# THE EARLIEST GREEK SOURCES ON THE CELTS

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The Greek sources on the Celts from the end of the sixth century BC to the beginnings of the Hellenistic age at the end of the fourth century provide the earliest documented look at the world of the ancient Celts. These sources, primarily literary but inscriptional as well, begin with the earliest periplus descriptions of the lands and people of the western Mediterranean and Atlantic coast, then move forward in time with brief, fragmentary glimpses of the first encounters between the Κελτοί and the Greek world, including descriptions of the early Celts and their way of life.

The goal of this current study is to bring together all these early sources into one location for reference and study, while providing the original language text, translation, and a brief commentary on each of the classical sources mentioning the Celts up to the end of the fourth century BC. There have been a few previous works dealing with the Celts in Greek literature of this era, but each has its own specific goals and consequent limitations. The twelfth volume of *Cours de littérature celtique* by D'Arbois de Jubainville is an excellent discussion of the most important classical passages on the Celts, both Greek and Roman, but is not a complete collection of the ancient texts<sup>1</sup>

Dinan's *Monumenta Historica Celtica* is a fairly comprehensive work up to the early first century BC which has the advantage of giving the Greek and Latin texts along with a translation and brief commentary, but omits some important material while including several dubious passages<sup>2</sup>. Another important source is the first volume of Zwicker's *Fontes Historiae Religionis Celticae*, which is in a slightly different category than the other works as he presents only the ancient texts dealing with Celtic religion and includes no translation or commentary<sup>3</sup>. The best known recent work on the subject of the classical sources on the Celts is Tierney's monograph entitled *The Celtic Ethnography of Posidonius*, in which Tierney does

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1. D'Arbois de Jubainville 1902. Other more recent surveys of the Celts in classical literature include Rankin 1987, 1995; Freeman 1994, 1995A and B.

Textual abbreviations used in this study: *CAF* = Kock 1884; *CGF* = Kaibel 1899; *FGrH* = Jacoby 1923-1957; *GGM* = Müller 1882; *IG* = *Inscriptiones Graecae*; *PCC* = Kassel and Austin, 1986; *SEG* = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 1923-.

2. Dinan 1911.

3. Zwicker 1934.

an admirable job discussing Posidonius and his followers, but deals with the early material only as a brief prelude to his main thesis on the Posidonian tradition.<sup>4</sup>

The people we call the Celts were known by a variety of names in the ancient Mediterranean world. From the time of Hecataeus in the late sixth century BC onwards, they were known as Κελτοί by the Greeks. Beginning in the late fourth century BC, they were also frequently called Γαλάται, a term which superseded but did not replace Κελτοί and which was not restricted to the Celtic Galatians of Asia Minor. Strabo and others are also fond of using hybrid forms such as Κελτ-ίβηρες, Κελτο-λίγυες, and Κελτο-σκύθαι to describe tribes of mixed Celtic descent<sup>5</sup>.

The Romans generally called the Celts *Galli*, whether they were inside or outside of Gaul, but they clearly knew these tribes were the same as the Greek Κελτοί. However, the decision of which classical passages to include in a collection of early references to the Celts is not as simple as searching for those early authors who use words such as Κελτοί, Γαλάται, and *Galli*. Genuine passages which contain such key words are certainly included in this study, but several other less obvious passages which refer to the Celts in a less direct way also belong in the corpus. Conversely, a number of marginal references which some scholars have previously considered appropriate have been excluded from this collection after careful examination. A lack of concord on an acceptable corpus of early classical references to the Celts is a major problem among the few previous works on the subject, especially among the three most important secondary sources: D'Arbois de Jubainville, Dinan, and Tierney. This is partially because D'Arbois de Jubainville, Dinan, and several others have an unjustifiably broad definition of 'Celtic' which includes references to Hyperboreans and dubious words such as κασσίτερος 'tin', in Homer and Hesiod<sup>6</sup>. Tierney is rightly more cautious and conservative, but his brief survey of pre-Posidonian material is not the primary focus of his study and thus understandably does not mention several sources which undoubtedly belong in the corpus. With these discrepancies and difficulties in mind, the careful compilation of an acceptable and exhaustive canon of genuine early passages on the Celts has been the major goal of this study.

The elimination of doubtful Celtic terms and references followed by a careful survey of all available ancient materials yields the following corpus of Celtic sources in the literature and inscriptions of Greece to the end of the fourth century

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4. Tierney 1960.

5. Strabo 1.2.27, 4.6.3, 1.2.27, etc.

6. Homeric κασσίτερος as a Celtic loan-word is unlikely. Though the ultimate etymology is unknown, an eastern origin is more plausible given Sanskrit *kastira* 'tin', and the spread of bronze technology from the Near-East to Greece and Europe. The Hyperboreans (Greek Ὑπερβόρειοι: ὑπέρ, 'beyond, above' + Βορέας, 'North Wind') are first mentioned in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* frag. 49 (early sixth century BC) and later by Herodotus (4.33) and others. The term *Hyperborean* simply means 'one who dwells beyond the North Wind', and was used in a vague fashion for a legendary race to the north of Greece. Although it is conceivable that the Hyperborean legend was based on contact with Celts, there is nothing convincingly Celtic in their mythology to encourage such an origin.

BC. Problems regarding Celtic identification and dating will be addressed in the discussion of the individual authors:

#### 6th century BC

Hecataeus of Miletus	late sixth cent. BC	Periplus of Gaulish Mediterranean coast
Sources for Avienus' <i>Ora Maritima</i>	c. 500 BC?	Periplus of Mediterranean and Atlantic coast of W. Europe

#### 5th century BC

Herodotus	c. 430-425 BC	Source of Danube in Celtic lands
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#### 4th century BC

Xenophon	c. 362 BC	Celtic mercenaries in Greece
Ephippus	370-360 BC	Celtic cook in Greek comedy
<i>IGii<sup>2</sup> 1438</i>	352/1 BC	Celtic weapons in Athens
Plato	c. 350 BC	Celts as drunkards
Asclepiades of Tragilus	4th cent. BC	Myth of Cyparissa
Heraclides Ponticus	mid 4th cent. BC	Sack of Rome by Hyperboreans
Pseudo-Scylax	360-347 BC	Celts settle on Adriatic near Veneti
Eudoxus of Cnidos	c. 390-c. 340 BC	Agatha: city of Celts or Ligurians
Aristotle	mid 4th cent. BC	Homosexuality, bravery, etc. among Celts
Ephorus	mid 4th cent. BC	Geography, obesity punishment
Theopompus	mid 4th cent. BC	Sack of Rome, banquet trap, etc.
Pytheas	late 4th cent. BC	Voyage to Britain
Ptolemy I	late 4th cent. BC	Celts and Alexander
Sopater	c. 300 BC	Celts sacrifice war prisoners

### Hecataeus of Miletus

Hecataeus of Miletus, on the western coast of Asia Minor, was an early Ionian ethnographer and mythographer who traveled widely in Asia and Egypt and recorded detailed descriptions of his journeys<sup>7</sup>. Herodotus knew of him as a scholar and leading citizen of Miletus, but borrowed from his work without acknowledgment according to later critics<sup>8</sup>. Hecataeus wrote a *Periegesis*, a guide to world geography, which described a coastal voyage around the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Only about 300 fragments of his work remain, most brief quotations in the *Ethnica* of Stephan of Byzantium (early sixth century AD). However, as in all citations of previous authors by later writers, whether Hecataeus by Stephan, Pytheas by Strabo, or Himilco by Avienus, it is sometimes difficult to precisely separate the original words of an author from secondary material. Three of the surviving fragments from the *Europa* section of Hecataeus' *Periegesis* deal with the towns of the Celts and neighboring Ligurians in Mediterranean Gaul.

Stephan of Byzantium *Ethnica Epitome*: Νάρβων, Μασσαλία, Νύραξ  
(*FGrH* 1A, #1, frags. 54-56; Nenci, 1954, 45)

54. Νάρβων· ἐμπόριον καὶ πόλις Κελτική ... Ἐκαταῖος δὲ Ναρβαίους αὐτούς φησι.

55. Μασσαλία· πόλις τῆς Λιγυστικῆς κατὰ τὴν Κελτικὴν, ἄποικος Φωκαέων. Ἐκαταῖος Εὐρώπη.

56. Νύραξ· πόλις Κελτική. Ἐκαταῖος Εὐρώπη.

54. Narbon: Trading center and Celtic city ... Hecataeus calls them *Narbaioi*.

55. Massalia: A Ligurian<sup>9</sup> city near Celtica, a colony of the Phocaeans. Hecataeus in *Europa*.

56. Nyrax: A Celtic city. Hecataeus in *Europa*.

Hecataeus uses the Greek term *polis* for the original Narbon *oppidum* of Montlaurès above the Aude River, near modern Narbonne, though the Celtic hill-fort certainly did not compare in size or organization to a Greek city. The site shows evidence of destruction in the late third or early second century BC, perhaps by

7. Hecataeus flourished at the time of the 65th Olympiad (520-16 BC) according to the *Suidas* lexicon of the 10th century AD. Herodotus (5.36) says that he urged his fellow Milesians not to revolt against Persia during the uprising of the Ionian Greek cities in 500 BC. He enumerated in council the numerous tribes and resources available to the Persians, but his advice was rejected.

8. Herodotus 2.143, 5.36. See Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.3.

9. The Ligurians apparently occupied territory stretching from Spain to central Italy in the centuries before Hecataeus (Thucydides 6.2.2; Livy 5.35.2), but inroads by Etruscans, Celts, and Romans soon limited them to southeastern Gaul and the upper Po valley (Polybius 2.16.1). Little trace of their language remains save scant glosses and placenames (e.g. *Porcobera*, *Berigiema*). These suggest an Indo-European dialect, but one separate from Celtic or Italic (see Whatmough 1933, 147-65; Schmoll 1959).

the Gaulish Volcae Tectosages<sup>10</sup>. The Roman colony of *Narbo Martus* was founded in the nearby plain in 118 BC. The Greek outpost of Massalia (Roman *Massilia*, modern *Marseille*) was founded c. 600 BC by colonists from Phocaea in Ionia. The city, near the mouth of the Rhône River, was ideally located for trade between the Mediterranean world and inland Gaul. Though Hecataeus says the colony was founded in Ligurian territory, Justin calls the local tribal the *Segobrigii*, a typically Gaulish name<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the legend of the colony's foundation recorded in a fragment of Aristotle's *Constitution of Massalia* from Athenaeus and in Justin has a very Celtic tone<sup>12</sup>. Trade northward up the Rhône and westward up the Aude and down the Garonne valleys to Atlantic Gaul was a major vehicle for classical influence in the Celtic lands<sup>13</sup>. That the Celts were an integral part of Massalia at least in later classical times is attested by Varro, attested from Isidore, who says the Massaliots were trilingual, speaking Greek, Latin, and Gaulish<sup>14</sup>.

The location of the πόλις Κελτική of Nyrax (Νυράκη in alternate manuscripts) is unfortunately unknown.

### Sources for Avienus' *Ora Maritima*

It is ironic that one of the earliest classical references to the Celts may be contained in a very late document, the *Ora Maritima* of the late fourth century AD Roman poet Festus Rufus Avienus. The *Ora Maritima* is an archaising *periplus*, i.e. a coastal description, of over 700 lines primarily describing the coast from Gades in the southwestern Iberian peninsula to Massalia in Gaul, but with frequent digressions on other parts of western Europe<sup>15</sup>. Avienus states that he drew on a variety of *vetustis paginis* 'ancient sources' (line 9), including Hecataeus of Miletus, Scylax of Caryanda, and Herodotus (lines 42-50), as well as the descriptions of the

10. Cunliffe 1988, 45.

11. Justin *Epitome* 43.3. *Segobrigii* may mean 'Strong Hill Fort Dwellers' or 'Strong in Power/Honor' (cf. Old Irish *seg-* 'strength, valor'; Old Irish *brí*, Welsh *bre* 'hill'; Old Irish *bríg* 'power, strength, virtue', Welsh *bri* 'honor, fame').

12. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13.576 a-b (Rose 1886, frag. 549); Justin *Epitome* 43.3. In the story, Phocaeen traders arrive in Massalia just as the marriage of the local king's daughter, *Petta* (*Gyptis* in Justin), is about to begin. She selects her bridegroom, in this case the surprised Greek Euxenos 'Good Guest', by offering him a bowl of wine. Although the theme of a bride choosing a husband is common in classical literature (e.g. Penelope in *Odyssey* 21, Helen in Euripedes *Iphigenia Aulidensis* 68-9) both the bride's name and the similarity of the story to Celtic sovereignty goddess tales is intriguing. *Petta* is perhaps related to Welsh *peth* 'thing', Breton *pez* 'piece', Old Irish *cuit* 'share, portion', and Pictish place names in *pett-*, *pit-*, which seem to mean "parcel of land" (Jackson 1954, 146-49). The sovereignty goddess aspect of the marriage is paralleled with deadly consequences in the story of the Galatian queen Camma (Plutarch *De mulierum virtutibus* 257-8; Polyaeus *Strategmata* 8.39) as well as numerous Welsh and Irish tales (see Mac Cana 1985, 114-21; McCone 1991, 109-10).

13. Cunliffe 1988, 24-35; Dietler 1994.

14. Isidore *Etymologiae* 15.1.63.

15. Editions include Schulten 1922, Berthelot 1934, Stichtenoth 1968, and Murphy 1977.

Carthaginian Himilco (lines 114-19, 380-89, 411-16). However, the intermixture and uncertainty of Avienus' sources as well as the permutations they may have gone through before reaching him make the *Ora Maritima* an extremely problematic source on the early Celts. One section of the poem (lines 108-119) arguably drawing on early sources is a digression beginning at the Oestrymnides Islands, the location of which is itself debatable:

*Ast hinc duobus in sacram sic insulam  
Dixere prisci solibus cursus rati est.  
Haec inter undas multam caespitem iacet,  
Eamque late gens Hiernorum colit.  
Propinqua rursus insula Albionum patet.  
Tartesiisque in terminos Oestrurnnidum  
Negociandi mos erat. Carthaginis  
Et iam colonis et vulgus inter Herculis  
Agitans columnas haec adhibant aequora.  
Quae Himilco Poenus mensibus vix quattuor,  
Ut ipse semet rem probasse retulit  
Enavigantem, posse transmitti adserit*

*But from here it is a two day voyage to the Sacred Island<sup>16</sup>,  
for thus the ancients called it.  
It lies rich in turf among the waves,  
thickly populated by the Hierni.  
Nearby lies the island of the Albiones.  
The Tartessians<sup>17</sup>  
were accustomed to carry on trade  
to the edge of the Oestrymnides<sup>18</sup>.*

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16. The name 'Sacred Island' probably originated with a false etymology connecting the oldest Greek name for Ireland, Ἱέρωνη, with ἱερή ('holy, sacred') νῆσος ('island'). In the East Ionic dialect of the Greek cities of the Asia Minor coast and their colonies (such as Massalia) the similarity would be even greater, as aspirated ἱερή would become unaspirated ἱεπή. A more valid etymology derives Greek Ἱέρωνη (Proto-Celtic \**Iwerju*, Old Irish *Ériu*, Middle Welsh *Iwerdon*) from Indo-European \**pei-* 'fat, swollen' (Pokorny 1959, 793; Koch 1991, 21), found in Greek πῖερα, 'fat, fertile, rich', an adjective applied often to land (e.g. *Iliad* 18.541; *Odyssey* 19.173, etc.). If this is a genuine reference to Ireland dating to c. 500 BC, it pre-dates the next reliable citation (Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 5.13) by over four hundred years.

17. Tartessus was a town and region around the Guadalquivir River in southern Iberia. It was visited by Samnian and Phocaeen Greeks as early as the seventh century BC (Herodotus 1.163, 4.152).

18. The Oestrymnides may be islands off the Brittany coast near Brest or the Scilly Isles off Cornwall, both groups being near ancient tin deposits. But Hawkes (1975, 22-6) argues for a more southerly location at the Isla de Ons, just off the northwestern coast of Spanish Galicia. This would of course be more than two-days sail from Ireland, but Hawkes sees the references to Ireland and Britain in the *Ora Maritima* as still originating, through Ephorus (c. 405-330 BC), in an early Massaliot source.

*The Carthaginian  
colonists and people around the Pillars  
of Hercules<sup>19</sup> frequented these waters.  
Four months scarcely is enough for the voyage,  
as Himilco the Carthaginian asserted and proved  
by sailing there and back himself.*

There are several arguments for assigning an early date to at least some of Avienus' sources. First, the poem progresses eastward along the coast from Gades in Iberia and ends with glowing praise for Massalia in Gaul. This terminus suggests that an early periplus source for the *Ora Maritima* was Massaliot. Massalia, as mentioned previously, was founded by settlers from Phocaea c. 600 BC, and in subsequent decades established its own colonies in Spain and traded at least as far as Gades on the southwestern Atlantic coast of the Iberian peninsula, beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Carthaginian expansion largely blocked this Atlantic trade by 500 BC, thus the Massaliot periplus with its descriptions of the Atlantic littoral should pre-date the Carthaginian blockade<sup>20</sup>. Second, Avienus mentions and apparently draws on the lost work of Himilco, a Carthaginian navigator who, according to Pliny, explored north of the Pillars of Hercules in the late sixth/early fifth centuries BC, when the power of Carthage was at its height<sup>21</sup>. Finally, *Albiones* (112), a name Avienus uses for the inhabitants of Britain, was superseded by forms based on Πρετταν-/Βρετταν-, perhaps as early as Pytheas' late fourth century BC voyage. Pliny, later echoed by Bede, says Albion was the original name for Britain<sup>22</sup>. There are, however, difficulties with these arguments. Our knowledge of Himilco's voyage is limited to Pliny's brief reference and the material embedded in the *Ora Maritima*. Moreover, Pliny does not inspire great confidence when in the same passage he claims that another Carthaginian, Hanno, sailed from Gades around Africa to Arabia, and that sailors from India were shipwrecked near the Suebi in Germany. Further, it is possible that the term *Albionum* in the *Ora Maritima* is a not genuine reference to Britain from an early Massaliot source, but an archaizing and poetic usage by Avienus<sup>23</sup>.

No single argument for dating some of the *Ora Maritima*'s sources to the sixth century BC or earlier is in itself strongly persuasive. However, when the evidence is taken as a whole, it is reasonable to see the *Ora Maritima*, despite its considerable difficulties, as probably containing early information on the Celts.

19. The modern headlands of Gibraltar in Spain and Jebel Musa in Morocco.

20. Hawkes 1975, 17-19; Hind 1972.

21. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 2.169. See Hyde 1947, 121-24.

22. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 4.102; Bede 1.1. *Albion* corresponds to Old Welsh *elbîd*, Middle Welsh *elfyd* (Koch 1991, 21). See also Rivet and Smith 1979, 247-48, 280-82.

23. The Spanish tribe of *Albiones* (Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 4.111) could have conceivably confused Avienus, but his positioning the *Albiones* on an island near Ireland, as in earlier Greek authors (e.g. Pseudo-Aristotle *De Mundo* 3) makes this unlikely.



## Herodotus

Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus on the western coast of Asia Minor in the early fifth century and died before 420 BC. The purpose of his *History* is to give the background of the Persian War, but he digresses extensively on the peoples of the Mediterranean and Asia. He does not claim extensive knowledge of western Europe, but in two similar passages he does mention the Celts as living near the source of the Ister (the Greek name for the Danube) and outside the Pillars of Hercules.

### 2.33

ῥέει γὰρ ἐκ Λιβύης ὁ Νεῖλος καὶ μέσην τάμνων Λιβύην· καὶ ὡς ἐγὼ συμβάλλομαι τοῖσι ἐμφανέσι τὰ μὴ γινωσκόμενα τεκμαιρόμενος, τῷ Ἰστρῷ ἐκ τῶν ἴσων μέτρων ὀρμάται. Ἰστρὸς τε γὰρ ποταμὸς ἀρξάμενος ἐκ Κελτῶν καὶ Πυρήνης πόλιος ῥέει μέσην σχίζων τὴν Εὐρώπην. οἱ δὲ Κελτοὶ εἰσι ἔξω Ἑρακλέων στηλέων, ὀμουρέουσι δὲ Κυνησίοισι, οἳ ἔσχατοι πρὸς δυσμέων οἰκέουσι τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ κατοικημένων. τελευτᾷ δὲ ὁ Ἰστρὸς ἐς θάλασσαν ῥέων τὴν τοῦ Εὐξείνου πόντου διὰ πάσης Εὐρώπης, τῇ Ἰστρίην οἱ Μιλησίων οἰκέουσι ἄποικοι.

For the Nile flows out of Libya, cutting through the middle of that country. And as I reason, calculating unknown things from known, it begins at the same distance as the Ister. For the Ister, beginning in the land of the Celts and the city of Pyrene<sup>24</sup> flows through the middle of Europe. The Celts live beyond the Pillars of Hercules and border on the Cynesii<sup>25</sup>, who are the westernmost inhabitants of Europe. The Ister then flows through all of Europe and empties into the Euxine Sea at Istria, which Milesian colonists inhabit.

### 4.49

ῥέει γὰρ δὴ διὰ πάσης τῆς Εὐρώπης ὁ Ἰστρὸς, ἀρξάμενος ἐκ Κελτῶν, οἳ ἔσχατοι πρὸς ἡλίου δυσμέων μετὰ Κύνητας οἰκέουσι τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ· ῥέων δὲ διὰ πάσης τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐς τὰ πλάγια τῆς Σκυθικῆς ἐσβάλλει.

24. Pyrene (Πυρήνη) is mentioned by Herodotus and Avienus (*Ora Maritima* 559, 565) as a town, but by Aristotle as a mountain range (*Meteorologica* 1.13, below).

25. The *Cynesii* (both Κυνησίοι and Κύνηται in Herodotus) are mentioned only in Herodotus and Avienus (*Ora Maritima* 201, 566). Strabo (*Geography* 3.1.4) and Pliny (*Naturalis Historia* 4.116) do mention an area named *Cuneus* in western Spain, but they say it is named from a nearby wedge-shaped promontory (Lat. *cuneus*, 'wedge'). Appian (*Hispanica* 57), however, does refer to a *Cunei* (Greek Κουνέοι) tribe of southwestern Spain.

For the Ister flows through all of Europe, rising among the Celts who are the westernmost inhabitants of Europe, except for the Cynetes. Flowing through all of Europe, it reaches its end along the borders of Scythia.

Elsewhere in his *History*, Herodotus expresses great skepticism about the geography of western and northern Europe<sup>26</sup> but in these two passages, he seems fairly certain about the source of the Danube and location of the Celts. His confidence in his sources is, however, partially misplaced<sup>27</sup>. Although the Danube flows over 2800 km through the middle of Europe, it is less than half the length of the Nile. Moreover, the source of the Danube is not near the Pyrenees, but in the Black Forest of southwestern Germany more than 800 km away<sup>28</sup>. However, he is correct that the Celts inhabited the region around the headwaters of the Danube in the fifth century BC, as archaeology confirms<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, they also had settled in western Spain, 'beyond the Pillars of Hercules'<sup>30</sup>. The Danube was visited by the Greeks from at least the seventh century BC when Milesian colonists from Ionia founded the colony of Istria near its estuary. Even earlier (c. 700 BC), Hesiod mentioned the Ἴστρον καλλιρέεθρον 'beautiful-flowing Ister', as one of

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26. In 3.115 he admits:

περὶ δὲ τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ τῶν πρὸς ἐσπέρην ἐσχατιέων ἔχω μὲν οὐκ ἀτρεκέως λέγειν· οὔτε γὰρ ἐγώ γε ἐνδέκομαι Ἑριδανὸν καλέεσθαι πρὸς βαρβάρων ποταμὸν ἐκδιδόντα ἐς θάλασσαν τὴν πρὸς βορρῆν ἄνεμον, ἀπ' ὅπου τὸ ἤλεκτρον φοιτᾷ λόγος ἐστί, οὔτε νήσους οἶδα Κασσιτερίδας ἐούσας, ἐκ τῶν ὁ κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ. τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ὁ Ἑριδανὸς αὐτὸ κατηγορεῖ τὸ οὖνομα ὡς ἐστὶ Ἑλληνικὸν καὶ οὐ βάρβαρον, ὑπὸ ποιητέω δὲ τινὸς ποιηθέν· τοῦτο δὲ οὐδενὸς αὐτότεω γενομένου δύναμαι ἀκοῦσαι, τοῦτο μελετῶν, ὅπως θάλασσα ἐστὶ τὰ ἐπέκεινα Εὐρώπης, ἐξ ἐσχάτης δ' ὧν ὁ κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ καὶ τὸ ἤλεκτρον.

