

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPTS**

EPISODES 16 -20

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EPISODE 16: THE RISE OF THE ROME – AND LATIN

Welcome to the History of English podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 16: The Rise of Rome – and Latin.

In this episode, we're going to look at the emergence of Rome from a small city near the western coast of Italy to the dominant political and military power of the Mediterranean. This will set the stage for the expansion of Latin throughout the western world.

In this episode, I am going to provide a brief overview of the rise of the Rome. There have been millions of words written about this subject, and there are some great podcasts that deal exclusively with the history of the Roman Empire. But for our purposes, I think it's important to understand the basic events which led to the rise of Roman power and the spread of the Roman language throughout western Europe. And along the way, we can look at some of the Latin words which have passed into English.

And again, since Latin has had such a tremendous influence on English, I am only going to look at a few of the Modern English words which originated during this period. In fact, from this point forward in the story of English, I will be introducing more and more Latin words because, from this point on, the Latin words are constantly filtering into English. They come in during the late Roman period when the Romans encountered the Germanic tribes. They come in when the Romans conquered southern Britain. They come in with the spread of the Church into Britain. They come in with the Norman French. And they come in during and after the Renaissance in a variety of academic, scientific and legal borrowings. So Latin is going to be constant part of the story of English as we move forward.

And the fact that Latin is so pervasive is itself a testament to the overall power and influence of the Romans. We live with the Roman legacy everyday in the words we use and the alphabet we use to write those words.

So let's pick up the story where we left off in the last episode. As you may recall, Indo-European tribes had settled into modern Italy. And a group of Indo-European tribes had settled in a region which extended from the Tiber River southward which was called Latium. And the dialect of these tribes was eventually called Latin after the name of that region. And a group of these people had begun to settle in and around the hilly region along the Tiber River which eventually became known as Rome. But this early Roman village was initially controlled by Etruscan kings from northern Italy. And this is a very important point. South of the Tiber was the Latium region occupied mainly by Latin speakers with a culture descended from the original Indo-Europeans. But north of the Tiber was the early Etruscan civilization which spoke a completely different language. And Rome was located on the Tiber River which was dividing line between these regions. The people who lived there were Latin-speaking people with an Indo-European ancestry. But they were ruled by Etruscan kings from the Etruscan culture to the north.

Now as I said, Rome was home to only a portion of the Latin speaking peoples in the region. And during this early period, tribal warfare was a constant. There were wars between these Latin-speaking tribes – and wars between those tribes and other tribes. And early Rome had to deal with these conflicts and the warring tribes all around it. But the hills of Rome afforded it some protection during that period. And eventually – as Rome began to grow – and as it began to borrow more and more from the Etruscans – including Etruscan military practices – Rome started to become a powerful city-state in its own right. And it soon became more aggressive in its relationship with the surrounding Latin tribes. Rome began to wage war against its Latin neighbors, and it began to conquer them. And as Roman power grew, the overall power and influence of the Etruscans to the north began to wane.

As you may recall, from the last episode, the Etruscan territory was a collection of independent city-states with a common language and culture. There wasn't a centralized government. And furthermore, they were primarily interested in trade and commerce. They weren't empire builders. And they also found themselves at war not only with surrounding tribes in the north of Italy, but also with the Greeks who had expanded into the northern Mediterranean as well. And all of this took a toll on the Etruscan civilization which was beginning to experience a period of decline. And this was occurring at the same time that Roman power was growing at a faster and faster rate. The Romans had become much more organized and more militaristic. And the tipping point in this relationship was late in the 6th century BC.

As I've noted, Rome was initially ruled by Etruscan kings. Later Roman historians alleged that these early Etruscan kings were cruel and harsh rulers. The authority of these kings was symbolized by a bundle of rods with an ax. This was called a *fascis*. And that is actually the origin of the term *fascism*.

In the late 6th century BC, the Romans began to rise up against their Etruscan rulers. Around 509 or 510 BC, the Romans drove out the last Etruscan king – named Tarquinius – or sometimes called Tarquin the Proud. And at this point Rome became a republic. After the loss of Rome, the Etruscans continued to lose their grip on other cities in northern Italy. And increasingly, the loss of Etruscan power was replaced by Roman power.

So we now have a completely independent Rome, occupied by Latin-speaking Romans, and now governed by Romans. Again, this is around 509 BC – which is the date the Romans themselves used as the date when Rome began. Part of the reason why this date is used as the date of the beginning of the Roman republic is because a treaty was signed between Rome and Carthage in 508 BC – though some historians argue over the accuracy of that date. And that particular treaty doesn't mention a Roman 'king.' So that suggests that Rome was no longer being ruled by kings – which would have been the Etruscan kings.

So, again, now we have an independent Roman republic, but life was not easy for Rome during this period. As soon as the Etruscans were expelled from Rome, the city came under attack from its neighbors. Rome had to fight for survival, but Roman power eventually allowed Rome to take the upper hand. And the city was ultimately able to establish an alliance with the other Latin-speaking tribes in Latium to the south of Rome. And Rome eventually came to dominate that alliance.

During this period, the culture of Rome became more and more distinct from the Etruscan culture to the north. Around this time, the Romans built the first temple to the Roman Gods Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. This temple is sometimes called the ‘Temple of Jupiter,’ but it was actually a single structure with three different sections for each of the three Gods – Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. This temple was built on one of the Seven Hills of Rome. And according to tradition, when the foundation of the temple was being laid, the Romans found a human skull buried in the ground. And the Romans took this as a positive sign. They interpreted this head as a sign that Rome was destined to be the ‘head’ of all of Italy.

The Latin word for head was *caput*. And if you have a good memory, you may remember that I talked about this word in episode on Grimm’s Law. Remember that Jacob Grimm had studied the Germanic languages – which includes English – and he had identified the specific sound changes which had occurred within the Germanic language family and which distinguish the Germanic languages from the other Indo-European languages. And two of the specific changes which he observed were a shift in the ‘k’ sound to the ‘h’ sound, and a shift of the ‘p’ sound to the ‘f’ sound. And I gave this Latin word – *caput* – as an example because it includes both of those changes. Remember that the Romans almost always used the letter C for the ‘k’ sound. So the word *caput* was spelled C-A-P-U-T. And this word is apparently very similar to the original Indo-European word for head. In the Germanic languages, the initial ‘k’ sound had shifted to an ‘h’ sound and the middle ‘p’ sound had shifted to an ‘f’ sound under Grimm’s Law. So in Old English, we have the word *hafud*. And that was the original version of the modern word *head*. Over time, the middle consonant ‘f’ had fallen out and the word was shorted to the modern word *head*. So I just wanted to make that connection again for you.

