

Unity and Diversity in the European Iron Age: Out of the Mists, Some Clarity?

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Abstract While some researchers continue to focus fruitfully on traditional issues, in recent years new perspectives, some strongly revisionist, have developed within European Iron Age archaeology, moving it from a long-static state into a rapidly changing milieu. Studies of colonialism, imperialism, and interaction have undergone sequential shifts into new territory, while topics related to sacred activity, political apparatuses, and the ruler-subject relationship have undergone substantial reworking. Perspectives absent from earlier literature have emerged: gender, age, ethnicity, and identity, and interpretations employing theories of practice, agency, landscape, and embodiment have emerged, mirroring broader disciplinary shifts. An overarching trend sees Iron Age Europe as a series of interactive societies with both broad similarities and sharp regional, even local, differences, moving through time and ever-changing relationships, influences, and trajectories. The collision of traditional and revisionist scholarship has produced debate, some heated, but has improved and invigorated the field.

Keywords Iron Age · Europe · Colonialism · Political development · Ethnicity · Identity · Religion · Paradigm shift

Introduction

In their 1995 introduction to the volume *Celtic Chieftdom, Celtic State*, Arnold and Gibson (1995) likened the legacy of European Iron Age studies to a mist: a scholarly mist, blown in through a fragmented approach and the lingering paradigms of another age. Piccini (1996) also refers to this mist as a metaphor for the public love

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