

Finally, the fact that there appear to be only a few words of non-IE origin shared by Goidelic and Brythonic, but not by other Celtic or Indo-European languages, points to the conclusion that Proto-Insular Celtic was not the language spoken by the Celts who first came into contact with the pre-Indo-European inhabitants of the British Isles. As far as the evidence of these loanwords is concerned, Proto-Insular Celtic never existed.

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Once again on the pre-Celtic substratum in the British Islands

A compact paper by the well-known Indo-European and Celtic scholar Ranko Matasović deals with, essentially, three different problems, each of which is extremely complicated and, from the perspective of Celtic studies, hardly suggests a simple and unequivocal solution. Thus, in his introduction he remarks that it is nearly impossible to identify which kind of language — either typologically or genetically — had been spoken on the British Isles before Celtic occupation (the very fact that an unknown pre-Celtic population certainly did exist is indicated by multiple archaeological discoveries, some of which show parallels between Britain and Ireland). However, already in the next phrase Matasović shifts his attention to the old and painful problem of the Pictish language, stating that “it may actually have been Celtic”, with a reference to a single concise book by K. Forsyth (Forsyth 1997). Forsyth is, first and foremost, an archaeologist rather than a linguist; second, she is somewhat aware of the fact that her straightforward claim to have identified the Pictish language as Celtic is grossly oversimplified, and, consequently, suggests that linguists might solve the problem by looking from a different angle.

Yet Pictish is actually irrelevant here, because, whatever known family it belonged to — along with the Pretanic theory, there have been claims of identifying Pictish as Basque, Germanic and Proto-Saamic — it would hardly give us the answer to the question of what language had been spoken on the British Isles in the pre-Celtic era, that is, before the mid-2nd millennium BC, which is the earliest likely time of Celtic invasion into the region. The Picts, who inhabited a rather limited area of southeast Scotland (and perhaps northeast Ireland as well) could easily have belonged

to a later migration wave. Thus, other lands may have been inhabited by people (or peoples) speaking a different language (or languages). Thirdly, and finally, the problem of pre-Celtic substratum in Insular Celtic languages is directly linked, or at least related, by Matasović to another complex problem that does not have an unambiguous solution problem — that of constructing the genealogical tree for Celtic languages. More specifically, he raises the question of whether the very possibility of explaining the peculiarly Insular Celtic traits in these languages could depend on a particular scholar's adherence to either the «Gallo-Brittonic» or the «Insular» theory.

This kind of approach at first seems to be almost scandalizing, since one hardly can see the Insular theory as having anything to do with the issue of substratum. Indeed, the theory according to which “the Brittonic of the Roman Period was in fact the local British variant of Gaulish” (Schmidt 1980: 179), after having been accepted uncritically for a long time, has been severely criticized during the last decades. As an alternative option, the Insular Celtic theory was constructed, which suggested an original affinity between the Goidelic and Brittonic branches of the Celtic language family, thus inevitably dismissing the ‘P ~ Q’ subgrouping model for Celtic languages.¹¹ Certainly, some phonetic fluctuations attested within Gaulish dialects (that is, between the 2nd century BC and 2nd century AD) indicate that this conventional model is somewhat artificial and that the shift $*q^w > p$ is a relatively late phenomenon. However, the proponents of Insular theory rely just as much on the evidence from historical phonology. Besides, as John T. Koch soundly

¹¹ Reflexes of IE $*q^w$.

remarks in his classic work, “Gallo-Brittonic vs. Insular Celtic” (Koch 1992), any comparison between Insular and Continental Celtic is complicated by the fact that, by the time that more or less valid records of early Goidelic or Brittonic first appeared, the Continental Celtic languages were nearly obsolete. That is, many linguistic traits that are now seen as specifically Insular, especially in syntax and morphology, could theoretically be found in Continental Celtic languages as well, had they persisted for just a few more centuries.