I cannot speak with exactness concerning the westernmost regions of Europe. I personally don't believe there is a river called Eridanus flowing into a Northern Sea, from which it is said our amber comes. Nor do I know of the Cassiterides, from which tin is brought. Indeed the very name Eridanus is Greek, created by some poet, and is not foreign. Neither can I confirm that a sea beyond Europe even exists. All we know for certain is that our tin and amber come from very distant regions.

27. It is possible that he is drawing on a lost section of Hecataeus' *Periegesis*, but this is not certain. Given that Greeks had established colonies in western Europe almost two centuries before Herodotus (e.g., Massalia, c. 600 BC) and had carried on trade with the inhabitants of Spain and Gaul even earlier, there could have been numerous reports about western Europe in circulation in the Greek world in the late fifth century BC.

28. Some have argued that Herodotus is not referring to a town near the Pyrenees at all, but a similarly named locale in the Black Forest (Pearson 1934, 336-37). Such conjecture is hypothetical, but Ammianus Marcellinus (28.2.5) does mention a *mons Piri*, probably near Heidelberg. See also Jullian 1905.

29. See Frey 1991.

30. Gamito 1991; Lenerz-de Wilde 1995.

the children of Tethys and Ocean<sup>31</sup>. In the early fifth century, Pindar has the Ister rising in the land of the Hyperboreans<sup>32</sup>, while Aristotle (mid-fourth century BC) echoes Herodotus in having the Danube rise in the area of Pyrene. The error was corrected in Roman times<sup>33</sup>.

### Xenophon

Xenophon (c. 428-c. 354 BC) was an Athenian aristocrat and student of Socrates who spent much of his life fighting as a mercenary from Persia to the Peloponnesus. In his *Hellenica*, a history of events in Greece from 411 to 362 BC written soon after 362 BC, Xenophon tells how Celtic mercenaries were sent to Greece by Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse in Sicily, to aid the Spartans against the Thebans and their allies<sup>34</sup>. In describing these mercenaries, he provides the first incontestable description of Celtic people as opposed to Celtic regions or settlements<sup>35</sup>. It is appropriate that this description deals with Celtic success in battle, as martial prowess would be the distinguishing characteristic of the Celts in the classical mind for centuries to come.

#### *Hellenica* 7.1.20

Ἄμα τε δὴ πεπραγμένων τούτων καταπλεῖ Λακεδαιμονίοις ἢ παρὰ Διονυσίου βοήθεια, τριήρεις πλέον ἢ εἴκοσιν· ἦγον δὲ Κελτούς τε καὶ Ἰβηρας καὶ ἰππέας ὡς πεντήκοντα.

At the same time these things had been accomplished, an auxiliary force from Dionysius sailed to the Spartans consisting of more than twenty triremes. This armada carried Celts, Iberians, and about fifty horsemen.

#### *Hellenica* 7.1.31

οἱ δ' ἄλλοι φεύγοντες ἔπιπτον, πολλοὶ μὲν ὑπὸ ἰππέων, πολλοὶ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν Κελτῶν.

And the rest were slain as they fled, many by the cavalry and many also by the Celts.

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31. Hesiod *Theogony* 339.

32. Pindar *Olympian* 3.14, 8.46; Aristotle *Meteorologica* 1.13, below.

33. Strabo *Geography* 7.1.1; Ptolemy *Geography* 3.8.3, 8.7.2.

34. Dionysius is not remembered kindly by history. Dante places the tyrant in Hell, boiling in a pool of blood (*Inferno* 12.107).

35. Twenty years before the expedition to the Spartans, the same Gauls who had burned Rome just months before approached Dionysius seeking friendly relations (Justin *Epitome* 20.5.4). The tyrant formed an alliance and immediately began using Gauls as mercenaries in his wars in peninsular Italy. Thus some of the Celts who aided the Spartans in 369/68 BC may have been aging veterans of the sack of Rome in 390 BC.

After the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War in 404 BC, Sparta gained hegemony over the Greek cities. But beginning in 379 BC, a revived Thebes rose to check Sparta's power. Xenophon's first passage opens in 369 BC as the Thebans and their allies have raided the northern Peloponnesus and are fighting near Corinth. The Celts and other troops from Dionysius arrived in time to aid the Spartans, but remained only long enough to discourage the Thebans and attack the nearby town of Sicyon before returning to Sicily<sup>36</sup>. The next year a second expeditionary force from Dionysius arrived which also included a number of Celts. They successfully attacked Sparta's enemies in Arcadia, but were ambushed on the road to Sparta by Messinians and Arcadians as they prepared to return to Sicily. With the help of Spartan forces, they defeated their foes without any casualties to their own troops.

The subject of Celtic mercenaries in the Mediterranean world which begins with Xenophon continues in many later classical authors. They were so valued as soldiers that less than a century later, 'none of the eastern kings would wage war without Gaulish mercenaries'<sup>37</sup>.

### Ephippus

Ephippus (early-mid fourth century BC) was a writer of comedy whose work survives only in quotations in the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus (fl. 200 AD). Three of these fragmentary quotations are from a comedy entitled *Geryones*, based on the three-headed and sometimes three-bodied monster Geryon slain by Hercules in the far west during his tenth labor<sup>38</sup>. The context of Athenaeus' passage is a prolonged discussion on fish by the guests at an elaborate dinner party.

Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 8.346f-47c  
(CAF 2, 252-3, frag. 5; PCG 5, 134-35, frag. 5)

τάχα δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἄνδρες φίλοι, ἐκόντες παρελίπετε ὡς ἱερὸν  
τινα ἰχθύν τὸν παρ' Ἐφίππῳ τῷ κωμωδιοποιῷ, ὃν φησι τῷ  
Γηρυόνῃ σκευάζεσθαι ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ δράματι διὰ τούτων  
λέγων·

τούτῳ δ' ὁπότεν ναέται χώρας  
ἰχθύν τιν' ἔλως' οὐχ ἡμέριον,  
τῆς περικλύστου δ' ἁλίας Κρήτης  
μείζω μεγέθει, λοπᾶς ἐστ' αὐτῷ  
δυνατὴ τούτους χωρεῖν ἑκατόν.  
καὶ περιοίκους εἶναι ταύτη  
Σινδοῦς, Λυκίου, Μυγδονιώτας,

36. Diodorus Siculus (15.69-70) says the total number of Dionysius' force was two thousand and that they had received pay for five months of service.

37. Justin *Epitome* 25.2.

38. See Hesiod *Theogony* 287; Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 870; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2.5.10.

Κραναούς, Παφίους. τούτους δ' ὕλην  
κόπτειν, ὅπoταν βασιλεὺς ἔφη  
τὸν μέγαν ἰχθύν· καὶ προσάγοντας,  
καθ' ὅσον πόλεως ἔστηκεν ὄρος.  
τούς δ' ὑποκαίειν. λίμνην δ' ἐπάγειν  
ὕδατος μεστήν εἰς τὴν ἄλμην,  
τούς δ' ἄλας αὐτῷ ζεύγη προσάγειν  
μηνῶν ὀκτῶ συνεχῶς ἑκατόν.  
περιπλεῖν δ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄμβωσιν ἄνω  
πέντε κέλητας πεντασκάλμους,  
περιαγγέλλειν τ'· 'οὐχ ὑποκαίεις,  
Λυκίων πρύτανι· ψυχρὸν τουτί·  
παύου φυσῶν, Μακεδῶν ἄρχων·  
σβεννυ, Κέλθ'<sup>39</sup>, ὡς μὴ προσκαύσης.'

οὐκ ἄγνωῶ δ' ὅτι τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα εἶρηκεν ὁ Ἔφιππος κἀν  
Πελταστῆ τῷ δράματι.

And perhaps you, my friends, omitted intentionally, as something  
sacred, the fish mentioned by the comic poet Ehippus, which he  
writes was served to Geryon in the play of the same name. He says:

Whenever the inhabitants of that country  
catch a fish, not one of every-day size,  
but bigger in size than sea-washed Crete,  
they serve to him a dish which can  
hold a hundred of these.  
And the neighbors all about  
are Sindians<sup>40</sup>, Lycians<sup>41</sup>, Mygdonians<sup>42</sup>,  
Cranaans<sup>43</sup>, and Paphians<sup>44</sup>. These chop  
the wood whenever the king cooks  
that enormous fish. And they haul so  
much of it that it fills the circuit of the city,  
while others light the fire underneath. A lake  
of water they use to make the sauce, and a  
hundred ox teams for eight months bring in salt.

39. Κέλτους μή and Κέλτ'οὐ μή in alternate manuscripts

40. A Black Sea tribe to the west of the Crimea (Herodotus 4.28, 86). They were honored by the Athenians several times in the fourth century BC for sending grain (Tod 1948, 42, 206-9).

41. A people of SW Asia Minor who spoke an Anatolian language related to Hittite and Lydian.

42. A region of Macedonia, but here a poetic name for all the Macedonians.

43. An alternate name for the Athenians (Herodotus 8.44).

44. Paphos is a city on the west coast of Cyprus.

In the top of that dish sail five swift galleys,  
 each with five oars to a side. Orders  
 are given: 'Hurry up with that fire,  
 you Lycian chief, it's not hot enough!  
 Now stop the bellows, you Macedonian  
 captain! Put out the fire, you Celt,  
 so that you don't overcook the fish !

I am not unaware that Ehippus uses the same lines in his play, *The Peltast*<sup>45</sup>.

This intentionally absurd passage portrays the fish of Geryon as so large that the entire Mediterranean basin is needed as a cooking vessel. The various tribes around the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, from the Sindians in the far northeast to the Celts in the far west, chop wood, haul water, and tend to the cooking fire. Five galleys dash from shore to shore delivering instructions to the various peoples involved in the immense effort. The passage is similar to and perhaps is a comic play on the image of the Mediterranean as a pond in Plato<sup>46</sup>.

#### Inventory of the Treasury of Athena (*Inscriptiones Graecae* ii<sup>2</sup>, 1438)

A portion of an inventory list from the treasury of the old temple of Athena on the Acropolis at Athens not only provides the earliest Greek epigraphical evidence on the Celts, but also pre-dates most literary references<sup>47</sup>. The fragmentary inscription *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 1438 (*SEG* 19, 129), dated 352/1 BC, lists σιδηρᾶ Κελτικά 'Celtic iron weapons', among the dedicatory armament stored in the temple treasury<sup>48</sup>.

*IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 1438, Face B. lines 7-8

. . . κ|αἰ κυναῖ χαλκαῖ Ἀργολ[ικαῖ . . . . . 43 . . . .  
 . . . .παντ]οδαπὰ μικρὰ χα[λκᾶ·] ΗΗ(50)ΔΙ· πῖλοι χαλκοῖ καὶ  
 τιάρ[αι . . . . . 45 . . . . .σιδ]ηρᾶ Κελτικά·

. . . and copper Argolic helmets . . . various small copper 261: copper helmet-liners and tiaras . . . Celtic iron weapons:

45. *CAF* 2, 261.

46. Plato *Phaedo* 109b. See Webster 1970, 41. The *Phaedo* was probably written c. 380-70 BC.

47. However, an Etruscan monument of the 5th century BC listing an apparently Celtic personal name (*mi Nemeties* 'I am [the tomb] of Nemetios') does pre-date *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 1438 (de Simone 1980).

