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978-0-521-08891-6 - The Celtic Languages
Edited by Donald Macaulay
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This volume describes the six modern Celtic languages. Four of these, Modern Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Breton, are living community languages; the other two, Manx and Cornish, survived into the modern period, but are no longer extant as community languages, though they are the subject of enthusiastic revivals. *The Celtic languages* sets them briefly in their Indo-European context, and states their general relationships within the broader Celtic language family. Individual linguistic studies are first placed briefly in their sociolinguistic and sociohistorical context. A detailed synchronic account of each language then follows, including syntax, morphology, phonology, morphophonology, dialect variation and distribution. Each description is based on a common plan, thus facilitating comparison amongst the different languages.

This latest volume in the Cambridge Language Surveys will be welcomed by all scholars of the Celtic languages, but has also been designed to be accessible to any reader with only a basic knowledge of linguistics. It is the only modern account to deal with all surviving Celtic languages in this detail.

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THE CELTIC LANGUAGES

Edited by

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*Tha an leabhar sa 'na chuimhneachan air fìor
sgoilear agus deagh charaid An t-Ollamh Dáithí Ó
hUaithne nach maireann a bha gu bhith air fear den
luchd sgrìobhaidh.*

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PREFACE

This volume aims to give a description of the six modern Celtic languages. Four of these, Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Breton, are living community languages. As such, extended treatment (within the limits of the volume) is given to their phonology, morphology and syntax and a sketch of their sociological history and a sociolinguistic profile is provided. Two of the languages, Manx and Cornish, have recently, the former in the nineteenth and the latter in the eighteenth century, ceased to be spoken community languages – though both have been the subject of enthusiastic revivals. These two languages are given less intensive coverage, though a similar range of aspects is dealt with.

The descriptions are basically synchronic (though certainly informed by the writers' knowledge of their languages' histories). It was considered that an attempt to include a historical section on each language, that would be in any way adequate, would make the volume impossibly unwieldy. There would, indeed, be in such a historical examination sufficient material for a volume in itself. It was felt that the present volume, making a clear statement of the contemporary linguistic position of the living languages (in particular), would, in any event, be a desirable preliminary to that.

The volume was planned to present parallel descriptions. Contributors were all presented with identical sets of chapter, section and sub-section headings. As was anticipated, it proved impossible to follow this plan in its entirety, and it seemed best not to insist on it rigidly, as such an insistence might well have produced a distorted picture of some important areas of the different languages. Contributors were, however, encouraged to restructure their plan only within strict limits and when their intimate knowledge of the particular language indicated to them that that was necessary. By and large the relative coincidence of descriptive headings is very high indeed. This enables readers to make their own comparisons between the languages and to see the extent to which their structures and systems and the manner in which these are realised are comparable. A detailed explication of these comparisons makes a fascinating

study. Such a study, however, would be an extensive one, and is beyond the scope of this volume.

The linguistic studies are placed in brief sociolinguistic and sociohistorical contexts because the writers are convinced that such information is vital to the understanding of how the languages present themselves. It provides the reader with a frame of reference which will help to explain the different directions that the development of the languages has followed, influenced by contact with other societies and other languages. Again, these contextual sections are necessarily curtailed by the limits of space.

The volume has taken some time in the making and some of the contributions were in fact written a number of years ago. To be fair to those contributors affected, this should be made clear. The editor is grateful to them for their forbearance and to the publishers for their patience while problems were overcome which threatened at one stage to end his participation in the project altogether.

NOTE

Readers may have initial difficulties with examples if they are not acquainted with the more unusual features of the Celtic languages, such as initial mutations: changes that affect consonants at the beginnings of words (see, for example, 1.6.2); or the variation in verb stems, for example Scottish Gaelic *chi* 'sees', (*chan*) *fhaic* '(does not) see', *chunnaic* 'saw', (*chan*) *fhaca* '(did not) see', or the order of verb and subject *chan fhaca e* [not + saw + he] 'he did not see'. It is, unfortunately, not possible to find viable examples that do not utilise these features, and it is not feasible to refer constantly to sections where these features are explained. We recognise the difficulties, however, and we have tried to minimise them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies for permission to reproduce maps from Jackson 1967 (7.1 and 7.2); to the Association for Scottish Literary Studies for permission to use maps from MacKinnon 1986 (4.2 and 4.3) and from Withers 1979 (4.1). Thanks are also due to these authors; and to Dr Seumas Grannnd for useful information about the distribution of some Scottish Gaelic dialect forms.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABST	abstract
ADJ	adjective
ADV	adverb
AFF	affirmative
ART	article
ASPIR	aspiration
COLL	collective
COMP	comparative
COND	conditional
CONJ	conjunction
COP	copula
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
DEP	dependent
DIM	diminutive
DIR	directional
DU	dual
EMPH	emphatic
EQ	equative
FEM	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual
IMPERF	imperfect
IMPERS	impersonal
IMP(V)	imperative
INDEF	indefinite
INDEP	independent
INDIC	indicator
INF	infinitive
INTER/O	interrogative

LOC	locative
MASC	masculine
NEG	negation
NOM	nominative
NUM	numeral
O	object
P	predicate
PERF	perfective
PL	plural
POS	positive
POSS	possessive
PPART	past participle
PREF	prefix
PREP	preposition(al)
PRES	present
PRET	preterite
PREV	preverbal
PRO	pronominal
PROG	progressive
PRON	pronoun
PT	particle
RECIP	reciprocal
REFLEX	reflexive
REINF	reinforcing
REL	relative
S	subject
SG	singular
SGT	singulative
SIT	situational
SPEC	specific
ST	stem
SUBJ	subject
SUBJUNCT	subjunctive
SUBORD	subordinate
SUFF	suffix
SUP	superlative
V	verb
VN	verbal noun/verb–noun
VPT	verbal particle