According to Koch, ‘the general Neo-Celtic phenomenon of syllable losses and morphophonemic mutations arose in the Insular languages after Celtiberian and Lepontic were dead and Gaulish moribund’ (Koch 1992: 491). Perhaps deviating from the subject, one could remark that the latter observation, true as it is, still actually undermines the Insular theory, since the earliest evidence for the loss of final syllables is attested exactly in the so-called ‘Gaulois tardif’ (late Gaulish), mainly in the nominative and accusative cases, dating back to the 1st–2nd centuries BC. For instance, P.-Y. Lambert says: “Ces abrégements sont plus ou moins importants: ARCANTODAN(nos), dans la même série des Lixoviens, pourrait avoir perdu trois lettres” (Lambert 1997: 402). One could conceive, therefore, that an imaginary temporal extension of the evolution of Continental Celtic languages could theoretically yield us a stage not unlike Insular, and, vice versa, that the Continental data could be of significant use wherever a reconstruction of Proto-Brittonic or Proto-Goidelic forms is attempted. Moreover, the morphophonemic mutations mentioned by Koch are, at least in Old Irish, plausibly explicable through the (later) apocoped ending of the first word in a two-unit syntagma, and, in a way, it is precisely the data from Gaulish that support this solution. Just a single example will suffice: the nasalized Anlaut after possessive plural pronouns allows us to reconstruct the deleted Auslaut with *-m/-n-*:¹²

a n-ech ‘their horse’ < **ēja neχ^wa* < **ējan eχ^wah* < **ējam ek^wos*

This conjecture is further supported by Gaulish *ējanom* (Larzac) — gen.pl.fem. ‘their’.

In the light of this, one should regard as more important those specifically Goidelic and Brittonic innovations on which the entire system of arguments for the Insular theory is based; it is these innovations that could indeed be the real evidence for the shared sub-

stratum. Yet the abovementioned article by Koch lists surprisingly few instances (only the fact that both in Goidelic and Brittonic initial *s-* of the radical alternates with the lenited */h/*, along with some vocalic parallels, can be seen as valid enough). While Koch shows, quite convincingly, that the earlier Continental languages, such as Celtiberian and Lepontic, lack a number of important phonetic innovations found in Insular languages, the nature of this difference may be merely chronological. It must be noted once more that the bulk of Koch’s arguments is based exclusively on phonetic matches, without much concern for vocabulary or syntax. The Insular theory was further developed by Kim McCone (see “Evidence for Insular Celtic” in McCone 1996) and Peter Schrijver (Schrijver 1995), but then fell under the criticism of other Celtologists (see, for instance, Isaac 2005; 2007b). Presently, this problem is still unresolved, and, as P. Sims-Williams put it, “It seems, then, that attempts to prove the existence of either Gallo-Brittonic or Insular Celtic have failed so far. There are too many possible ways of interpreting the linguistic and ethnic data” (Sims-Williams 2007: 34).

Yet, until very recently, all the arguments concerning the Insular Celtic theory, either from its proponents or its opponents, were limited to the field of historical phonology, and it is only recently that some use has finally been made of archaeological discoveries (De Bernardo Stempel 2006). Even Paul Russell, whose generalization is based upon the idea of long-term contacts between sub-groups, while arguing that “it is at least theoretically possible that all the sub-groups of the Celtic group are to be derived directly from Proto-Celtic, and that any striking parallels between sub-groups is due to subsequent contact between speakers” (Russell 1995: 17–18), does not transcend the limits of phonological and, partly, syntactic isoglosses.

Next, there is a matter of terminology. Russian, unlike English, when it comes to linguistic meta-description, can use two separate words for ‘Insular (languages)’ — *insul’arnyje* and *ostrovnyje* (both words are given in the plural form). The former may be applied to a certain reconstructed unity sharing certain phonetic innovations, which would later diverge into Proto-Brittonic and Proto-Goidelic. The latter means Celtic languages of the British Islands, that is, a historically attested state of Brittonic and Goidelic branches of Celtic, which, during a certain period of time (beginning from the 3rd century A.D.), had undergone a sort of accentual revolution, which reshaped their syntax and basically made them what they are today (with a few subsequent modifications).