48. Also included in the inventory are κυναῖ χαλ|καῖ βαρβαρικα[i 'barbarian copper helmets', (face B, line 6-7). See Schweigert 1938.

The inventory list was found in three pieces, with writing on both the front (A) and back (B) faces. Unfortunately, a large portion from the middle of the document is missing, as well as parts of the edges. The list of dedicatory objects contains a large number of weapons, including these σιδηρᾶ, probably swords or daggers.

Exchange with the Gallic auxiliaries of Dionysius mentioned previously by Xenophon, who were allies of the Athenians as well as Spartans, is one possible source of the Celtic weapons in the temple treasury. Overseas trade is another potential avenue, as commercial activity between the Greeks and Gauls of the western Mediterranean had existed for over a century. Regardless of the source, the presence of σιδηρᾶ Κελτικά on the treasury inventory list along with contemporary literary references to the Celts, demonstrates not only that the Celts were known to the Greeks, but that their weapons were valued objects in mid-fourth century Athens<sup>49</sup>.

### Plato

The Greek philosopher and Plato (c. 429-347 BC) briefly mentions the Celts in the *Laws*, his final work, probably written during the last decade of his life. The *Laws* continue the theme of the ideal city discussed in his *Republic*. Among the undesirable characteristics of Plato's ideal citizens is drunkenness, which his imaginary Athenian stranger, discussing legal matters with Spartan and Cretan interlocutors, associates with the Celts and other *barbaroi*.

#### *Laws* 1.637d-e

λέγω δ' οὐκ οἴνου περὶ πόσεως τὸ παράπαν ἢ μή, μέθης δὲ αὐτῆς πέρι, πότερον, ὥσπερ Σκύθαι χρῶνται καὶ Πέρσαι χρηστέον, καὶ ἔτι Καρχηδόνιοι καὶ Κελτοὶ καὶ Ἰβηρες καὶ Θρᾶκες, πολεμικὰ σύμπαντα ὄντα ταῦτα γένη, ἢ καθάπερ ὑμεῖς· ὑμεῖς μὲν γάρ, ὅπερ λέγετε, τὸ παράπαν ἀπέχεσθε.

I am not discussing the drinking of wine or not in general, but outright drunkenness, and whether we ought to follow the custom of the Scythians and Persians, and also the Carthaginians, Celts, Iberians, and Thracians, all very warlike peoples, or be like you Spartans, who, as you claim, abstain totally from drink.

In the first book of the *Laws*, Plato's emphasis is on the importance of σωφροσύνη 'moderation, balance', among the citizens of his ideal city-state. In-

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49. Another possible source for these weapons is contact to the north of Greece. As seen below, Gallic warriors had penetrated the Balkans by the second half of the fourth century BC and were fighting Illyrian tribes (Theopompus *FGrH* 2B, #115, frag. 40, below). An embassy from Celts living near the Adriatic met Alexander during his campaign against the Illyrians in 335 (Ptolemy I s.v. Strabo 7.3.8, below), a year after his father Philip was murdered at with a Κελτική μάχαιρα 'Celtic dagger' (Diodorus Siculus 14.94).

toxicating drink would not be forbidden, as the Greeks customarily drank wine mixed with water, but drunkenness would be condemned. The Spartan's claim of total abstinence is certainly exaggerated as even young Spartan women were allowed wine on occasion<sup>50</sup>. Herodotus also confirms Spartan imbibing, but records that drunkenness among the Spartans was learned only in recent times from visiting Scythians<sup>51</sup>.

Plato's description of the Celts, along with so many other tribes, as drunkards should be taken as a broad characterization. Plato was an occasional visitor to the court of Dionysius in Syracuse, so it is conceivable that he formed an opinion on Celtic drunkenness from the behavior of the Celtic mercenaries employed there<sup>52</sup>. The ancient Celts were certainly known for their prodigious thirst for wine and beer, as both literary and archaeological evidence confirm<sup>53</sup>. However, one wonders how much the classical characterization of Celts as drunkards by Plato and others was due to cultural chauvinism.

### Asclepiades of Tragilus

Little is known of Asclepiades of Tragilus except that he lived in the fourth century BC and was a pupil of the famous Athenian orator Isocrates. Asclepiades wrote the *Tragoidoumena*, a work on the myths of Greek tragedy. His sorrowful tale of the Celtic king, Boreas, and his daughter, Cyparissa, is preserved in a gloss by a Virgilian commentator on the phrase *Idaeis cyparissis* 'the cypresses of Ida'<sup>54</sup>. The commentary is ascribed to the late first century AD Latin scholar Valerius Probus, but it is certainly by a later author.

Probus *Commentary on Vergil's Georgics* 2.84

(FGrH 1A, #12, frag. 19)

*Quidam putant, ut Asclepiades ait, Boream fuisse Celtarum regem, qui  
filiam Cyparissam amiserit, et novum arboris huius genus primus in  
tumulo eius severit ob eamque causam esse luctuosam cypressum.*

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50. Xenophon *Spartan Constitution* 1.3.

51. *History* 6.84. In this passage Herodotus says that when the Spartans wanted a stronger drink than their usual wine diluted with water, they asked for an ἐπισκύθισον 'a Scythian cup'.

52. See Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.20, 31, above.

53. Diodorus Siculus (5.26) describes the brewing of native beer and the import of Greek wine by the Gauls, as well as their subsequent inebriation. Archaeology has yielded Greek wine amphorae throughout Celtic lands dating from the time of earliest contact with the classical world (see Cunliffe 1988, 24-35). An interesting exception to the Celtic love of wine is recorded by Caesar (*Bellum Gallicum* 2.15) who says the Nervii of Belgic Gaul forbade the import of wine and luxury goods on the grounds that such civilized imports would weaken their fighting ability.

54. Virgil *Georgics* 2.84.



*Certain people think, as Asclepiades said, that Boreas was a king of the Celts who lost his daughter Cyparissa and then first observed this new type of tree on her grave mound. This is why cypress trees are mournful.*

The brief account of Asclepiades of the Celtic princess Cyparissa is just one of three different myths in classical literature concerning the origin of the cypress tree. The first is recorded by Ovid who tells of the young man Cyparissus from the island of Ceos who accidentally kills his favorite stag<sup>55</sup>. His sorrow is so great that he wants to grieve forever, and Apollo grants his wish by turning him into a mournful-looking tree, the cypress. The second myth also involves another young man from Ceos named Cyparissus, but his metamorphosis into a cypress tree occurs while fleeing the unwanted affections of Apollo, Silvanus, or Zephyrus, depending on the legend<sup>56</sup>.

The version of the story involving Cyparissa is the earliest recorded example of a classical author directly introducing the Celts into the mythology of the Mediterranean world. Other examples, such as the Argonauts sailing through Celtic lands, occur in the following century and thereafter<sup>57</sup>.

Problems arise when one tries to find a genuine Celtic origin behind Asclepiades' tale. First, cypress trees cannot withstand cold weather and thus do not grow in any area inhabited by the Celts in the fourth century BC. Second, *Cyparissa* is not a Celtic name. In fact, it is not likely even to be Greek, though it occurs in the Greek language as early as the Linear B records of the Bronze Age<sup>58</sup>. Finally, the name of the royal father, *Boreas*, is simply the Greek name for the North Wind, an appropriate appellation for a Celtic king since the Celts lived to the north of Greece<sup>59</sup>. There are numerous metamorphoses in later Celtic literature of Ireland and Wales, but we should not unnecessarily assign Celtic significance to a tale such as Asclepiades' which contains motifs so common in the mythology of the Mediterranean world and beyond.

### **Heraclides Ponticus**

The fourth century BC Greek writer Heraclides Ponticus came from the town of Heraclea on the Black Sea to study in Athens with Plato and Aristotle. His fragmentary writings range from history to literary criticism and astronomy. As cited in Plutarch, he briefly refers to the Celtic sack of Rome in 390 BC, though he misidentifies the Gauls as the mythical Hyperboreans.

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55. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10.106-42.

56. Servius *Commentary on Aeneid* 3.680.

57. Appolonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4.611-47.

58. Pylos tablet Sa 488.

59. But see Heraclides Ponticus s.v. Plutarch *Camillus* 22.2-3, below.

Plutarch *Camillus* 22.2-3  
(Wehrli 1953, frag. 102)

τοῦ μέντοι πάθους αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀλώσεως ἔοικεν ἀμυδρά τις εὐθύς εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα φήμη διελθεῖν. Ἡρακλείδης γὰρ ὁ Ποντικός οὐ πολὺ τῶν χρόνων ἐκείνων ἀπολειπόμενος ἐν τῷ Περὶ ψυχῆς συντάγματι φησιν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐσπέρας λόγον κατασχεῖν, ὡς στρατὸς ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων ἐλθὼν ἔξωθεν ἠρήκοι πόλιν Ἑλληνίδα Ῥώμην, ἐκεῖ που συνωκημένην περὶ τὴν μεγάλην θάλασσαν. οὐκ ἂν οὖν θαυμάσαιμι μυθώδη καὶ πλασματίαν ὄντα τὸν Ἡρακλείδην ἀληθεῖ λόγῳ τῷ περὶ τῆς ἀλώσεως ἐπικομπάσαι τοῦς Ὑπερβορέους καὶ τὴν μεγάλην θάλατταν.

But it seems that some distorted news of the calamity quickly reached Greece. Heraclides Ponticus, who lived shortly after that time, mentions it in his work *On the Soul*. He says that a report had made its way from the west that an army of Hyperboreans had captured a Greek city called Rome which was situated near the Great Sea. I should not be surprised that such a writer of fictions and fables as Heraclides should ornament an actual event with 'Hyperboreans' and a 'Great Sea'.

Aristotle and Theopompus, writing at roughly the same time as Heraclides, also mention the sack of Rome, but both correctly identify the invaders as Gauls rather than Hyperboreans<sup>60</sup>. Heraclides may have known their true identity as well, but as Plutarch notes, many of his writings have colorful elaboration and mythologizing. The Gaulish migration into Italy and subsequent sack of Rome are recorded by a number of classical authors, with the two primary motivations given as overpopulation of the Celtic lands to the north and a desire for southern luxury goods. Pliny says a Gallic craftsman named Helico who had lived and worked in Rome, brought figs, grapes, olive oil, and wine back north when he returned home, thus whetting the Celts' appetites for southern commodities<sup>61</sup>. Polybius, Justin, and Livy all emphasize overpopulation leading to internal discord as an impetus for movement into Italy<sup>62</sup>. An increase in population in the middle Rhine region during the fifth century BC and subsequent spread of the characteristically Celtic La Tène culture into the Po valley is certainly supported by archaeological evidence<sup>63</sup>.

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60. Aristotle s.v. Plutarch *Camillus* 22.3 and Theopompus s.v. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.5.57, below.

61. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 12.2.5.

62. Polybius 2.17; Justin *Epitome* 20.5.7; Livy 5.33-34.

63. Kruta 1978; Cunliffe 1988, 33-7.

### Pseudo-Scylax

Pseudo-Scylax or the Younger Scylax is not to be confused with the Scylax of Caryanda in Caria who is said to have explored the Red Sea, Africa, Indian Ocean, and Indus River for Darius the Great in the late sixth century BC<sup>64</sup>. Pseudo-Scylax, in the middle of the fourth century BC, wrote a periplus describing the shore of the Mediterranean and Black Seas in a clockwise direction beginning at the Pillars of Hercules<sup>65</sup>. He is the first ancient author to mention Celtic settlements in the Italian peninsula.

Pseudo-Scylax *Periplus* 17-19  
(GGM1, 25-26; Peretti 1979, 198-218)

17. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ Ὀμβρικὸν Τυρρηνοί. Διήκουσι δὲ καὶ οὗτοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Τυρρηνικοῦ πελάγους ἔξωθεν εἰς τὸν Ἀδρίαν· καὶ πόλις ἐν αὐτοῖς Ἑλληνὶς Σπίνα καὶ ποταμός· καὶ ἀνάπλους εἰς τὴν πόλιν κατὰ ποταμὸν ὡς εἴκουσι σταδίων. καὶ ἐστὶν ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἀπὸ Πίσσης πόλεως ὁδὸς ἡμερῶν τριῶν.