Well, the Romans found this head – this *caput* – as they were building the temple to Jupiter. And based upon this discovery, they determined that they were destined to be the head of Italy. So they called this particular hill where the temple was being built the ‘Capitoline’ Hill. And that produced the word *capital* which has come down to us in modern English. And that word still means the ‘head place’ or primary place. It also can refer to a specific building in which government business is conducted. And of course in the United States, we have our own ‘Capitol Hill.’ And this reflects the influence which the Romans had on the founding fathers of the United States.

So we have the Capitoline Hill. And in the last episode, I mentioned that the first Latin-speaking Indo-Europeans had settled on the Palatine Hill in Rome. So these are two of the so-called Seven Hills of Rome. And many of the leaders and prominent families of Rome lived on the Palatine Hill. So around this time, the Romans decided to drain the valley between these two hills. And, at that site, in the drained valley, the Roman Forum was constructed. The Forum was the marketplace of Rome. It was the center of civic life, and it contained temples, law courts, the senate house and other public forums. There was a lot of arguing and debate in the Forum, and the word *Forum* had given use the word *forensic* meaning something related to the law or the courts. So ‘forensic science’ – which seems to dominate prime time television these days – it means science related to proving a case in court like proving someone’s guilt or innocence.

After the Forum was constructed, the Romans placed a large stone there. The Romans then placed additional markers along the roads leading out of Rome. And each marker was placed at a distance of 1,000 paces.

Since a pace was approximately 5 feet, 1,000 paces was approximately 5,000 feet in modern measurements. Since the unit of length was 1,000 paces, the Romans called the distance a *mille* which was the Latin word for ‘thousand.’ And we have taken that measurement in Modern English as the word *mile*. And that is also why a modern mile comes from the Latin word for ‘thousand’ but actually represents a measurement of slightly more than 5,000 feet. By the way, each of these markers was called a *milliarium*. And this word comes into English as *milestone*. So as you traveled in or out of Rome, you passed a *milliarium* every 1,000 paces. So this was a mark indicating how far you had come or how far you had to go. And it is in this sense that we have inherited the term *milestone* to refer to a level of achievement or accomplishment. Of course, the Latin word *mille* meaning ‘thousand’ appears in many other modern English words. For example, we see it in *millipede*, *millimeter*, and the word *million* which actually means a thousand thousands.

So Rome has emerged as a powerful republic, independent from its earlier Etruscan overlords. Over the next century, Rome continued to expand its territory, and the Etruscan territory continued to shrink. In the early 4th century BC, two back-to-back events occurred which would have a tremendous influence on the development of the Roman Empire.

First, in 396 BC, the Romans finally defeated the chief Etruscan city of Veii after a 10-year siege. And after the capture of Veii, the Romans quickly consumed the entirety of the Etruscan territory within the emerging Roman Republic. So we see the emerging Roman Republic expanding at a rapid rate and basic consuming its former rivals in the Italian peninsula.

And what’s really interesting at this point is how the Romans treated the Etruscan culture which had been so influential to its early history. At this point, Etruscan influences may have been as great – if not greater – than Greek influences. But the Romans apparently wanted nothing to do with these Etruscan influences. Maybe it was because Rome didn’t want to acknowledge or admit that it had begun as basically an Etruscan city. Maybe it resented the Etruscan kings. But regardless, the Romans largely discarded the Etruscan contributions to the early Roman culture. And instead, they gave the credit to the Greeks or to mythological stories.

It is believed that the Romans may have actively destroyed Etruscan writings which may have presented an alternate view of history. We know that the Etruscans had writing because the Romans had borrowed the alphabet from them. Yet we have very few traces of the Etruscan language today. Only a few artifacts and inscriptions exist. And that is partly why we know so little about the Etruscan language. And many Roman historians believe that this scarcity of Etruscan writings and artifacts is due to an intentional purge by the later Romans.

Now, as I mentioned, there were two back-to-back events which happened around this time in Roman history. The first was the complete victory over the Etruscans. But the other event, which only happened about 6 years later, would have the exact opposite impact on Rome – at least in the

short term. And this event was an invasion of Celtic-speaking Gauls from the north who sacked Rome in 390 BC.

Now I am going to take a much closer look at the early Celtic-speaking tribes in the next episode. But for now, it is just important to understand that much of central Europe north of Italy was occupied by a variety of tribes which had a similar culture and who spoke closely-related Celtic languages.

You may recall from the last episode that many language historians believe that the linguistic ancestors of the Celtic tribes may have once lived with – or in very close proximity to – the ancestors of the Latin-speakers in southeastern Europe. This is because there are some strong similarities between the two language families. And this view holds that the Celtic ancestors traveled into central and western Europe where they came to dominate the entire region. The region north of Italy and generally west of the Rhine is known today as France, but at this time the region was called ‘Gaul,’ and it was dominated by these Celtic-speaking tribes.

Around 391 BC, a group of these Celtic-speaking tribes crossed the Alps from the north and began to settle into northern Italy. Of course, this was the Etruscan territory which was in the process of falling to the Romans in the south. So the Romans sent ambassadors to arbitrate between the Gauls and the Etruscans in the north of that territory. But the Romans committed a diplomatic ‘no-no’ by dropping their neutrality and joining the Etruscans against the Gauls. The Gauls were so offended by this breach of military etiquette, that they decided to march on Rome itself.

But the important part of this story is what happened when the Celtic-speaking Gauls arrived in Rome. Simply stated, they defeated the Roman army, and they occupied, sacked and burned the city. They occupied and ruled over the city for 7 months before eventually being afflicted by malaria and other diseases. They finally agreed to leave after the Romans paid them a massive ransom of gold.