¹² From [Jaskuła 2006: 92]; cf. also several other parallel reconstructions, some of which could possibly be supported by Continental data [ibid.].

In English, the term ‘Insular Celtic’ was originally coined for the latter meaning — for instance, David Greene uses the term ‘Insular Celtic’ to denote a group of Brittonic and Goidelic dialects of relatively recent origin, attested on the British Islands (Greene 1966). The same meaning was ascribed to this term by Warren Cowgill in his analysis of the two types of verb endings “in Insular Celtic” (Cowgill 1975). Yet, until now, none of the studies in which the term ‘Insular Celtic’ has been used in any meaning, has dealt with the evolution of vocabulary in these languages.

In this particular respect the article by Matasović is a pioneering effort, an attempt to define what ‘Insular Celtic’ is from an entirely different point of view — that of vocabulary. Moreover, the very presence of words whose etymology is obscure (and may be substratal) can, in his opinion, serve as evidence either for or against the Insular theory in the difficult task of building the genealogical tree for Celtic languages. As he says: “Why is the pre-Celtic substratum of the British Isles relevant to the proper subdivision of the Celtic languages? In this paper we shall argue that the two proposed views on Insular Celtic make different predictions about the nature of the pre-Celtic substratum. If the speakers of Proto-Insular Celtic established contacts with speakers of the substratum language (or languages) in the British Isles, we would expect to find a considerable amount of non-Indo-European loanwords shared by both Goidelic and Brythonic, but lacking in other Celtic and Indo-European languages. If, on the other hand, the speakers of Goidelic and Brythonic arrived in the British Isles as linguistically differentiated groups, we would not expect the number of shared substratum words to be significant” (p. 154).

Is this kind of approach relevant? At least upon first sight, it does not seem that way. One might immediately think of hundreds, if not thousands, of loanwords shared by different languages which are not necessarily closely related. Such are Scandinavian loanwords shared by English and Irish, like OE *bord* ‘side of a ship, plank, table, board’ < ON *borð*; OE *elta* ‘engraved sword’, cf. Old Icelandic *hjalt* and OE *hilt/helta*; OE *cnapp* ‘button’ < ON *knappr*, cf. OE *cnaepp*; OE *bāt* ‘boat’ < ON *bátr*, cf. OE *bāt*. Apparently, these words indicate regular contacts with Scandinavian languages in the same (Viking) era, rather than close linguistic affinity between English and Irish. The same can be applied to the multiple Russicisms found in non-Slavonic languages of the former USSR or today’s Russian Federation, or to the even more numerous Latinisms present in nearly every European language, as well as in many non-European languages.

Yet all such examples would only indicate linguistic and ethnic contacts, either direct or indirect. Rather than being of *substratal*, they are of an *adstratal* origin, and adstratal loanwords tend to be far more mobile.

In order to model a situation that could have conceivably existed during Proto-Goidelic and Proto-Brittonic occupation of the British Islands, one should think of an ethnolinguistic parallel from a historical period when a region, inhabited by a certain community speaking a language A, was invaded by speakers of languages X and Y that would consequently and simultaneously supersede the language A. The most apparent example would be Canada where the formal spoken languages are presently English and French. Presumably, today’s Canadians use substratal words for local realities (although these words need not be shared by everyone). Naturally, this covers toponyms and hydronyms; it must be noticed that the word *Canada* is itself of local origin (from Iroquois *Kanata* ‘settlement’, see Mithun 1999) and first attested in European maps from the 16th century (probably loaned into English through French). The name of the country sounds differently in English and French, according to the phonetic rules of each language. There could certainly be many other parallels, even more interesting ones, yet the simplest example of ‘Canada’ clearly exposes the linguistic naïvety of Matasović’s approach to the reconstruction of Insular Celtic.