18. Μετὰ δὲ Τυρρηνοὺς εἰσι Κελτοὶ ἔθνος, ἀπολειφθέντες τῆς στρατείας, ἐπὶ στενῶν μέχρι Ἀδρίου διήκοντες· ἐνταῦθα δ' ἐστὶν ὁ μυχὸς τοῦ Ἀδρίου κόλπου.

19. Μετὰ δὲ Κελτοὺς Ἑνετοὶ εἰσὶν ἔθνος καὶ ποταμὸς Ἡριδανὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς.

17. After the Umbrians<sup>66</sup> are the Tyrrhenians<sup>67</sup>. They occupy the land from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Adriatic. In their country is the Greek city Spina and a river<sup>68</sup>. The voyage to the city down the river is about

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64. Herodotus 4.44.

65. The periplus mentions none of the cities founded by Alexander, but does include Olynthus near Macedonia which was destroyed in 347 BC. It also includes the Athenian colony of Neapolis in Thrace, which was founded in 360 BC. This gives a composition date for the *Periplus* within the thirteen-year period between 360 and 347 BC (Hyde 1947, 115-16).

66. The Umbrians were a central Italic tribe who spoke an Indo-European Italic dialect closely related to the language of the Oscans of southern Italy (Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.14.112).

67. An alternate name for the Etruscans. Tyrrhenus was the eponymous ancestor of the Etruscans who migrated to Italy from Lydia (Dionysius Halicarnassensis *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.28).

68. Spina was an important settlement located on the Adriatic coast close to one of the former mouths of the Po. A shifting coastline and Gallic raids led to a decline of the city in the fourth century BC. Ancient sources variously record the city's founders as Pelasgians, Thessalians, or others (Dionysius Halicarnassensis *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.18, 28; Justin *Epitome* 20.1, etc.), but archaeology suggests it was primarily an Etruscan city with strong Greek cultural influences (Alfieri and Arias 1958; Stillwell 1976, 857; Finley 1977, 100).

twenty stades<sup>69</sup>. The journey from the city to Pisa<sup>70</sup> is three days.

18. After the Tyrrhenians are a Celtic people who remained behind after a raiding expedition which reached the head of the Adriatic. There is the innermost recess of the Adriatic.

19. After the Celts are the Veneti<sup>71</sup>, and the Eridanus River<sup>72</sup> is in their land.

It is possible that the Celtic tribe which Pseudo-Scylax is referring to are the Senones. Polybius, writing in the second century BC, says that the Celts occupied the northern bank of the Po from its source in the Alps to the Adriatic, except for the part of the plain nearest the Adriatic, which was held by the Veneti<sup>73</sup>. On the southern bank, he reports, the Celts held all the land to the sea, with the Senones being the tribe nearest the Adriatic. The homeland of the Senones was the Seine basin of central Gaul according to Caesar, and Livy includes them among the Gaulish tribes which invaded Italy, perhaps in the fifth century BC, and sacked Rome in 390 BC<sup>74</sup>.

### Eudoxus of Cnidos

Eudoxus of Cnidos (c. 390-c. 340 BC) was a talented mathematician and geographer who studied in Egypt and taught at Athens, where he knew Plato and Aristotle. His *Tour of the World* (γῆς περίοδος) is a descriptive geography which survives only in quotations by later authors.

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69. A Greek stade (στάδιον) is approximately 185 meters, with twenty stades thus being approximately 3.7 km.

70. Unlikely to be the Etruscan town of Pisa in Tuscany which was approximately 200 km from Spina across the mountainous backbone of Italy.

71. The Veneti spoke an Indo-European, [and Italic] language. Herodotus (1.196) identifies them as Illyrian in origin, but their inscriptions suggest an independent language family. Polybius (2.17.5) notes the similarity of the Veneti and Celts:

τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὸν Ἀδρίαν ἤδη προσήκοντα γένος ἄλλο πάνυ παλαιὸν διακατέσχε· προσαγορεύονται δ' Οὐένετοι, τοῖς μὲν ἔθεσι καὶ τῷ κόσμῳ βραχὺ διαφέροντες Κελτῶν, γλώττη δ' ἀλλοία χρώμενοι.

But the area along the shore of the Adriatic was held by another very ancient tribe called the Veneti, who in customs and dress were very much like the Celts, but speaking a different language.

72. The Eridanus was first mentioned by Hesiod (*Theogony* 338) as a river in north-western Europe. Herodotus (3.115, above) doubts its existence, but Aeschylus suggests it is near Spain (s.v. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 37.32). In the sixth century BC, Greek writers, followed by Roman authors, begin to identify it with the Po River.

73. Polybius 2.17.

74. Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 2.2; Livy 5.34.

Stephan of Byzantium *Ethnica Epitome*: Ἀγάθη  
(Lasserre 1966, frag. 359)

Ἀγάθη· πόλις Λιγύων ἢ Κελτῶν . . . Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλη πόλις, ὡς Φίλων, Λιγυστίων ἐπὶ λίμνης Λιγυστίας· τάχα δ' ἡ αὐτὴ ἐστὶ τῇ πρώτῃ, ὡς Εὐδοξος.

Agathe : A city of the Ligurians<sup>75</sup> or Celts . . . According to Philon<sup>76</sup>, there is another city of the Ligurians on a Ligurian lake. Perhaps the second is the same as the first, as Eudoxus says.

Agathe (Greek Ἀγαθή, 'good'), modern Agde, was a colony founded by the Massaliots in the early sixth century BC on the Hérault delta between Massalia and Narbon both for military protection and the expansion of commerce with inland Gaul<sup>77</sup>. This Greek settlement was located on a low hill above the river just a few km south of the native hill-fort at Bessan.

### Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BC), prolific writer, natural scientist, philosopher, and tutor of Alexander the Great, was born the son of a physician in Stagirus near Macedonia. He studied with Plato and later founded his own school in Athens. The sections from his *Politics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *Eudemian Ethics* all emphasize the themes of Celtic bravery and prowess in war begun in Plato and Xenophon<sup>78</sup>. The remaining passages from various sources focus on the geography and climate of Celtic lands and the sack of Rome.

#### *Politics* 2.6.6 (1269b)

ὥστ' ἀναγκαῖον ἐν τῇ τοιαύτῃ πολιτείᾳ τιμᾶσθαι τὸν πλοῦτον, ἄλλως τε κἂν τύχῳσι γυναικοκρατούμενοι, καθάπερ τὰ πολλὰ τῶν στρατιωτικῶν καὶ πολεμικῶν γενῶν, ἔξω Κελτῶν ἢ κἂν εἴ τινες ἕτεροι φανερώς τετιμῆκασιν τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ἄρρενας συνουσίαν.

The inevitable result is that in such a state wealth is highly esteemed, especially if the men are dominated by women as it is with most military

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75. For the Ligurians, see note under Hecataeus above. Given Hecataeus' statement and those of later classical writers who restrict the Ligurians to the lands between the Rhône River in the west and Tuscan Pisa in the east, it is probable that the colony of Agathe was in Celtic territory.

76. Philo of Byblos (AD 64-141), a grammarian and translator of Phoenician mythology (*FGrH* 3C. #790).

77. Pseudo-Scymnus *GGM* 1, 204; Strabo *Geography* 4.1.5; Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.33.

78. Xenophon *Hellenica* 7.1.20, 31 and Plato *Laws* 1.637d-e, above.

and warlike cultures, except the Celts and certain other groups who openly approve of sexual relations between men.

The context of this first passage from the *Politics* is a discussion of the dangers of omitting the conduct of women from a state's legislation. In such a society, Aristotle says, women will take advantage of the law's disinterest in them to exercise subtle control over their husbands and thus the state<sup>79</sup>. An exception to such an indirect gynocracy would be a society in which the men rely on each other, not women, for sexual gratification. Aristotle is the first classical writer to mention homosexual relations among the Celts, but he is followed by later authors, such as Athenaeus, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo<sup>80</sup>.

*Politics* 7.2.5 (1324b)

ἔτι δ' ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι πᾶσι τοῖς δυναμένοις πλεονεκτεῖν ἢ τοιαύτη τετίμηται δύναμις, οἷον ἐν Σκύθαις καὶ Πέρσαις καὶ Θραξὶ καὶ Κελτοῖς.

Such martial ability is honored among all nations which are strong enough to conquer others, such as the Scythians, Persians, Thracians, and Celts.

*Politics* 15.2 (1336a)

συμφέρι δ' εὐθύς καὶ πρὸς τὰ ψύχη συνεθίζειν ἐκ μικρῶν παίδων· τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ πρὸς ὑγίειαν καὶ πρὸς πολεμικὰς πράξεις εὐχρηστότατον. διὸ παρὰ πολλοῖς ἐστὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἔθος τοῖς μὲν εἰς ποταμὸν ἀποβάπτειν τὰ γιγνόμενα ψυχρόν, τοῖς δὲ σκέπασμα μικρὸν ἀμπίσχειν, οἷον Κελτοῖς.

It is also advantageous to accustom children to the cold from a very early age. This is very beneficial not only for reasons of health but also with a view towards future military service. This is why among many non-Greek nations it is a custom to dip new-born babies in a cold river, or give them scant clothing, as among the Celts.

79. Aristotle may have had in mind the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, a comedy in which the women of Athens and Sparta proclaim an end to all sexual activity until their husbands make peace.

80. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13.603a; Diodorus Siculus 5.32.7; Strabo *Geography* 4.4.6. Homosexuality, often in the form of pederasty, is also reported by classical writers among other non-Greek nations such as the Persians, and of course frequently among the Greeks themselves, especially among the Spartans (Sextus Empiricus *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 3.199; Strabo *Geography* 10.4.21; etc.).

*Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7.6-7 (1115b)

καλοῦ δὴ ἕνεκα ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ὑπομένει καὶ πράττει τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν· τῶν δ' ὑπερβαλλόντων ὁ μὲν τῇ ἀφοβίᾳ ἀνώνυμος, εἴρηται δ' ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς πρότερον ὅτι πολλά ἐστὶν ἀνώνυμα, εἴη δ' ἄν τις μαινόμενος ἢ ἀνάληγτος εἰ μὴθὲν φοβοῖτο, μήτε σεισμὸν μήτε κύματα, καθάπερ φασὶ τοὺς Κελτοὺς·

On account of honor the virtuous man stands his ground and performs brave deeds. But the one who is fearless with excessive bravery, who fears nothing at all, not even earthquakes or waves, as they say of the Celts, has no name, as we have noted before is the case with many qualities, unless we call him mad or insensible.

*Eudemian Ethics* 3.1.25 (1229b)

διόπερ οὐτ' εἴ τις ὑπομένει τὰ φοβερὰ δι' ἄγνοιαν, ἀνδρεῖος, οἷον εἴ τις τοὺς κεραυνοὺς ὑπομένει φερομένους διὰ μανίαν, οὐτ' εἰ γινώσκων ὅσος ὁ κίνδυνος, διὰ θυμόν, οἷον οἱ Κελτοὶ πρὸς τὰ κύματα ὅπλα ἀπαντῶσι λαβόντες, καὶ ὅλως ἡ βαρβαρική ἀνδρεία μετὰ θυμοῦ ἐστίν.

Therefore no one is brave if he endures formidable events on account of ignorance, such as a madman who taunts thunderbolts, or if someone knows the dangers involved but is carried away by reckless passion, as the Celts who take up arms against the waves. The bravery of barbarians in general is based in passion.