When the Gauls finally abandoned Rome, many Romans returned to find the city almost uninhabitable. Many Romans thought that it would be best to abandon the city and move to the Etruscan city of Veii which they had recently conquered. But the decision was made to stay put and to rebuild Rome.

The consequences of this event cannot be overstated. Up to this point, everything had been going Rome’s way. They were beginning to think of themselves as invincible. But all of that changed with the sack of Rome by the Gauls. It was a very traumatic event for the Romans, and it severely affected their psyche. It shaped both their view of the Celtic tribes to the north and the way the Romans interacted with them in the future. So it is an important backdrop to the Roman invasion of Gaul under Julius Caesar which I will look at in the next episode. But it also made the Romans re-focus and re-double their efforts to dominate the region. The Romans would remember being sacked by the Gauls for many generations, and they remained apprehensive of the Celtic threat to the north even as they were conquering the Mediterranean. And in fact, this invasion of Celtic-speaking Gauls was the last time a foreign invader would sack Rome until the fall of the Roman Empire many centuries later.

Now in the aftermath of the invasion by the Gauls and Rome's period of rebuilding, several Latin tribes around Rome took the opportunity to declare their independence. And after a period of revolts and border wars, Rome finally subjugated almost all of the Latin tribes in 338 BC. The Latin League – which had been established by these communities and Rome – was dissolved and replaced by a federation of Latin colonies which owed their loyalty to Rome. Even though the other Latin cities theoretically retained their freedom and also retained many of the rights as the citizens of Rome, the Romans still established garrisons throughout the Latin cities to maintain order.

And this is the basic model which Rome followed as it conquered one territory after another. And it is also very important to the overall spread of the Latin language. Unlike other empires or armies, the Romans didn't just invade and conquer and loot new territories. They basically offered each new defeated territory a deal. If the newly defeated territory accepted Roman rule, they could become part of Rome. They could even become Roman citizens. They could share in the wealth of the Roman civilization, and they could enjoy the civilizing influence of Roman culture. But if the territory rejected Roman rule, the consequences would be severe. So it was either Romanization or repression. Not surprisingly, many chose Romanization. But that process of Romanization meant the spread of Roman culture – and specifically the Roman language – Latin. As these new territories were added to the Roman Empire, Latin became the lingua franca. It quickly replaced native languages in many of these territories. We will especially see this trend in western Europe in the next episode.

So since we're talking about the spread of the early Roman Empire throughout Italy, let's talk about the Roman military.

You probably won't be surprised to learn that we get a lot of military-related terms from the Romans. Actually, we get many Latin-derived military terms from the French-speaking Normans after 1066, but we can see the roots of the words by looking at the Romans themselves.

For example, the wooden bar that links two animals together when pulling a wagon or a plow is called a *yoke*. And you may remember that the word *yoke* has been traced all the way back to the original Indo-Europeans. Well, when the Romans defeated an opposing army, they would sometimes make the defeated troops pass underneath a homemade yoke. The yoke was made by sticking two spears in the ground and placing a third one across the top. This ritual symbolized Roman victory and Roman domination over the defeated troops. In Latin, a yoke was called *iugum* (/you-gum/.) And the ritual of marching defeated troops under the *iugum* was called *sub iugum* meaning 'under the yoke.' In later French, the 'y' sound shifted to a 'j' sound in many words. So *sib iugum* evolved from French into English as *subjugate*. So *subjugate* literally means 'under the yoke' in this original Roman military sense.

The Romans valued salt for both its preservative value and its use as a flavoring. The Romans adopted a rule that Roman soldiers would receive a salt allowance or an amount of money to purchase a specific amount of salt. The Latin word for salt was *sal*. So the salt allowance or payment to soldiers was called the *salarium* from the Roman word for salt. And this became the root of the word *salary* which we have in Modern English. It's also the basis of the phrase '*worth his salt*' or '*worth one's salt*.'

Roman soldiers were also issued very specific military equipment, including a sword, a shield and a helmet. The helmet was one of the most important pieces of equipment since it protected the soldier's head in battle. This gave Romans an advantage against barbarian tribes that didn't use helmets. The fastener of the helmet's chin strap was located near the soldier's cheek and was called a *buccula* which meant 'little check.' Over time, this term was used to refer to any type of fastener. The term became *buckle* after it was adopted into English.

The word *infantry* can also be traced back to the Romans. And speaking of *infantry*, have you ever wondered if there was a connection between the words *infant* and *infantry*? Unless you visualize an army of babies, there doesn't seem to be a connection there. But, as you might imagine, there is a connection. What do infants and an infantry have in common? Well, at least theoretically, they both supposed listen and obey their elders or superiors. And the connection here has to do with speech – or actually in this case – the lack of speech.

And it also affords me one of those occasional opportunities to digress into some interesting etymology.

The Latin word for 'baby' or 'small child' was *infans* which literally meant 'not speaking' since babies were not able to speak yet. And of course the modern English word *infant* comes to us directly from the Latin word *infans*. In the Roman military, the newest soldiers were not ready for cavalry or advanced responsibilities, so they were relegated to duty on foot. Since they were the inexperienced soldiers – and since they were to obey orders and not speak unless spoken to – the term *infans* was used to create the term *infantry*.

And speaking of youth. The Latin term *alescere* meaning 'to grow' is derived from an original IE root word which meant the same thing – to grow or nourish. Now the Romans put the prefix *ad* (meaning 'to') on the front of *alescere* to form the word *adolescere* meaning 'to grow up.' This is the root of the word *adolescent*, in other words, one who is growing up. The past participle of *adolescere* was *adultus* which is the root of *adult*, in other words, one who has already grown up.

Now let's go back to the Latin word *infans* for a second. As I said this word gave us *infant* and *infantry*. But buried within that word is a very basic root which appears in lots of Modern English words. That root is '*fa*' which refers to anything going into or coming out of the mouth. So it could refer to words or it could refer to food. So *in* was a Latin prefix meaning not – like *incapable* meaning 'not capable' or *in-sensitive* meaning 'not sensitive.' So since *fa* referred to speech or words, *infans* meant 'unable to speak.' And, as I said, *infantry* referred to young soldiers and those who were supposed to listen and obey but not speak – like infants.

