

[one-page, short but rigorous project description]

## **Atlantic Europe and the Metal Ages (AEMA): questions of shared language**

The ultimate question motivating the project is how, where, and when the Proto-Celtic branch emerged from Proto-Indo-European. In other words, it seeks an archaeological context of a known historical linguistic process of later prehistory. In persistent traditional thinking, Celtic emerged and spread from the earliest Iron Age of west-central Europe, Hallstatt C1a c. 800–c. 750 BC. This model fails to account for the evidence, most acutely in the Iberian Peninsula, where no reflex of Ha C1a occurs but there is abundant evidence of diverse, early, and archaic Celtic languages. In south Portugal and south-west Spain there is written evidence of Celtic names (at least) by the mid 7th century BC (at least). There is minimal overlap between Celtic studies and Palaeohispanic studies, and Hispano-Celtic data have yet to be fully integrated into the description of Proto-Celtic.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the AEMA project has two main lines of inquiry. (1) We will gather and interpret archaeological evidence for inter-regional connections in Atlantic Europe (Ireland, Britain, Armorica, and the western Iberian Peninsula) during the Copper and Bronze Ages c.2900–c. 800 BC. (2) We will gather Ancient Celtic written evidence relevant to the reconstruction of Proto-Celtic, paying full attention to the Palaeohispanic data and the archaeological background of inscriptional finds, such as re-use within multi-period contexts.

Through a work plan spanning the years 2013–2016, the AEMA research team (based at Aberystwyth, Oxford, London, and Bangor) will analyse and make comparable archaeological and linguistic evidence across Atlantic Europe and a central European control area. The data will be entered together on a GIS (Geographic Information Systems) database and made available as an open-access website. The database will also include Iron Age and name evidence gathered in the earlier AHRC-funded “Culture and Celtic Speech” project. The resulting multidisciplinary resource will allow experts in various fields and the public to draw informed conclusions concerning alternative models of Celtic origins.

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