These four passages are the first occurrences of the common later classical themes of the reckless courage and martial spirit of the Celts, apart from several earlier unadorned descriptions of military activity and Plato's brief characterization of the Celts as πολεμικοί, 'warlike'<sup>81</sup>. Both Plato and Aristotle characterize the inhabitants of Northern Europe in general as having an excess of θυμός 'will, temper, spirit'<sup>82</sup>. Aristotle recommends that children in the ideal society should be acclimated to the cold from an early age. This is reminiscent of Cretan and Spartan child-rearing, as well as Plato's ideal regime<sup>83</sup>. The description of dipping babies in a river may relate to the Celtic paternity-test in which newborns are dipped into the Rhine, mentioned by classical authors beginning with an anonymous third century BC poet in the Greek Anthology<sup>84</sup>. It may also simply be a part of the common practice of hardening newborns by bathing in various lands mentioned

81. Plato *Laws* 1.637d-e, above

82. Plato *Republic* 435e; Aristotle *Politics* 7.6.

83. For the Cretans, see Strabo *Geography* 10.4.20; for Spartans, Xenophon *Spartan Constitution* 2.3-4; Plato *Republic* 3.13.

84. *Anthologia Palatina* 9.125. Later references include Julian (*Epistle* 59) and Claudian (*In Rufinum* 110-114).

by several classical authors<sup>85</sup>. The report in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the Celts fear nothing, 'neither earthquakes or waves', is echoed in the passage from the *Eudemian Ethics*, where the Celts are said to battle the waves. Aristotle may be drawing on the same source as Strabo, who says the Cimbri fought against the tides<sup>86</sup>.

*Generation of Animals* 2.8 (718a)

ἔτι δὲ ψυχρὸν [τὸ] ζῶον ὁ ὄνος ἐστί, διόπερ ἐν τοῖς χειμερινοῖς οὐ θέλει γίνεσθαι τόποις διὰ τὸ δύσριγον εἶναι τὴν φύσιν, οἷον περὶ Σκύθας καὶ τὴν ὁμορον χώραν, οὐδὲ περὶ Κελτοὺς τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἰβηρίας· ψυχρὰ γὰρ καὶ αὕτη ἡ χώρα.

The ass is a cold-natured animal, so that because of its sensitivity to cold it does not reproduce in wintry climates, such as Scythia and neighboring regions, or the Celtic lands beyond Iberia, which are also cold.

*History of Animals* 7.28 (606b)

πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἡ κρᾶσις αἰτία, οἷον ἐν τῇ Ἰλλυρίδι καὶ τῇ Θράκῃ καὶ τῇ Ἠπειρῶ οἱ ὄνοι μικροί, ἐν δὲ τῇ Σκυθικῇ καὶ Κελτικῇ ὅλως οὐ γίνονται· δυσχείμερα γὰρ ταῦτα.

In many places the climate is a cause. In Illyria, Thrace, and Epirus, donkeys are small. In Scythia and Celtica, they do not occur at all, for these lands have very cold winters.

Aristotle's two passages on the climate and lack of asses in northern lands echoes the description of Herodotus, who says horses can bear the Scythian winters, but mules and asses cannot<sup>87</sup>. However, the probable historical distribution of the Asiatic Wild Ass (*Equus hemionus*) included much of Scythia, whereas an eastern species of wild ass (*Equus kiang*) may still be found on the cold Tibet an plateau above 3000 meters<sup>88</sup>. The distinctively shaggy modern Irish donkey also confirms the ability of asses to survive in Celtic lands, in spite of its desert origins.

85. Examples include Strabo *Geography* 3.4.17; Virgil *Aeneid* 9.603; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 16.2. Dio Cassius (76.12) relates that the primitive British could bear great hunger and cold, standing submerged in marshes for days with only their heads above the water.

86. Strabo *Geography* 7.2.1. The Cimbri were a probably Germanic tribe from Jutland (modern Denmark), who invaded Italy and were destroyed by Marius in 101 BC.

87. *History of Animals* Herodotus 4.28-30.

88. Clutton-Brock 1992, 26-38.



*Meteorologica* 1.13 (350b)

ἔκ δὲ τῆς Πυρήνης, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ὄρος πρὸς δυσμὴν ἰσημερινήν ἐν τῇ Κελτικῇ, ῥέουσιν ὅ τε Ἴστρος καὶ ὁ Ταρτησσός. οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἔξω στηλῶν, ὁ δ' Ἴστρος δι' ὅλης τῆς Εὐρώπης εἰς τὸν Εὐξεινον πόντον.

From Pyrene, this is a mountain range towards the equinoctial sunset in Celtica, flow the Ister and Tartessus. The latter enters the sea outside the Pillars of Hercules, while the Ister flows across Europe into the Euxine.

In his *Meteorologica*, Aristotle conducts a short geographical review of Asia, Europe, and Africa, but his inaccurate description of the course of the Ister does not improve on that of Herodotus<sup>89</sup>.

Plutarch *Camillus* 22.3  
(Rose 1886, frag. 568)

Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ ὁ φιλόσοφος τὸ μὲν ἀλῶναι τὴν πόλιν ὑπὸ Κελτῶν ἀκριβῶς δηλὸς ἐστὶν ἀκηκοώς, τὸν δὲ σώσαντα Λεύκιον εἶναί φησιν· ἦν δὲ Μάρκος, οὐ Λεύκιος, ὁ Κάμιλλος.

Aristotle the philosopher accurately heard about the capture of the city by the Celts, but he says the city's savior was named Lucius, although the forename of Camillus was not Lucius but Marcus.

Aristotle did not correctly record the name of Marcus Furius Camillus, but he did identify the Celts as the sackers of Rome, unlike Heraclides Ponticus, who as recorded in the same passage of Plutarch, calls them Hyperboreans<sup>90</sup>. Aristotle's other contemporary, Theopompus, also correctly reports that Celtic invaders captured Rome<sup>91</sup>.

## Ephorus

Ephorus of Cyme (c. 405-330 BC) was a pupil of Isocrates, as were Asclepiades of Tragilus and Theopompus. His status as one of the most important historians of the fourth century BC rests largely on his *Universal History* (Ἱστορίαι) of thirty books. His work survives only in quotations from later authors, but he was apparently an influential source for Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Polyaeus, and Plutarch. His surviving passages on the Celts deal with the geographical position

89. Herodotus 2.23, 4.49, above.

90. Heraclides Ponticus s.v. Plutarch *Camillus* 22.2-3, above.

91. s.v. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.5.57, above.

and extent of the Celtic tribes in the fourth century BC, as well as commentary on their customs.

Strabo *Geography* 1.2.28  
(*FGrH* 2A, #70, frag. 30a)

μηνύει δὲ καὶ Ἔφορος τὴν παλαιὰν περὶ τῆς Αἰθιοπίας δόξαν, ὅς φησιν ἐν τῷ περὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης λόγῳ, τῶν περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν τόπων εἰς τέσσαρα μέρη διηρημένων, τὸ πρὸς τὸν ἀπηλιώτην Ἰνδοῦς ἔχειν, πρὸς νότον δὲ Αἰθίοπας, πρὸς δύσιν δὲ Κελτοῦς, πρὸς δὲ βορρᾶν ἄνεμον Σκύθας.

Ephorus also relates the ancient notion concerning Ethiopia in his book *On Europe*<sup>92</sup>. He says that if the heavens and earth are divided into four parts, the Indians will occupy the land of the east wind, the Ethiopians the regions from which the south wind blows, the Celts the west, and the Scythians the land of the north wind.

Josephus *Contra Apionem* 1.67  
(*FGrH* 2A, #70, frag. 133)

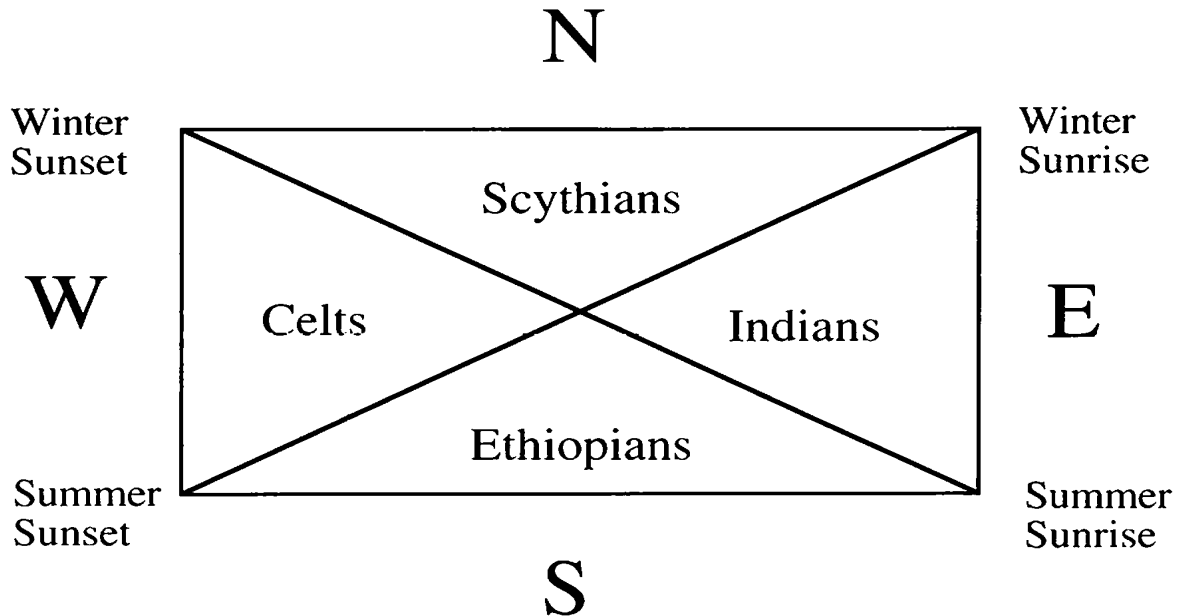
περὶ μὲν γὰρ Γαλατῶν τε καὶ Ἰβήρων οὕτως ἠγνόησαν οἱ δοκοῦντες ἀκριβέστατοι συγγραφεῖς, ὧν ἐστὶν Ἔφορος, ὥστε πόλιν οἶεται μίαν εἶναι τοῦς Ἰβήρας τοῦς τοσοῦτο μέρος τῆς ἐσπερίου γῆς κατοικοῦντας.

Concerning the Gauls and Iberians, such ignorance existed even among those who were considered to be the best writers, such as Ephorus, that he thought the Iberians lived in a single city, whereas in fact they occupied a large portion of the western lands.

Ephorus divides the known world into four sections, placing the four primary barbarian peoples, Indians, Ethiopians, Celts, and Indians, into a four-part parallelogram, with the civilized lands of the Mediterranean at the center<sup>93</sup>:

92. The Greeks from the time of Homer (*Odyssey* 1.22, etc.) generally considered any region south of Egypt to be the land of the Ethiopians (Αἰθιοπῆες 'burnt faced'). This passage is echoed in Cosmas Indicopleustes *Christian Topography* 2.79 (*FGrH* 2A, #70, frag. 30b).

93. The four quarter cosmos and the literally *crucial* center is an almost universal world-view, with examples found among the Chinese, Indians, and Aztecs among others. Ireland was similarly divided into four regions, with Meath (Old Irish *Mide* < Indo-European \**med<sup>h</sup>yo-* 'middle') as the central, *quintessential* province (see Rees and Rees 1961, 146-72).



In spite of the gross distortions of such a system, which leaves out the Germans, Iberians, Persians, Ligurians, and many others, it serves as a simplified, but representative view of the known globe to fourth century BC Greeks<sup>94</sup>. Josephus' low opinion of Ephorus' geography may be due to the goal of his treatise, which, as a defense of Judaism, strives to downplay the ability of Greek historians to accurately portray marginal nations. We do not possess the fragment of Ephorus to which Josephus refers, so it is difficult to judge Ephorus' geographical accuracy on this particular point. However, the next passage from Ephorus in this collection says that he included most of Iberia in the list of Celtic lands, which certainly shows Ephorus knew Iberia was much larger than a single town.

Strabo *Geography* 4.4.6  
(*FGrH* 2A, #70, frag. 131)

Ἐφορος δὲ ὑπερβάλλουσιν τε τῶν μεγέθει λέγει τὴν Κελτικήν, ὥστε ἥσπερ νῦν Ἰβηρίας καλοῦμεν ἐκείνοις τὰ πλεῖστα προσνέμειν μέχρι Γαδείρων, φιλέλληνας τε ἀποφαίνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ πολλὰ ἰδίως λέγει περὶ αὐτῶν, οὐκ ἔοικότα τοῖς νῦν. ἴδιον δὲ καὶ τοῦτο· ἀσκεῖν γὰρ αὐτοὺς, μὴ παχεῖς εἶναι μηδὲ προγαστορας, τὸν δ' ὑπερβαλλόμενον τῶν νέων τὸ τῆς ζώνης μέτρον, ζημιουῖσθαι.