Latin *fa* came from the Greek word *pha* (which was spelled with the Greek letter Phi – so the Greek root is spelled P-H-A in the modern alphabet). Both Latin *fa* (spelled 'F-A') and Greek *pha* (spelled 'P-H-A') meant basically the same thing. And we see this root in words like *esophagus*. We also see it in the root of the word *face* since the mouth is the largest opening in the face. We also see the root *fa* in the word *fame* (from the Latin word *fama*) which is based upon your reputation or things people say about you. Many Romans felt that your *fama* or *fame* impacted you and ultimately how your life played out. This created the word *fata* which is the root of the Modern English word *fate*.

The root word *fa* also produced the word *fess* which is found in modern English expressions like ‘*fess up*’ meaning to speak the truth about yourself. Another word for this is *confess* – and its noun version *confession*. Again, both based on that same *fa* root. We also see it in *profess*. *Pro* could mean ‘in front of’ or ‘on behalf of’ something. So if I am going to speak on behalf of something, I am going to *profess* it. That would make me a *professor*. And something that I can talk about in great detail and with great expertise is my *profession*. That might make me a *professional*. And if the connection between speech and *profession* seems like a bit of a stretch, well then what about your *vocation* which shares the same root as *vocal*. So there.

And by the way, a place where you offered prayers or made oaths was called a *fanum* in Latin – again with that same *fa* root. So since you offered prayers there, a *fanum* came to refer to a religious or holy place. And the words *profane* and *profanity* come from the combination of *pro* and *fanum*. Now this may seem a bit odd at first. If you are ‘pro’-*fanum*, then it may seem like you are speaking in favor of something religious or holy. But *pro* also meant ‘before or in front of.’ So if you were speaking *profanum*, you were speaking in front of or outside of the fanum – not inside of it. So *profanum* came to refer to things outside of the holy place. They were therefore not holy. They were common or vulgar. In other words they were *profane*.

So we can see how a common Greek or Latin root word like *fa* produced a multitude of Modern English words. By the way, I got a lot of these ‘*fa*’ words from the book The Words of the Day by Professor Steven M. Cerutti, Ph.D. So I just wanted to acknowledge that book for this brief digression.

And since I have talked about words which come from the original Latin word related to ‘speech’, let me mention a couple of things about writing. The Romans didn’t have books in the sense that we know them today. Instead, they wrote with ink on parchment. And the parchment was rolled up for easy handling. When writing with ink, the Romans would often use a feather for writing. And the Latin word for feather was *penna*. And that is the source of the modern English word *pen*. And you may remember for an earlier episode that Latin *penna* and English *feather* are actually cognate. Both words came from an original Indo-European word. And again – between *penna* and *feather* – we see that shift from the ‘p’ sound to the ‘f’ sound in the Germanic languages which Jacob Grimm had identified.

In addition to parchment, some Romans also wrote on small wooden boards covered with a thin coat of wax. They would take a stylus and write on the wax. They called these *tabulae* and that is the origin of the word *tablet*. And it’s kind of fascinating to think of ancient Romans walking with tablets and writing on them with a stylus. Because in the modern world of iPads and iPhones and other digital tablets, we’re sort of mimicking what the Romans were doing over 2,000 years ago.

So let’s turn our attention back to the growing Roman Republic – soon to become the Empire. And I want to conclude this episode by looking at the expansion of the Roman Republic beyond the Italian peninsula into the Mediterranean, including North Africa, Greece and the Middle East.

Now it was very possible at this early date – around the 4th century BC – that Rome’s sphere of influence could have basically been contained to Italy itself. Because beyond the shores of Italy to the south was a major regional power with a lineage that stretched back to the Phoenicians. That was the city-state of Carthage. I mentioned Carthage in an earlier episode when I discussed the Phoenicians. You may recall that the Phoenicians were a collection of city-states in and around modern-day Lebanon who spoke a Semitic language and who used an early form of the alphabet which the Greeks later borrowed – and which was the original form of the alphabet we still use today.

You may also recall that these Phoenicians traded throughout the Mediterranean and established colonies along the way, especially along the North African coast. One of those colonies was Carthage in what is modern-day Tunisia.

And as the power and influence of the Phoenicians began to disappear in the east, the power of Carthage became greater and greater in the west. The language of the Carthaginians was inherited directly from the Phoenicians and was called *Punic* by the Romans – again a direct reference to the original Phoenicians. The Latin word for Phoenician was *Punic*. And in fact, the Romans generally thought of Carthage as a Phoenician city speaking a Phoenician language.

As Carthage grew, its biggest rival early on was Greece. Remember the Greeks were the only people who could challenge the trading and shipping prowess of the early Phoenicians. And when the Phoenicians city-states were consumed by other regional powers, that left Carthage to deal with the Greeks. Carthage had briefly entered into an alliance with the Etruscans to fend off the Greeks. And Carthage expanded its sphere of influence by taking control of what is today southern Spain. So Carthage now extended from North Africa into southern Europe. In turn, the Greeks intensified their position in southern Gaul – remember that’s modern France. And also remember that modern cities like Marseille and Nice were once Greek colonies. These Greek port cities in southern Gaul allowed the Greeks to maintain access to trade routes which extended into the heart of western Europe. So what resulted was an unstable and very delicate balance of power between the Greeks, the Carthaginians and the Etruscans. And this balance of power was ultimately disrupted by the Rise of Rome.

It was probably inevitable that Rome and Carthage would collide as Rome’s sphere of influence spread southward and Carthage’s sphere of influence spread northward. Initially, direct conflict between these two powers was avoided because Greek colonies were located in between Rome and Carthage in parts of southern Italy and Sicily. So those Greek colonies provided a bit of a buffer zone.

A non-aggression treaty had been negotiated between Rome and Carthage in 348 BC, which allowed Rome to advance south. And it was only a matter of time before Rome was eyeing those Greek cities in southern Italy and Sicily. Those cities were in a state of decline and headed for conflict with Carthage when Rome intervened on behalf of the Greek cities.