It is worth noting that in the beginning of his work he concedes (theoretically) the possibility of alternate explanations for the shared stratum of obscure (and possibly substratal) lexicon present in Brittonic and Goidelic: “Other possibilities are also imaginable, of course, but less probable. It is possible that there was a Common Proto-Insular Celtic, but that it was spoken on the Continent, and that Goidelic and Brythonic arrived to the British Isles as already differentiated languages; moreover, it is possible that, although they were different languages, they both came in contact with a single, homogenous substratum spoken in the whole of the British Isles, in which case we would again expect a substantial number of common loanwords shared by Brythonic and Goidelic. This latter possibility (a single substratum extending over Britain and Ireland) is *a priori* improbable considering the level of linguistic diversity those parts of prehistoric Europe for which we have more evidence” (p. 154). So does he in fact suggest the ‘Canada’ model theoretically, only to reject it *a priori* in the end? Tending to oversimplify the issue of the obscure part of Insular Celtic vocabulary by reducing it to the reconstructed Insular Proto-Celtic, Matasović seems to neglect the fact that the Celtization process on the British Isles

was complex, multistage and prolonged (cf. the theory of ‘Cumulative Celticity’ — Hawkes 1973; for a survey of the theory, see also Mac Eoin 1986; Mallory 1984; Koch 1991). Nor does he take into account the later permanent contacts between Brittonic and Goidelic communities, during which loanwords of local substratal origin could be exchanged mutually (like Latin loanwords on the later British Isles).

All these perplexities could possibly be explained through the fact that, apart from being the author of the reviewed article, Matasović is also the compiler of a dictionary of Proto-Celtic (Matasović 2009). This volume is a product of thorough work that took him many years to complete, and is presently an almost unique collection of basic (broadly speaking) Proto-Celtic stems. As is claimed in a recent substantial review, ‘Damit ist endlich eine Basis geschaffen für die mehr als überfällige Aufarbeitung der Etymologie des keltischen Lexikons’ (Balles 2011: 265). This work is a large-scale one, and, as Matasović himself is indeed aware, quite open to criticism, still more for the reason that Matasović, unlike Vladimir Orel (Orel 2003), does not confine himself to identifying proto-stems (etymons) and their descendants in daughter languages and citing previous research on the subject, but rather tries to trace the phonetic evolution of each stem on an independent basis, as well as establish proper semantic matches. His research article “The Substratum in Insular Celtic” should therefore be conceivably regarded as an extension (or extended part) of the same work. Naturally, of particular interest should be the list of 85 reconstructions of Proto-Celtic words given on pp. 441–443 in Matasović 2009, whose IE etymons are not known reliably — what Matasović refers to as “The non-Indo-European elements in the Celtic lexicon”. The same list is referred to in Matasović’s article, where he notes that a considerable proportion of these words is also found in Continental Celtic, so that “we are left with only 38 words shared by Brythonic and Goidelic without any plausible IE etymology” (p. 157). Actually, a simple recount of the words on his list reveals 43 (rather than 38) lexical units that are *not* characterized by him as “probably attested in Gaulish” or “probable (possible) cognates in Germanic”. However, this does not add much to the list.

As Matasović correctly notes, some words not attested in Continental Celtic could have simply been lost, for the reason that the evidence for Continental Celtic languages is only fragmentary and, moreover, it is not always the case that meanings of the surviving words can be reconstructed reliably. He further claims (quite correctly, from a theoretical point of view) that many of the words without a plausible Indo-European

etymology (according to our calculations, only 9, i.e. 21%), denote floral and faunal objects, that is, part “of the semantic fields that are usually prone to borrowing” (p. 157). These include: ‘wolf’ (**blVdV-*), ‘mouse’ (**lukot-*), ‘pig’ (**mokku-*), ‘stag’ (**sido-*), ‘berry’ (**smer-*), ‘strawberry’ (**subi-*), ‘pig’ (**sukko-*), ‘raven’ (**wesakko-*), ‘sea weed’ (**wimonā-*). In the article, the list based on the 2009 dictionary has been supplemented with the words for ‘sea-gull’ (OI *faíleann*, MW *gwylan*), ‘bat’ (OI *iatlu*, MW *ystlum*) and ‘periwinkle’ (MI *faochán*, W *gwichiad*).