94. The world view represented by Ephorus may owe its origin to Hecataeus (see Heidel 1937, 16-20).

Ephorus, in his account, says that Celtica is so large that it includes most of Iberia, as far as Gades. He also reports that the Celts are great admirers of the Greeks and says many things about them that are not true for current times. They are very careful to avoid becoming fat or potbellied, and if any young man's belly sticks over his belt he is punished.

Strabo *Geography* 7.2.1  
(*FGH* 2A, #70, frag. 132)

οὐκ εὖ δ' οὐδὲ ὁ φήσας ὄπλα αἶρεσθαι πρὸς τὰς πλημμυρίδας τοὺς Κίμβρους· οὐδ' ὅτι ἀφοβίαν οἱ Κελτοὶ ἀσκοῦντες κατακλύζεσθαι τὰς οἰκίας ὑπομένουσιν, εἴτ' ἀνοικοδομοῦσι· καὶ ὅτι πλείων αὐτοῖς συμβαίνει φθόρος ἐξ ὕδατος ἢ πολέμου, ὅπερ Ἐφορός φησιν.

The writer who says that the Cimbri took up arms against the rising sea is not correct. Neither is the statement that the Celts, as a training in fearlessness, patiently stand by while their homes are destroyed by flood-tides, and then rebuild them<sup>95</sup>. Nor is it true that they suffer greater casualties from water than war, as Ephorus says.

Ephorus is correct that large parts of Iberia were Celtic in the fourth century BC, and in fact the peninsula probably had a significant number of Celtic settlements several centuries earlier<sup>96</sup>. The statement that the Celts were great admirers of the Greeks is echoed later by Pseudo-Scymnus, who says the Celts followed Greek customs and enjoyed friendly relations with their Hellenic neighbors<sup>97</sup>. The generally amicable relations between the Celts of Gaul and the Greek colonists of Massalia, as well as the Gaulish craving for Greek wine among other goods, certainly support Ephorus' assertion. Strabo's admonition concerning shifts in Celtic customs over time is well worth heeding. It is a grave mistake to believe that the ancient Celts, whose archaeological and historical remains stretch over a period of a thousand years and who inhabited lands from Ireland to Asia Minor, were an unchanging and uniform culture. As for the prohibition against excess weight, we have no other classical evidence, except that the martial emphasis of the ancient Celts would discourage obesity among warriors as a practical matter. It may be worth noting that medieval Irish law contains a somewhat similar injunction, which allows a wife to divorce her husband if he becomes so fat as to be incapable of sexual intercourse<sup>98</sup>.

95. See Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7.6-7, above.

96. Almagro-Gorbea 1991; Camito 1993.

97. Pseudo-Scymnus *Periplus* 183-87 (*GGM* 1, 202).

98. Kelly 1988, 74.

### Theopompus

Theopompus of Chios, (born c. 378 BC) writer of the *Hellenica* (Ἑλληνικαὶ ἱστορίαι) and *Philippica* (Φιλιππικά), is known only through fragments quoted in later authors. His *Philippica* was a fifty-eight book history of the world beginning with the accession of Philip of Macedon. Among its many digressions are several comments on Celtic history and geography.

Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.5.57  
(*FGrH* 2B, # 115, frag. 317)

*Theopompus, ante quem nemo mentionem habuit, urbem dumtaxat a Gallis captam dixit.*

Theopompus, who was the first to record it, says only that the city [Rome ] was captured by the Gauls.

Theopompus is the third of the fourth century BC authors in this study to comment on the Celtic sack of Rome, along with Heraclides Ponticus and Aristotle<sup>99</sup>. Although Pliny asserts that Theopompus was the first to record the sack, the fact that Heraclides and Aristotle were his contemporaries makes it difficult to say precisely who was the earliest. It is sufficient to say that the capture of Rome by the Gauls was general knowledge to informed Greeks of the mid-fourth-century BC.

Stephan of Byzantium *Ethnica Epitome*: Δριλώνιος  
(*FGrH* 2B, #115, frag. 202)

Δριλώνιος · πόλις μεγάλη, ἐσχάτη τῶν Κελτικῶν. τὸ ἔθνικόν Δριλώνιος, ὡς Θεόπομπος μγ'.

Drilonius: A great city and most distant of the Celts. The ethnic name is Drilonius, as Theopompus says in Book 43.

The location of Drilonius is unknown. Theopompus may be referring to a Celtic settlement on the Atlantic coast of Gaul or Iberia<sup>100</sup>.

Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 10.443b-c  
(*FGrH* 2B, #115, frag. 40)

99. Heraclides Ponticus s.v. Plutarch *Camillus* 22.2-3 and Aristotle s.v. Plutarch *Camillus* 22.2-3, above.

100. It is conceivable that he is using ἐσχάτη ('farthest, uttermost, final') to mean the Celtic town most distant from the Celtic homeland of west-central Europe. If this is true, Drilonius could be a settlement in Illyrian lands on the Drilo River (the modern Drini of northern Albania). This river was well known to the classical authors (Strabo *Geography* 7.5.7; Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 3.144), and the Celts, according to Theopompus' next passage (s.v. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 10.443b-c), were fighting Illyrians at this time.

διὸ καὶ Κελτοὶ πολεμοῦντες αὐτοῖς καὶ εἰδότες αὐτῶν τὴν ἀκρασίαν παρήγγειλαν ἅπασιν τοῖς στρατιώταις δεῖπνον ὡς λαμπρότατον παρασκευάσαντας κατὰ σκηνὴν ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὰ σιτία πῶαν τινὰ φαρμακώδη δυναμένην διακόπτειν τὰς κοιλίας καὶ διακαθαίρειν. γενομένου δὲ τούτου, οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν καταληφθέντες ὑπὸ τῶν Κελτῶν ἀπώλοντο, οἱ δὲ καὶ εἰς τοὺς ποταμοὺς αὐτοὺς ἔρριψαν, ἀκράτορες τῶν γαστέρων γενόμενοι.

The Celts, knowing this weakness<sup>101</sup> when making war on them [the Illyrians], announced to all the soldiers that a wonderful banquet had been prepared for them in their tents. They put a certain medicinal herb in the food which attacked and purged their bowels. Then some were captured and slain by the Celts, while others, unable to stand the pain, threw themselves into the rivers.

Athenaeus quotes this passage from the second book of Theopompus' *Philippica*, in a digression on the dining and drinking habits of the Illyrians. The particular Illyrian tribe mentioned by Theopompus are the Ardiaei, who inhabited the region near the mouth of the Naron River (the modern Neretva), midway down the Adriatic coast, about 175 km north of the Drilo River. This conflict of Celts with Illyrians was the result of a general Celtic expansion into Italy, the Danube valley, and beyond during the fourth century BC<sup>102</sup>. This passage raises two important cultural points. First, it shows a devious side of the Celts not often emphasized by the classical authors, who tend to portray the Celts and other barbarians as brave and passionate innocents. Second, this is the earliest instance of Celtic feasting, a theme found throughout classical literature on the Celts as well as in the later Irish and Welsh tradition<sup>103</sup>.

### Pytheas

Pytheas (fl. late fourth century BC) was a Greek explorer from Massalia who sailed north along the Atlantic coast of Iberia and Gaul to Britain and Ireland, possibly to the Baltic, and to the controversial land of Thule. His reports on these regions were frequently dismissed by many ancient scholars, but the description of his travels deserves careful study. The reconstruction of genuine material of Pytheas on the Celtic lands is difficult, as the record of his voyage survives only in later fragmentary quotations and paraphrased references.

101. The tendency of the Illyrians to overindulge themselves at daily drinking parties.

102. See Kruta 1991.

103. Some ancient examples include Phylarchus s.v. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 4.150d-f and Posidonius (s.v. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 4.152d-f; Diodorus Siculus 5.28). Later examples include the Irish tale *Fled Bricrenn* and the Welsh heroic poem *Y Gododdin*.

Several ancient authors such as Polybius and Strabo, who labels Pytheas a *ψευδίστατος* 'arch-falsifier', put little stock in his journal<sup>104</sup>. However, a number of ancient authors, such as Eratosthenes, Pliny, and Ptolemy, as well as many modern critics tend to believe most of Pytheas' reconstructed account of his travels around the Atlantic coast of Europe. Pytheas' voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules may have followed partially in the wake of his countryman, the hypothetical Massaliot author of the periplus used by Avienus in his *Ora Maritima*. Although Pytheas is known only imperfectly through later authors, his observations have undergone a less tortuous re-working than the sources underlying the *Ora Maritima*, and should be ranked as the earliest reliable, first-hand evidence for the British Isles. The following is a conservative list of probably genuine passages from Pytheas on the Celts and Celtic lands:

Strabo *Geography* 1.4.5

(Mette 1952, frag. 6a.5; Roseman 1994, frag. 4)

καὶ τὰ ἀκρωτήρια τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ τὸ τῶν Ὀστιμίων, ὃ καλεῖται Κάβαιον, καὶ τὰς κατὰ τοῦτο νήσους, ὧν τὴν ἐσχάτην Οὐξιθάμην φησὶ Πυθέας ἀπέχειν ἡμερῶν τριῶν πλοῦν.

We must add as well the other promontories, especially that of the Ostimii, which is called Cabaeum, and the islands near it, the outermost of which Pytheas calls Uxisame, three days' sail distant.

The context of this passage is a critique by Strabo of Eratosthenes' geographical knowledge, particularly his placement of the western boundary of the known world. Eratosthenes drew on Pytheas, who identifies an island, Uxisame, off a cape named Cabaeum in the land of the Ostimii. Caesar places the Ostimii, whom he calls the Osismi, in the westernmost part of Brittany next to the Veneti<sup>105</sup>. Cabaeum must be the modern Pointe du Raz or Pointe de St. Mathieu, both at the western tip of Brittany. Pytheas says, according to Strabo, that the island of Uxisame is three days sail, a journey of roughly 550 kilometers in good weather<sup>106</sup>. If Pytheas means three days' sail from westernmost Brittany, this would place Uxisame either off the coast of Ireland, Britain, or perhaps northwest Iberia. More likely, Uxisame is the modern Île d'Ouessant (Ushant) 20 km off Brittany, and Strabo is taking as a starting point the delta of the Garonne River, which is roughly three days sail from Île d'Ouessant and is the beginning of the westward thrust of Gaul into the Atlantic<sup>107</sup>. Even if the location of Uxisame is questionable, the Celtic nature of

104. Strabo *Geography* 1.4.3.

105. Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 2.34, 3.9, 7.75. Strabo calls them the Osismii when he is not following Pytheas (4.4.1).

106. Assuming a rough sailing distance of thousand stades (180 km) per day (Hawkes 1975, 27).

107. See Hyde 1947, 127; Hawkes 1975, 27.

its name is unmistakable. Οὐξισάμη is a good Celtic word meaning 'farthest, highest' from Indo-European \**ups-* 'high' (with the development to Proto-Celtic \**ouks-*), plus the addition of the Celtic superlative suffix in \**sam*. This would fit Île d'Ouessant semantically, since it is the most distant and westernmost island off the coast of Gaul.

Strabo *Geography* 1.4.3

(Mette 1952, frag. 6a.3; Roseman 1994, frag. 3)

ὁ δὲ πλειόνων ἢ δισμυρίων τὸ μῆκος ἀποφαίνει τῆς νήσου, καὶ τὸ Κάντιον ἡμερῶν τινῶν πλοῦν ἀπέχειν τῆς Κελτικῆς φησι·

But Pytheas says the length of the island [of Britain] is more than twenty thousand stades<sup>108</sup> and Kantion<sup>109</sup> is several days sail from Celtica<sup>110</sup>.

