

BOOK REVIEW

The Ancient Celts. By BARRY CUNLIFFE. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. ix + 486. Paperback, \$27.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-875293-6.

Barry Cunliffe has outdone himself in updating his important survey of the Ancient Celts. This is not an easy feat to do in under 500 pages, considering that he covers 8,000 years of human history and a territory from the Black Sea to Ireland. Cunliffe divides his text into 15 chapters followed by a guide to further reading, an extensive timeline, 30 additional and very useful maps and a spectacular index and sources of illustrations. The chapters can be divided into roughly four sections covering historiography, Celtic history, cultural themes and Celtic dispersal after the fall of Rome.

Chapter 1 explores an etic view of the Celts. It starts with Greco-Roman texts then moves from their oblivion to a resurgence of the idea of the Celts and the use of these texts by modern societies. Cunliffe explores Great Britain's, France's and Germany's use of the Celts in creating their own identities in the wave of nationalism. He finishes with a survey of Celtic archaeology from 1870 to the present. In his second edition, Cunliffe includes present work being done currently in Celtic archaeology.

Moving onto chapter 2, Cunliffe covers how the Historical Celts were shaped by examining studies of their languages, echoes of Celtic traditions in oral stories from the insular tradition and the archaeological excavations and studies of their art. It is a deeper dive into some of the concepts covered in the first chapter. He explains how these three disciplines come together to create a more complete picture of the Celts.

The major migrations that occurred in the Neolithic period up through the early Bronze Age are the focus of Chapter 3. Cunliffe looks at the two major theories of how the Celtic language developed (the Kurgan and Anatolian models) and, explaining how both models could be true, he melds them together in his analysis. He looks at some of the new genetic work being done and calls for

archaeologists, linguists and geneticists to collaborate to better understand the development of Indo-European and Celtic groups.

In Chapter 4, Cunliffe examines the geographic region of the Atlantic sea shore from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age and how metal trade influenced the region. Here he explores the interaction of the Phoenicians and how they created an interchange of Celtic and Mediterranean ideas. He takes time to look at each region along the coast from Iberia up to the British Isles.

Cunliffe moves inland with chapter 5, diving into the cultures that shaped what would be known as Gaul to the Romans. He brings the reader quickly through the migrations of the early Bronze Age to the crystallization of the major Mediterranean cultures who will in turn influence the Hallstatt and then La Tène cultures. He looks at how need for differentiation among the elite created the material remains of many Celtic centers. This focus on the elite archaeological footprint is present in most of the chapters, and I wish Cunliffe had expanded into what the average person's life may have looked like in Celtic society.

Chapter 6 focuses on the major movements of Celtic populations starting in the 5th century through the 1st BCE. Here the reader is exposed to the background stories of major Celtic and Greco-Roman clashes that Livy, Polybius and others wrote about. Cunliffe covers what is happening in the Celtic homeland that leads to these widespread movements and disruptions of neighboring civilizations. He provides a helpful conceptual model of the Celtic raid that illustrates their expanded raiding pattern (157).

Following this, Cunliffe returns to the Atlantic Celts in Chapter 7 and what they were engaging in during the time of migration. He considers the trade routes and individual nature of the communities along the coast and how the different internal and external pressures affected each group.

Cunliffe brings us across Europe to the Danube and Black Sea regions in chapter 8. He summarizes the area before Celtic incursions. Then, moving between Thrace, the Pontic region, Egypt and central Anatolia he focuses on how the Celts integrated with and changed the local people.

Chapter 9 is the first of Cunliffe's topical examinations where he pores over warfare and how it influenced society. In his introduction Cunliffe states: "To imply that any generalized description has universal application is evident nonsense" (213). I wish Cunliffe had used this quote in every chapter to reinforce the

diversity of the Celts, an important take away from the text. He surveys the weapons that were used from spears to shields to chariots, and how Celtic defenses evolved to counter their mercurial tactics. He speaks to how the potlaches and battles evolved hand in hand for the Celts. This chapter is the only one to speak about women explicitly (236-237). However, if Cunliffe's admonishments from early chapters demonstrate anything, there are new ways of understanding and interpretation that should have made this section more robust. Indeed, it should have been given its own chapter in the book. Many different scholars are working on the topic of women in the Celtic period, like Dorothy Watts with *Boudicca's Heirs: Women in Early Britain* (London: Routledge, 2008) or Miranda Aldhouse-Green with *Boudicca Britannia* (London: Routledge, 2014) to name a few, and are sadly missing from the "Further Reading" section, as is any further reading on Celtic women.

La Tène or Celtic art is the focus of Chapter 10. Cunliffe warns that Celtic art should not be treated separately from the social context that led to its rise, but his warning comes at the end of the chapter. The chapter is divided into different material subheadings like bronze, stone, ceramics, and die engraving. He also reviews the influences of different cultural groups and movements on the development of Celtic art. He should have been more explicit about the intersectionality of Celtic art and that it need not be judged against Greek art.

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