As Rome’s intentions were clearly spreading to the southern part of Italy, it led to direct conflict with Carthage in southern Italy in 264 BC. This initiated the first of three Punic Wars between Rome and

Carthage to determine who would rule the Mediterranean world. Remember the Latin word for Phoenician was “*Punic*” – so that is the source of the name for these wars.

The first war was fought over control of the island of Sicily. And the first Punic War was actually a naval war primarily. This was something the Romans were not accustomed to. And the Romans had to actually build a navy to fight the Carthaginians, but they proved successful and won control of Sicily from Carthage.

In the second Punic War, the famous Carthaginian leader Hannibal decided to avoid a fight at sea, and he surprised the Romans by mounting an armed expedition from Spain and traveled through southern France and famously crossed the Alps with a contingent of war elephants and engaged the Romans from the north. Hannibal actually defeated the Romans in battle after battle. But he was not able to (or wasn't willing to) actually invade Rome itself. He apparently expected an uprising from within Italy by the various peoples who had been conquered by the Romans. He thought that these people would join his effort to overthrow and defeat the Romans. But that never really happened. And the fact that there was no such uprising is another indication of the success of the Romanization process I mentioned earlier. At least Rome offered the benefits of Romans citizenship and Roman civilization. So a popular uprising within Italy never happened.

As I said, at various points, Hannibal could have headed straight for Rome, but for whatever reason he held back. And some language historians note at this point that had Hannibal not held back – had he gone to Rome and defeated the Roman army and took control of the city – then much of modern western Europe might be speaking some version of Phoenician today rather than a version of Latin. But of course, that is not what happened. Instead of bringing a decisive end to the war, Hannibal fought an inconclusive war in Italy for 16 years.

Given a perhaps unintended reprieve by Hannibal, Rome put a general named Scipio in charge of the army, and Rome began to build up its naval fleet. As Rome began to rebuild its army and navy, the tide started to shift in favor of Rome. Under Scipio, Rome defeated and took control of Carthage territories in Spain which interrupted Hannibal's supply lines. Rome finally gathered its rebuilt army and navy – but rather than attack Hannibal directly in Italy – they decided instead to head southward across the Mediterranean for Carthage itself. And this caused Hannibal to return to north Africa to engage the Romans there. Hannibal was finally defeated by the Romans in Carthage to end the Second Punic War.

A few decades passed before Rome put the final nail in Carthage's coffin with the third and final Punic War. Rome was able to assume control of north Africa in the process. Rome burned the city of Carthage to the ground and – according to historical legend – Rome sowed the fields of Carthage with salt to make sure nothing would grow there. Most modern historians don't believe that the fields were actually salted, but there is no doubt that the devastation was massive. Carthage was never able to recover from the Punic Wars. And with Carthage removed as a threat to Rome, the Roman Empire was able to expand its influence around the Mediterranean. By the end of the third Punic War, Rome had extended its control to Greece. And with Carthage out of the way, Egypt and much of the Middle East would also fall to Roman armies. The entire Mediterranean was soon under the control of Rome.

So with the Mediterranean under its control, Rome's attention soon turned to the north – to that vast region occupied by those hated Gauls who had sacked Rome a few centuries earlier. It would take an ambitious and shrewd military and political leader to conquer that region. And Rome happened to have just such a person. His name was Julius Caesar. And Caesar's expeditions to the north brought the Romans into direct contact with the Celtic-speaking tribes of central and western Europe – and eventually brought the Romans into contact with the Germanic-speaking tribes of northern Europe. Caesar's expeditions also saw the first attempt by Rome to colonize southern Britain. So we're now at the point where we need to begin looking at the Celts, the Germanic tribes, and early Roman Britain. So we're getting very close to the period of Old English. But we're not quite there yet.

Next time, I'm going to focus on the Celtic tribes who occupied much of Europe during this period. And I'm going to look at Caesar's expeditions to conquer those continental Celts. And I am also going to continue to look at Latin as its influence began to spread into western Europe.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 17: ANCIENT CELTS AND THE LATIN INVASION OF GAUL

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 17: Ancient Celts and the Latin Invasion of Gaul.

In this episode, we're going to look at the ancient Celts – the people who once dominated much of Europe. And we'll look at the spread of Rome – and Latin – into many of the territories where the Romance languages are being spoken today.

But before I begin, let me give you an update on a couple of matters. First, I sometimes neglect to mention the website for the podcast so let me do that. It's historyofenglishpodcast.com.

And also, I have mentioned in past episodes that I am working on a series dedicated to the history of the alphabet from its ancient origins to Modern English. It has taken me a little longer than I anticipated to put that together because I have been trying to maintain a regular schedule for this podcast. And so in order to get an episode of the podcast ready every two weeks, I have not had as much time to dedicate to the alphabet series. But it looks like that series will be ready at the start of the new year. And it will actually consist of several parts. First, there will be an overall history of the alphabet, and then a look at the various letters and how they got to use in their current form. So it will basically be an audiobook which will be divided into several chapters. So look for that in January.

So let's turn now to this episode. Last time I explored the rise of Rome from a small village in western Italy to the dominant political and military power of the Mediterranean. And with the spread of Rome, the Roman language went with it. But the overall role of Latin was still limited at this point. In the eastern Mediterranean, Greek was still the dominant language – and it would remain the dominant language even after the Romans conquered the Macedonian and Greek territories to the east. And north of Italy – in the areas we know today as France, Germany and Britain – it was Celtic languages that dominated.

So let's look at these Celtic-speaking people of western Europe and try to figure out who they were. When we think of modern Celtic cultures, we think of places like Ireland, Scotland and Wales. And we can also include places like the Isle of Man and the French province of Brittany. In all of these places, modern Celtic languages are still spoken. But these are merely the remnants of a culture – or at least a linguistic group – that once dominated most of central and western Europe. In fact, during the time of the early Roman Republic, pretty much all of Europe between Italy in the south and Scandinavia to the north was occupied by Celtic-speaking tribes. And this included Britain and large portions of modern Spain. So who were these ancient Celts?

Well – they were the linguistic descendants of the early Celtic tribes that I have mentioned in earlier episodes. So – like the Greeks, the Romans and the Germanic tribes to the north in Scandinavia – they spoke languages that were descended from the original Indo-European language.