Strabo *Geography* 2.4.1

(Mette 1952, frag. 7a.1; Roseman 1994, frag. 5)

ὄλην μὲν τὴν Βρεττανικὴν τὴν ἐμβατὸν ἐπελθεῖν φάσκοντος, τὴν δὲ περίμετρον πλειόνων ἢ τεττάρων μυριάδων ἀποδόντος τῆς νήσου.

After asserting that he traveled the whole of Britain which was accessible, Pytheas reported that the coast-line of the island is more than forty thousand stades<sup>111</sup>.

These two passages relating to the geography of Britain are not particularly accurate from a modern point of view, but Pytheas can be forgiven his errors considering that classical geographers several centuries later were making mistakes on an even larger scale, such as Strabo's placement of Ireland to the north of Britain<sup>112</sup>. The length of Britain is approximately 1000 km from north to south, less than one third the distance given by Pytheas. Kent is about 32 km across the English Channel from Calais, and is several days' sail from Celtica if one starts from a more distant part of Gaul. The actual circumference of Britain is only half the 7400 km which Strabo reports from Pytheas<sup>113</sup>.

More important than geographical inaccuracies is the use of the term Βρεττανική for the island of Britain by Strabo, who is presumably echoing Pytheas.

108. 20,000 stades equal approximately 3700 km.

109. *Kantion* is modern Kent in southeast Britain.

110. Celtica is an alternate name for Gaul. The actual distance from Dover to Calais in France is approximately 32 km. Strabo (1.4.3) rightly says that Kent is visible from the Gaulish coast.

111. 40,000 stadia equal approximately 7400 km.

112. *Geography* 2.1.13, etc.

113. Diodorus Siculus (5.21.3) adds 2500 stadia or approximately 456 km to Strabo's figure of 40,000.



The earlier name for the island of Britain was *Albion*, as found in Avienus, which Pliny says was the original name of Britain<sup>114</sup>.

Strabo *Geography* 2.5.8

(Mette 1952, frag. 6c; Roseman 1994, frag. 6)

‘ο μὲν οὖν Μασσαλιώτης Πυθέας τὰ περὶ Θούλην τὴν βορειοτάτην τῶν Βρεττανίδων ὑστατα λέγει, παρ’ οἷς ὁ αὐτός ἐστι τῷ ἀρκτικῷ ὁ θερινὸς τροπικὸς κύκλος·

Pytheas of Massalia says that Thule, the northernmost of the Britannic Isles, is most distant, and that there the Arctic Circle coincides with the summer tropic<sup>115</sup>.

The location of Thule has been a heated controversy since Virgil referred to the mysterious island as *ultima Thule*, the land at the edge of the world<sup>116</sup>. A full discussion of the topic and survey of the literature is beyond the scope of this study, but since Pytheas regarded it as the northernmost of the British Isles and therefore conceivably inhabited by Celtic tribes, a brief examination is in order. Thule has been identified variously with the island groups of the Orkneys, Shetlands, and Faroes, as well as Iceland and Scandinavia. Pytheas says Thule is six days’ sail from Britain<sup>117</sup>, which would be too great a distance for the Orkneys or Shetlands, although Ptolemy seems to identify the Shetlands as Thule<sup>118</sup>. Other classical authors identify Thule with Scandinavia<sup>119</sup>, while some modern scholars prefer Iceland, which also touches the Arctic Circle<sup>120</sup>. If Thule was the Orkneys or even possibly the Shetlands, it may have been inhabited by a Celtic-speaking people, but if Thule was farther north, it is unlikely that its inhabitants were Celts.

### Ptolemy I

Ptolemy (c. 367/6-283 BC), son of Lagus of Macedonia, was a life-long companion and a leading general of Alexander the Great. He was exiled along with Alexander by Philip of Macedon, but returned with Alexander after Philip’s death

114. *Naturalis Historia* 4.102. See Avienus above, Koch 1991, Rivet and Smith 1979, 280-82.

115. Meaning that in Thule the summer solstice (τροπικός) is the same as the Arctic Circle. This is another way of saying that Thule is on the Arctic Circle (66.6Σ), the lowest latitude where on June 21st the sun does not set.

116. *Georgics* 1.30.

117. s.v. Strabo *Geography* 1.4.2.

118. *Geography* 2.2. If the Orkneys derive their name from Indo-European \**pork-* ‘young pig’, the loss of the initial *p-* in Celtic would argue for Celtic inhabitants of these northern islands just south of the Shetlands.

119. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 4.96; Procopius *De Bello Gothico* 2.15.

120. Hawkes 1975. Roman coins have been found in Iceland which, if genuine deposits, argue for at least intermittent visits to the island in classical times (Shetelig 1949).

in 336 BC to serve Alexander until his death thirteen years later. After Alexander died, Ptolemy took over the Egyptian part of his empire and founded the Ptolemaic royal line which continued until the death of Cleopatra. After he became king of Egypt, Ptolemy wrote a history of Alexander's life using Alexander's official journal, but also drawing on his own years of close association. His history survives only in fragments, primarily from Arrian's *Anabasis* (second century AD), but also from quotations in Strabo and other authors<sup>121</sup>.

Strabo *Geography* 7.3.8  
(*FGrH* 2B, #138, frag. 2)

φησὶ δὲ Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Λάγου κατὰ ταύτην τὴν στρατείαν συμμῖξαι τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ Κελτοὺς τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ἀδρίαν φιλίας καὶ ξενίας χάριν. δεξάμενον δὲ αὐτοὺς φιλοφρόνως τὸν βασιλέα ἐρέσθαι παρὰ πότον, τί μάλιστα εἶη ὃ φοβοῖντο, νομίζοντα αὐτὸν ἐρεῖν· αὐτοὺς δ' ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὅτι οὐδένα, πλὴν εἰ ἄρα μὴ ὁ οὐρανὸς αὐτοῖς ἐπιπέσοι, φιλίαν γε μὴν ἀνδρὸς τοιούτου περὶ παντὸς τίθεσθαι.

Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, says that during this campaign some Celts living near the Adriatic arrived seeking good will and friendship. Alexander received them warmly and while they were sharing a drink asked them what they feared the most, thinking they would say him. They answered that they feared nothing except that the sky might fall down on them, but that they honored the friendship of a man like him more than anything.

The one certain passage on the Celts from Ptolemy comes from Alexander's early campaign in Thrace against the Illyrians in 335 BC, a year after his father's

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121. Arrian (*Anabasis* 1.4) repeats the story of the Celtic embassy, with additional details such as the Celts' great height, pledges made between them and Alexander, and Alexander's final comment that the Celts were ἀλαζόντες 'braggarts'. Jacoby does not accept Arrian's version for primary listing in the *FGrH* corpus of Ptolemy, but it is also possible that Strabo is not completely faithful in his rendition of Ptolemy's history (see Bosworth 1980, 64-5). Arrian also reports a visit by various embassies from foreign states to Alexander in Babylon (*Anabasis* 7.15.4), but this passage is not generally accepted as genuine (Tarn 1948, 374-78):

Κατιόντι δὲ αὐτῷ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα Λιβύων τε πρεσβεῖσαι ἐνετύγχανον ἐπαιούντων τε καὶ στεφανούντων ἐπὶ τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῆς Ἀσίας, καὶ ἐξ Ἰταλίας Βρέττιοί τε καὶ Λευκανοὶ καὶ Τυρρηνοὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐπρέσβευον· καὶ Καρχηδονίους τότε πρεσβεῦσαι λέγεται καὶ ἀπὸ Αἰθιοπῶν πρέσβεις ἐλθεῖν καὶ Σκυθῶν τῶν ἐκ τῆς Εὐρώπης, καὶ Κελτοὺς καὶ Ἰβήρας ὑπὲρ φιλίας δεησομένους·

When Alexander entered Babylon, ambassadors from the Libyans met him praising his greatness and crowning him with wreaths for conquering the whole kingdom of Asia. And from Italy, embassies from the Brettii, Leucani, and Etruscans also came for the same purpose. It is also said that embassies arrived at that time from the Carthaginians, Ethiopians, and from Europe the Scythians, Celts, and Iberians, all desiring his friendship.

death. This campaign was necessary to secure Macedonia's northern borders before he began his conquest of the Persian Empire the next year. That Celts were in the general region of Alexander's campaign is no surprise as several years earlier Pseudo-Scylax reported their presence at the mouth of the Adriatic and Theopompus records Celtic expansion into Illyria<sup>122</sup>.

The statement of the Celts that they fear nothing except the sky falling down on them seems at first to be vainglorious boasting, but it bears a remarkable resemblance to an oath given by the warriors of the Irish king Conchobar before the final battle of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*<sup>123</sup>:

*'Gébmá-ne íarom i mbale i tám,' ar na hóca, 'acht mani maidi in talam  
found nó an nem anúas foraind, nícon memsam-ne de sund?'*

'We shall hold the spot where we now stand', said the warriors, 'but unless the ground quakes beneath us or the heavens fall down on us, we shall not flee from here'.

There is nothing to suggest that the Celts who visited Alexander swore any oath, but their answer may be part of a common cultural tradition or even a specific formula which also survived in Irish epic.

### Sopater

Sopater of Paphos (*fl.* late fourth century BC) was a writer of comic poetry whose work survives only in fragments. His longest surviving passage is from a parody called *The Galatae*.

Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 15.160e  
(CGF 193, frag. 6)

παρ' οἷς ἔθος ἐστίν, ἥνικ' ἄν προτέρημα τι  
ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις λάβωσι, θύειν τοῖς θεοῖς  
τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους· <τοὺς> Γαλάτας μιμούμενος  
κάγῳ κατακαύσειν ἠΰξάμην τοῖς δαίμοσι  
διαλεκτικούς τρεῖς τῶν παρεγγεγραμμένων.

Among them is the custom, whenever they win  
a victory in battle, to sacrifice their prisoners  
to the gods. So I, imitating the Celts, have vowed  
to the divine powers to burn as a offering  
three of those false dialecticians.

122. Pseudo-Scylax *Periplus* 19 and Theopompus s.v. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 10.443b-c, above.

123. O'Rahilly 1976, 121, 234. See also Jackson 1964, 13; Bosworth 1980, 65.

Although the passage is a comical tirade against counterfeit philosophers, there is no reason to assume that this first reference to human sacrifice among the Celts is imaginary, as it appears in later classical authors as well. Diodorus Siculus and Strabo describe a divination rite of the druids wherein they stab a victim in the back and watch his death convulsions to foretell the future<sup>124</sup>. In the same passages, they describe the Gaulish practice of impaling evildoers after a five-year captivity, then burning them afterwards on enormous pyres along with first-fruits. Strabo and Caesar further say that the Gauls build large statues out of straw and wood, fill them with animals and humans, then burn the structure as an offering<sup>125</sup>. The importance of this passage lies partially in the fact that Sopater could use this reference in his work and expect his Greek readers to accept his claim of human sacrifice among the Celts. His passing allusion shows that reports of such immolations were common knowledge among Greeks of the late fourth century BC.

After the fourth century, the number of ancient writers on the Celts grew enormously as the Gauls sacked Delphi in 278 BC and subsequently invaded and settled in Hellenistic Asia Minor. Roman contact and confrontation with the Gauls of western Europe from the second century BC also marks the beginning of Latin and as well as further Greek history and ethnography on the Celts lasting until the end of the western Empire. Polybius, Posidonius, Caesar, Cicero, Livy, Tacitus, Ausonius, and many others have left us essential and wonderfully detailed documents for understanding the culture of the ancient Celts which may make the pre-300 BC sources look fragmentary and paltry by comparison. Still, the earliest writers on the Celts from Hecataeus to Sopater, whether listing obscure towns in Gaul, describing martial bravery, or mentioning human sacrifice in an off-hand remark, do provide a unique and fundamental source of information on the early Celts.

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124. Diodorus Siculus 5.31.3; Strabo *Geography* 4.4.5.

125. Strabo *Geography* 4.4.5; Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 6.16. Caesar reports that those Gauls who were seriously ill or facing battle offered or vowed a human sacrifice. This was done on the principal that a life must be given to the gods in order to save the suppliant's life.

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