It might also be supplemented, for instance, with the Insular word for ‘swallow’, which also lacks a reliable etymology¹³, yet is definitely Proto-Celtic in form (OI *fannall*, MW *gwennol* < OK **waNālā*, see McCone 2005: 408–9). In the above cited work, McCone drew parallels between Insular Celtic words and Basque *enara*, *ain(h)ara* ‘swallow’, tracing them back to a hypothetical Proto-Basque *(*w*)*aiNala*, supposedly loaned into Celtic at some stage. Later, the Proto-Celtic form was more accurately restored as **waNeLā* in (Stifter 2010: 151), where another parallel, Gallo-Roman *vanellus* ‘Northern lapwing’ (from Vulgar Latin), was also adduced. Juxtaposition of lexical forms brings Stifter to the conclusion that the word for ‘swallow’ or ‘lapwing’ could have been borrowed into Proto-Basque and Proto-Celtic from another non-Indo-European language (Stifter 2010: 156).

Other words cannot be grouped semantically, including natural objects (for instance, **loro-* ‘sea’, **klukka* ‘rock’) as well as artefacts (**mando-* ‘awl’, **bratto-* ‘mantle’ etc)¹⁴. Naturally, as Matasović himself is perfectly aware, this list is open to further expansion, and closer examination of specific Celtic languages, either Insular or Continental, could (and does!) yield more words of obscure origin.

Why not then to define them as merely ‘wandering words’ (Wanderwörter), presuming parallel and inde-

¹³ In Matasović 2009: 391–2, there is an attempt to derive the Proto-Celtic word for ‘swallow’ (in his reconstruction, **wesnālā*) from IE **wesr/n-* ‘spring’. This is hardly convincing, since it runs against the root vocalism in Goidelic (*a?*).

¹⁴ Some of these words can probably be Indo-European, though their etymology is unreliable. Thus, Matasović states that OI *gorm* ‘blue’ (MW. *gorm* ‘dark-blue’, Bret. *uurm-haelon* ‘with brown brows’, Corn. *gorm* ‘dun, dark’), “do not seem to have any cognates in other IE languages, so this adjective was probably borrowed from some non-IE source” (p. 169). Yet there is a probable origin for this word — IE **ǵ^her-mn-os* ‘warm, hot’ (IEW 1959, 493; MacBain 1982, sec. 21), implying that the word originally referred to embers (reconstructed proto-Celtic **gorsmo-s* (MacLennan 1979: 188). Therefore, although it cannot be restored as a Proto-Celtic word for any particular colour, it is perfectly traceable to an IE stem with another meaning.

pendent processes of borrowing into Brittonic and Goidelic from a third language (or even through the mediation of a fourth language)? Should not the very presence of these words in Gaulish indicate such a possibility? The observed regularity of phonetic shifts could then simply be evidence for an early date of borrowing — before the ‘linguistic revolution’ in Insular Celtic languages that took place over the relatively recent time period of 4th to 5th centuries AD. Now if one takes into consideration the glottochronological evidence indicating that Proto-Brittonic and Proto-Goidelic diverged approximately in 1200 BC (see Blažek 2007: 94), the words listed by Matasović must have been already present in the hypothetical Insular Celtic, supposedly borrowed from an obscure substratum language pre-existing on the British Isles. However, there is little, if any at all, certainty about it.