As you may recall, I have mentioned in prior episodes that late in the 2nd millennium BC, there were a variety of Indo-European tribes in the region north of Greece in southeastern Europe. And I have mentioned that these tribes included the tribes that swept down into Greece and caused the disruptions which led to the period known as the ‘Invasion of the Sea Peoples’ in the eastern Mediterranean. And I have noted that some language historians believe that the tribes may also have included the ancestors of the Latin-speaking tribes and other Italic-speaking tribes that found their way to Italy. And I’ve mentioned that these tribes may also have included the ancestors of the Celtic-speaking tribes. But let’s keep in mind that – as with so much of this part of ancient history – we can’t be too definitive about any of this. There are still lots of competing theories about the specific treks taken by these early Indo-European tribes.

By now, if you’ve listened to the earlier episode of this podcast, you’ll know that much of what is known about ancient history is the product of relatively recent discoveries. And by ‘relatively recent,’ I mean within the past couple of centuries. And that is generally true for our view of the ancient Celts as well.

In the mid-1800s, a prehistoric cemetery was discovered near Halstatt in Modern Austria. Excavations revealed that this was the site of culture that existed from around the 8th century BC until the 6th century BC. It turns out this was one of the earliest Celtic settlements in central Europe. And about a decade after the discovery of the Halstatt cemetery, a prolonged drought in Switzerland lowered the level of several lakes and revealed the remains of another ancient settlement near the city of La Tene in Switzerland. And this was a later Celtic settlement which originated near the end of the earlier Halstatt period and indicates a general westward movement of these peoples from southeastern Europe into western Europe. And both of these sites have revealed a tremendous amount about these early tribes. These Celtic tribes also existed at a time when early Greek and Roman historians encountered them. So in addition to archaeological evidence, we also have some contemporary accounts of these Celts by these ancient historians. So if we put all of these pieces together, we can get a general sense of who these people were.

As I’ve said, it is likely that the linguistic ancestors of the Celts were located in southeastern Europe in the area north of Greece late in the 2nd millennium BC. From here, they began a migration northwestward along the southern side of the Carpathian mountains into the area of modern Hungary and then further westward into modern Austria. Remember this is where the Celtic cemetery was discovered at Halstatt in Austria. This site represented one of the earliest of the ancient Celtic settlements. And so historians call this the Halstatt culture, and we can think of it as the Halstatt phase of the overall Celtic culture.

This Halstatt phase begins around 750 BC. So to put that into some perspective, that was around the time that the ancient Greeks were emerging from the Greek Dark Age having just adopted the Phoenician alphabet. And that was around the same time the first Latin speaking tribes were settling into the community that would become known as Rome. So at this early stage, these early Celts were just another group of tribes settling into western Europe and speaking an Indo-European dialect or language.

And by this point, there may have been enough of a distinction between the language of these tribes and other Indo-European tribes that we can say that we have a distinct Celtic language in place. But linguists are not in universal agreement on that point. Regardless, if the early Celtic language did not exist yet, it was quickly emerging.

And by this point, these early Celts had discovered the first organized farming in northern Europe. An archaeologists who study this part of Europe call the people who lived there before the Celts arrived the 'Urnfield Culture' because they cremated their dead and interred them in urns. And around the time that this Halstatt phase began – around 750 BC – this pre-existing Urnfield Culture began to morph into this emerging Celtic culture. So we probably have native peoples in these regions who were beginning to adopt some of the Celtic cultural characteristics, including the Celtic dialects. Remember that there is a difference between the spread of language or culture and the spread of ethnicity. This early Celtic culture was spreading throughout central Europe – perhaps by invasion, perhaps by migration, perhaps by assimilation of native cultures. But it was spreading and spreading very quickly.

These tribes continued their westward expansion so that by the time we get to the La Tene settlement in modern Switzerland – say around 450 BC – we can say with some certainty that we have a distinct Celtic language in place among these peoples. By this point, Celtic tribes occupied – or were in the process of occupying – much of the territory of modern Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

During the so-called La Tene period – from around 450 BC until about 200 BC – these tribes were spreading throughout western Europe, eventually occupying all of modern France, the British Isles, and larger portions of Modern Spain. So what we really have is a group of tribes spread out over a broad swath of central and western Europe.

At one time, early historians were reluctant to group all of these peoples together as part of some larger, unified cultural group. The fact is these tribes were often at war with each other. And there is no indication that these people saw themselves as part of some larger interconnected culture. But as modern scholars have examined these peoples more closely, and with the benefit of hindsight, they have begun to focus on the similarities between these peoples. And they have increasingly concluded that we do in fact have a common culture among these people that we can now call the ancient Celtic culture. There was no unified government among these peoples. Instead, it was really more like a confederation of independent tribes. But they had a common material culture, a common religion and common language or at least a common family of languages. And it is these three things – material objects, religion and language – that allows us to group these people together and call them the 'Celts.'

Let's start with material objects. Archaeologists have determined that these early Celts were the first people of Europe to master the use of iron. They have discovered amazing artwork, tools and weapons – all made from iron and all of a very similar style. Once they had mastered iron, they exported the technology throughout western Europe. Like their Indo-European ancestors, the Celts were well-equipped for mobility with horses, wagons, carts and chariots. But they were not nomadic. They were farmers who lived in settled communities.

Now farming was certainly not unique to the Celts. Most ancient people by this point were engaging in some type of farming. But again, unlike other peoples of northern Europe, these early Celts were renown for their mastery of iron and their ability to forge iron tools for farming. And this use of iron technology was widespread among these tribes, but not nearly as common among non-Celtic tribes. And as I have said, this mastery of iron extended to iron weapons, jewelry and other items. So this early use and mastery of iron is the first thing that linked these early tribes together.

The second major unifying factor was religion, and specifically, the class of religious leaders which these tribes utilized. And you've probably heard of these people religious leaders before. They were called the druids. The druids were Celtic priests and they conducted a wide variety of religious ceremonies. They officiated at the worship of gods and they regulated private and public sacrifices. They also acted as judges in disputes between both individuals and tribes. They had a very special status in Celtic society. They came from leading families, and they were exempted from paying taxes or taking part in fighting. And they were basically the teachers and the judges within Celtic society. And the key here is that you don't really find druids outside of these Celtic tribes. The later Romans noted that the Germanic tribes further north in Scandinavia and into northern Europe didn't have druid priests. So the druids were unique to the Celtic culture, and that fact provides another unifying link between them.

