



# The Ancient Celts

*Barry Cunliffe*

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## **The Ancient Celts** Barry Cunliffe

Fierce warriors and skilled craftsmen, the Celts were famous throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, the archetypal barbarians from the north, feared by both Greeks and Romans. And though this ancient thousand-year-old civilization was crushed by the military campaigns of Julius Caesar, the Celts remain an object of fascination to this day. Now, in *The Ancient Celts*, Barry Cunliffe, one of the world's leading authorities on European prehistory, explores the true nature of the Celtic identity and presents the first thorough and up-to-date account of a people whose origins still provoke heated debate.

Drawing on a wealth of recent archaeological findings, Cunliffe reveals how this loose band of nomads evolved from migratory barbarians into adroit traders and artists, inhabiting virtually every corner of Europe north of the Po. Beginning in the Hungarian plains of 1300 B.C., where the first hints of Celtic culture can be traced, the book shows how this fierce people slowly grew into one of Europe's most feared powers, constantly raiding and threatening the empires of both Greece and the Rome. Cunliffe demonstrates how the unprecedented Celtic diaspora gave way to the development of a number of mature, urban societies scattered throughout the continent. The book pays ample tribute to Celtic economic prowess, revealing how the civilization shrewdly took advantage of Europe's tin, copper, and gold resources to become both a respected trading partner with Rome and a nation of skilled artisans who forged some of the greatest weaponry of pre-antiquity. The book also describes the Celts' pantheistic religious traditions, with detailed accounts of weapon burials, human sacrifices, and the meditative powers of the Druids, and it concludes with a look at the influences of the Celtic mystique on the modern world, revealing how the concept of the Celt has been used many times by nations in search for an identity.

From the Victorians' glorification of Boudicca, to linguistic influences in Ireland and Britain, to the common bond of Celtic ancestry that virtually every European shares, this comprehensive history demystifies the world of the Celts as never before. A fascinating history blending insightful narrative with vivid detail, and boasting over 200 illustrations--including 24 color plates--and 30 maps, *The Ancient Celts* is an indispensable guide to this age-old, intriguing culture.

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