Let us take, for instance, the word for ‘badger’, reconstructed by Matasović, which is also attested in Continental Celtic, although in Gaulish another lexical unit is conjectured for the same meaning, *tasgos*. The latter word is well represented in proper names and survives in French *tanière* ‘badger hole’ (for details, see Delamarre 2003: 292–293). At the same time, Gaulish NP and NL also had an attested form *Broccos* (*Broccus*, *Broccius*, *Broco-magos* ‘badger-field’) which, through later Insular data, is also identified as a word for ‘badger’. This word, lacking IE etymology, had superseded the native *tasgos*: MI *broc* (Ogam. BROCI), Welsh *broch*. The Auslaut in both Irish and Welsh forms, where the original consonant is preserved in the former case and turns into a fricative in the latter, certainly allows the reconstruction of a geminate in **brokkos*, present also in Gaulish personal names. Cf. similar evolution in a native word: proto-Celtic **knokko* ‘hill’ < IE **knek-* (IEW: 559) — OI *cnocc*, MW *cnwch*. There is no room here to discuss the hypothesis that derives **brokkos* from a possible IE stem **brak-* ‘make a cracking noise’ and links the word for ‘badger’ with OI *braigid* ‘farts, breaks wind’ (LEIA-B: 77; Schumacher 2004: 233). Yet, even if one admits the absence of a reliable IE etymology for this word, there is no need to derive it from an early proto-language, thus dating it back to mid-2nd millennium BC or even earlier. Similarly, G. *cattos*, OI *catt*, MW *cath* ‘cat’, allow for Matasović’s reconstruction of CC **katto-*, presumably dating from the same early period. Yet, having reconstructed the Proto-Celtic form **katto-*, Matasović is aware of its fictitious character, since he admits the possibility of an early borrowing from Latin. It seems that there is no sufficient reason to dismiss the possibility of the same borrowing scenario for **brokkos*. If so, how can it be seen as ‘Proto-Celtic’ at

all? The only unambiguous fact is that the borrowing of this particular word predates the apocope that took place in the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. A similar kind of evolution may be observed in another example from Matasović: PCelt. **sukko-* ‘pig’, cf. OIr. *socc* ‘snout, plough-share’, MW *hwch* ‘pig’, OBret. *hoch* gl. aper; cf. also some examples that are not quoted in the article, yet present in the EDPG:

**slattā* ‘stalk, staff’: MI *slat* ‘stalk, stem’, MW *llath* ‘rod, staff’, MBret. *laz*

**mokku-* ‘pig’: OI *mucc*, MW *moch*, MBret. *moc’h*

**bratto-* ‘mantle, cloak’: OI *bratt*, MW *brethyn* ‘cloth’, MBret. *broz* ‘skirt’

Interestingly, the supposedly substratal words are marked by an unusual frequency of geminates: in Matasović’s dictionary there are 17 instances, which constitutes 20% of his list of etymologically obscure words and brings to memory the ‘language of geminates’ theory set up by Peter Schrijver; according to it, this type of language was present in Northern and Western Europe before Germanization and brought a number of loanwords to both Indo-European and Uralic languages (Schrijver 2007).

Nevertheless, our task is not to present any original interpretations of etymologically obscure (that is, lacking convincing IE etymologies) words that are found in either all of the Insular Celtic languages or some of them. In some instances cited by Matasović, there are apparent Basque parallels, while other cases are still left unsolved. Thus, regarding OI *rún* [ā f.] ‘mystery’, MW and MBret *rin* ‘mystery, wisdom’, cf. Gaulish *comrunos* ‘confidant’, Matasović, following Orel (Orel 2003: 310, see *ibid.* for bibliography and speculations on possible IE origins) and Joseph Vendryes (LEIA-R,S: R-53), notes that this word belongs to the shared Celtic and Germanic stratum of sacred vocabulary and could likely have been borrowed from Celtic into Germanic, while “both Germanic and Celtic words may have been borrowed from some non-IE language” (Matasović 2009: 317). At the same time, he reconstructs the Proto-Celtic form **rūnā* (although Orel does the same thing; his version is given as **rūnō*). But did it ever exist at all? And was there ever a Proto-Celtic word for ‘swallow’, allegedly borrowed from Proto-Basque (see above)? It is worth noticing that Vendryes, who does compare the Celtic and Germanic words for ‘mystery’, refrains from reconstructing a common proto-stem, and such caution seems justifiable.