Now at the height of Celtic power, it was possible to cross the entire continent of Europe from east to west without leaving Celtic territory. Remember that the Germanic tribes occupied the territory to the north in northern Europe, and the Romans were expanding throughout the Mediterranean to the south. But the vast territory in the middle was occupied by the Celts. And even though they were not a cohesive group of tribes, the druids within these various did communicate with each other over vast distances. According to the later Romans, the druids of Gaul (which is modern France) communicated with the druids of Britain. So again, we do see a type of networking between the groups, and this is even more evidence of a common culture.

Now the word *druid* comes from the Indo-European root word for 'oak tree.' And oak trees had very mystical, sacred properties to the ancient Celts, so the term *druid* reflected a connection between the priests and the sacred oaks. The rituals performed by druids often took place outside, especially in the woods. And since mistletoe often grew in trees, especially oak trees, the Celts soon came to believe that mistletoe was sacred as well. They thought that mistletoe had healing properties and could fend off evil spirits. It was thought to be a sign of good luck and blessings. It was so sacred that when enemies happened to meet and pass under mistletoe in the forest, they would lay down their weapons and agree to a truce – at least until the next day. And this was the origin of hanging mistletoe above a doorway as a sign of peace and goodwill. And of course that tradition later passed into Christianity many centuries later. By the way, the Germanic tribes also held mistletoe in high regard. And the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe comes from those tribes. So we see many similarities between the ancient Celts and the ancient Germanic tribes during this period. But I'm going to deal with the Germanic tribes in an upcoming episode.

And speaking of holiday traditions rooted in ancient Celtic culture, many of our modern Halloween traditions can be traced back to Celts – specifically the Celts of the British Isles. But that was a much later borrowing that occurred during the Middle Ages, so I am not going to go into that here.

So the use of iron and the creation of specific iron objects helps to establish a connection between these people. And certain religious practices – especially the existence of the druids – marks another cultural connection.

But one of the most important connections between these people, especially for our purposes, was the fact that they all spoke closely-related languages which we called *Celtic* today. And again, these were ancient versions of modern Celtic languages like Gaelic and Breton. But like many ancient people, the Celts were illiterate – meaning simply that they didn't write down their language. So that obviously makes the study of the early Celtic languages very difficult. The major point here is that by the 2nd Century BC, Celtic languages were widely spoken across western and central Europe. And even though those languages were likely quite diverse and may not have been mutually intelligible, they still reflect a common linguistic ancestry.

So all of these factors allow historians and linguists to lump these various European tribes together under the general heading of the 'Celtic tribes.'

Now by 400 BC, these tribes had already spread across much of western Europe and were also probably filtering into the British Isles at this time as well. They brought with them all the cultural factors that I just discussed – including iron-working, druids and the Celtic languages.

As I mentioned earlier, archaeologists call the earliest Celtic culture the Hallstatt culture based around what they have unearthed at Halstatt in Austria. And then there was this later Celtic culture exemplified by the site at La Tene in Switzerland. But these later artifacts discovered at La Tene have more elaborate designs, and they reflect influences from trading with the Greeks and the Etruscans. This would have been a time when ancient Greece was flourishing and the Etruscan culture was still prominent in Italy.

So let's take a look at the early contacts between these Celtic tribes and their neighbors. I mentioned earlier that the Celtic tribes were illiterate. But the Greeks and the Etruscans – and the later Romans – they were literate. They had written languages. And they also had writers and historians. And since they encountered the Celts, and since their writers sometimes wrote about the Celts, we can get a glimpse of these ancient Celtic people from these limited written accounts which do exist.

One of the problems we have is that we're getting the perspective of outsiders who didn't always have a positive view of the Celts. So we have to keep that in mind as we review their writings.

It was in fact the Greeks who coined the term *Celt*. The Greeks called these central European tribes the *keltoi*. And some linguists believe that the term *keltoi* may have simply been a generic term for the people who they considered to be barbarians in the north. So it may not have referred to any particular cultural or linguistic group.

Now the later Romans also encountered the same Celtic tribes as they ventured north across the Alps into the heart of Europe. But the Romans coined their own term for these people. The Romans called them the *galli*. And, unlike the term used by the Greeks which was probably more of a generic term, many linguists believe that the Roman term *Galli* initially referred to a specific tribe, but eventually came to be used to describe the entire region which they called *Gallia* – and which we would come to know as *Gaul*. And the area of Gaul roughly corresponds to modern France. So the term *Gauls* can be a little confusing. The Romans used it to refer to the people who inhabited the region of Gaul, and these people were Celts. But for the early Romans, they generally just called them *Gauls*. But Julius Caesar did note that some of the Celts living in Gaul called themselves *Celtae*. So there does appear to be a connection between this word *Celtae* and the Greek term *keltoi*. It is possible that the early Greeks and Romans had each encountered the same tribe or group of tribes which used this term to refer to themselves.

But the major point here is that these terms – *Celts* and *Gauls* – often get used interchangeably by historians. But, technically speaking, the Gauls represented only a portion of the overall Celtic people of Europe.

In 324 BC, the Greek explorer Pytheas traveled all the way to the British Isles. He referred to Ireland and Britain as the Pretanic Islands, with the Celtic inhabitants referred to as the Pritani. The Pretanic Islands became known as Pretania, and eventually in the hands of the Romans, it was called Britannia. According to Pytheas, the Celtic residents of Britannia mined tin and iron, made pottery, wove cloth, and raised large herds of cattle and sheep. So this was an ancient culture that still resembled the original Indo-European culture in many respects.

And speaking of the connection between the early Indo-Europeans and the ancient Celts, they both revered horses and they placed them in very high regard. The ancient Celts held annual parades and chariot races. And in times of war, they fought on horseback and were especially skilled at using horses in their cavalry. In fact, the Celtic cavalry was capable of intimidating the Roman infantry. And it wasn't until the Romans finally developed a disciplined, professional army that they were able to routinely defeat the Celts in battle. But more on that later. And by the way, some historians believe that these ancient Celts invented horseshoes. Remember the Celts were some of the first people of Europe to master the use of iron.

