**Exploring Celtic Origins: New Ways Forward in Archaeology, Linguistics, and Genetics, edited by Barry Cunliffe and John T. Koch, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2019, x and 214 pp., Illus. 62, £45.00 (Hardback), ISBN: 9781789250886.**

The latest in a series of four volumes since 2010 on the intersection of Celtic linguistics and prehistoric archaeology – exploring Proto-Celtic language as Bronze Age. For the lay reader, the volume discusses the third-second millennia BC in Atlantic Europe and is focused on the Bronze Age of Iberia, Ireland and Britain, two millennia before we encounter the people known to us as Celts. The take-away message of the earlier volumes – that Celtic language had a western European origin out of Tartessian – has been disputed both by ancient linguists and archaeologists (namely John Collis and Raimund Karl). This volume, expanding on the model, is now far more convincing.

Despite a continued misunderstanding of the ancient texts on use of the term *Keltoi*, Cunliffe successfully details his hypothesis that ‘Celtic’ language is rooted in a deep-time prehistory of the Atlantic West. Rather than moving west in the Iron Age (a product of invasionist theory) we see ‘Celtic’ develop instead across the Bronze Age, from Neolithic Indo-European roots. Whilst we can disagree on dates – the basic framework of the thinking is sound: bringing together long durée archaeology and new work in linguistics, aiming to understand both the pace and scale of language development, via our current understanding of the archaeology.

Koch provides a useful introduction to linguistics, emphasising language as older than archaeological ‘cultures’ – i.e. ‘Celtic’ language is not (only/purely/necessarily) linked to La Tène art for instance. He responds to Isaac’s (2004) Celtic from the East, and defends his work on Tartessian. With Fernández Palacios he considers Iberian Peninsula linguistics in light of new aDNA work. Koch’s archaeological thinking has progressed, although mass-movement remains – thus we find a struggling with the temporality of change, and too-quick acceptance of the Yamnaya narrative. We end however on a helpful separation into three: Indo-European (Neolithic), Beakers (proto-Celtic), Iron Age (Celtic).

Cleary and Gibson give a convincing longue durée approach to the various ‘interaction networks’ of the Bronze Age Iberian Peninsula, Ireland and Britain – isolating a well-connected Chalcolithic Europe (Beakers); an Early Bronze Age of declining contact; Middle Bronze Age dislocation; and renewed, uniquely Atlantic, Late Bronze Age traditions, as Bray contributes on chemical fingerprinting of metallurgy for each period. Silva et al. provide a very useful background to DNA/aDNA studies (especially in Britain) – urging greater complexity than in the Yamnaya model.

Overall, there is a slightly worrying return of arrows on maps and diffusionism, as opposed to regional-level material/social groups which understand networks theory and the temporality of change. This is only the start, however, of bringing together well-dated archaeology, palaeo-linguistics, and as yet fairly broad-brush aDNA. Already we see potential resolution of Renfrew’s Anatolian versus Gimbutas’ Kurgan model, with both potentially now correct.

Cunliffe’s decoupling of Celtic linguistics from Iron Age archaeology, with Celtic language instead a descendant of Indo-European in the Atlantic west, is convincing. The volume has a genuinely multidisciplinary approach – bringing together disagreeing fields, and there is much progress here. We see the exciting pace of scientific research, and recognise our need to rethink received ideas about Celts and Celtic. All ancient linguists and prehistorians need to read this volume. Genuinely multi-disciplinary work is not easy and, like language, it takes time.

**RACHEL POPE**