Reconstructing proto-languages from «Wanderwörter» is almost as safe as roller-skating in the mire,

and using these reconstructions to build up branches of a linguistic genealogical tree is even less promising. Matasović's conclusion that "finally, the fact that there appear to be only a few words of non-IE origin shared by Goidelic and Brythonic, but not by other Celtic or Indo-European languages, points to the conclusion that Proto-Insular Celtic was not the language spoken by the Celts who first came into contact with the pre-Indo-European inhabitants of the British Isles. As far as the evidence of these loanwords is concerned, Proto-Insular Celtic never existed" (p. 160) may be agreed with, but for a different reason — from the viewpoint of the conventional Gaulish-Brittonic theory. Analysis of obscure words held to be of substratal origin does not significantly change things. Insular Celtic is nothing more than a modelled molecule of imaginary substance, completely out of place within the linguistic model based on glottochronology. Of course, Matasović is not the only scholar to be blamed for that.

In this case, is there any positive agenda in the substratum theory at all? For a long period of time, before Celtic languages were introduced to Britain and Ireland, earlier peoples must have used local toponyms for at least the most prominent features of the landscape, and some of these could have possibly survived

the shift from languages now lost to those now present on the British Islands. One such group of identifiable toponyms consists of river-names that date from a very old stage of Western Indo-European. Such names have been identified on the Continent by Hans Krahe (Krahe 1962, 1964) and are also present in Britain (Nicolaisen 1976, 1982) and Ireland (de Bernardo Stempel 2000, 2005, 2007 and Vennemann 1998). These names are described as 'Pre-Celtic' or 'Old European' (*Alteuropäisch*). The development of this trend seems to be the only prospective way, but, although it was first contemplated quite a while ago, it has not yet yielded any linguistically reliable basis. Residues of so called «Old European» hydronymy have indeed been identified within Celtic-speaking regions — for example, the stem **ausa-* or "the well-known hydronymic base **dura-/*duria*" (De Bernardo Stempel 2000: 99). To those, we could add the etymologically obscure Irish hydronyms **ness-* and **úr*, but in any case, the whole matter lies in the domain of "the unresolved question about the real nature of the river-names ascribed to 'Old European' hydronymy" (ibid.). This issue goes beyond the subject of Indo-European or Celtic studies and has little to do with either the construction of a genealogical tree for Celtic or arguments in favour of the Insular theory.

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Reply to Tatyana Mikhailova

In her comments on my article on the substratum in Insular Celtic, Tatyana Mikhailova raises some important questions. The first is the genetic classification of Celtic languages, on which I personally prefer to remain non-committed, but which is a matter of serious disputes in Celtic linguistics. I would say that the majority of scholars now seems to accept the "Insular Celtic" hypothesis of McCone, Schrijver, and others, but I agree with Mikhailova that the alternative, Gallo-Brythonic hypothesis, remains a viable option. I cannot agree, however, with her thesis that the distribution of non-Celtic loanwords in Insular Celtic languages is irrelevant to the issue of genetic classification.

It is true that Irish and English share many loanwords from Old Norse, but the crucial thing is that we can show that they were borrowed *independently* in those languages. Of course, it would be absurd to assume that Irish and Welsh arrived to the British Isles before their separation because they share a huge number of loanwords from the same source (English), but this is because historical phonology of these languages shows that these loanwords entered both Irish and Welsh *after* certain exclusive Goidelic and Brythonic innovations. For example, although both W *papur* and Ir. *páipéar* come from English *paper* (ultimately, of course, from Gr. *pápyros*), it is clear that these words were borrowed after lenition and apocope that affected both