So what else did the Greeks and Romans have to say about the Celts. Well, they described the physical appearance of the Celts. Supposedly, they were tall people and they were “fair-haired” – so that means that had light-colored hair. Archeologists have unearthed graves with Celtic warriors and chiefs who were in excess of 6 feet tall, which was very tall for that period of time. They were also said to bear large mustaches with neck rings made of gold, silver or bronze. They wore colorful clothing and loved to fight in battle. The colorful clothing attributed to these ancient Celts also provides a cultural and historical link to modern tartan and plaid fabrics associated with Celtic societies.

And speaking of Celtic clothing, the Romans were amused by the fact that the Celts wore pants instead of tunics. And, in fact, the word *breeches* – or as we say in the American South *britches* – may be one of the oldest Celtic words in the English language. That word actually pre-dates Old

English – it goes all the way back to the original Germanic language spoken in northern Europe. But the ancient Celtic language had a very similar word. The original Germanic word was something like **brokiz*. And the Celtic word used in Gaul was **bracca*. So it is believed that one of the tribes borrowed the word from the other. And remember that by this point the Celts and the Germanic tribes were neighbors and sometimes rivals fighting for the same territory. So words would have likely passed between them – both figuratively and literally. If the Germanic tribes borrowed it from the Celtic Gauls, then that would make it one of the first Celtic words to arrive within English – or actually in this case – the ancestor of English.

By the way, that Celtic term **bracca* passed into Latin after the Romans conquered Gaul and eventually passed into French as *braguette* which meant codpiece armor to protect the crotch area. And this word *braguette* eventually gave use the word *bracket* due to some resemblance in shape between early *brackets* and the French *braguette*. It doesn't sound very comfortable, but think of the *braguette* as the connecting point between the two legs. So in that sense the term *bracket* makes a little more sense. So there you go.

According to these early Greek and Roman writers, women held many positions of equality with men in Celtic culture. They fought alongside men in battle and they retained control of their personal possessions after marriage. They also wore make-up and placed their hair in braids.

So I have discussed what the Greeks and the Romans wrote about the Celts. But let's explore the relationship between them a little further. First, I mentioned in the last episode that Celtic tribes from Gaul crossed the Alps and traveled down into northern Italy where they sacked the early city of Rome around 391 BC. And I noted that it had a tremendous psychological impact on the Romans. It shaped the way they viewed the Celts – or the Gauls – going forward. The Romans basically viewed them as savage barbarians and as a lingering threat to the north.

And following the conflicts with the Romans, some Celts moved to the East into the Balkans and eventually to Macedonia and Thrace into modern-day Greece. About 25 years after Rome was sacked, there are reports that Celts were fighting as mercenaries in the wars between Sparta and Thebes in Greece. A few years later, in 335 BC, Alexander the Great fought a brief skirmish against a Celtic tribe in the Danube Valley region to shore up the northern territory before he moved onto Anatolia and the Middle East and eventually India. So even Alexander had to deal with Celts on his northern border. And, in fact, about a century later, well after the death of Alexander and with Greek power waning, another group of Celtic tribes invaded Greece and sacked the city of Delphi.

This was around the time the Romans were fighting the Punic Wars with Carthage to gain control of the Mediterranean. And I mentioned Hannibal's famous trek from Spain through southern Gaul and across the Alps on his way into northern Italy. This trek took Hannibal through Celtic territory in northern Spain and southern Gaul (remember that's modern France). So along the way, Hannibal actually retained the Celts as mercenaries in his army. And large numbers of them fought as part of Hannibal's army against the Romans in Italy. It is estimated that he had about 10,000 Celtic mercenaries from Spain alone.

So you can probably see why the Greeks and the Romans had a generally negative view of the Celts. And you can see why the Romans really wanted to eliminate this northern threat. But this was barbarian territory to the Romans. They mainly wanted security from the Celtic threat in Gaul, but that could only be accomplished by actually conquering Gaul. And up to this point, Rome had been occupied by its quest to conquer Italy and the Mediterranean.

Now at this point in history, in the second century BC, western Europe can be roughly divided into three distinct territories. Around the Mediterranean was the Roman Republic where Latin was spreading and becoming a lingua franca – except in the east where Greek held on.

And far to the north were the Germanic tribes, which included the ancient ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons. And this is where the early Germanic languages were being spoken. But the vast territory in the middle was occupied by Celtic-speaking tribes.

And a series of events were about to transpire which would mark the beginning of the end of the Celts as a distinct culture in continental Europe, and it would pave the way for the Romans and the Germanic tribes to take over these Celtic areas.

Shortly after Rome began to establish trading posts up the Rhone River in Gaul, a situation developed in northern Europe which caused a great deal of concern in Rome. This was around 120 BC. And at this point, a group of tribes from Jutland and the North Sea coast began to migrate southward possibly as a result of a flash flood in their Jutland homeland. Now you may remember from way back in Episode 3 that Jutland means ‘Home of the Jutes.’ And the Jutes were part of the Anglo-Saxon tribes who brought Old English to Britain. But since there were a lot more Angles and Saxons than there were Jutes, the Jutes didn’t get their name in the label. But there were enough Jutes to establish their own territory which eventually became Kent in England.

So a group of tribes from this region around Jutland in modern-day Denmark began to move southward into southeastern Europe. And this confederation of tribes was led by two specific tribes – the Teutones and the Cimbri.

Now remember Jutland is in modern-day Denmark. And it is the same region that produced the Jutes – a Germanic-speaking tribe. So this is Germanic territory, not Celtic territory. And, in fact, the Teutones were a Germanic tribe. But there is debate about the other tribe – the Cimbri. Based upon the location of their homeland, some historians think they were also a Germanic tribe. But their name – Cimbri – is definitely Celtic, not Germanic. And many of the tribal leaders also had Celtic names. So most modern historians consider them to have been a Celtic tribe. But it shows you how the distinction between Celtic and Germanic was sometimes blurred in many of these areas.

And to emphasize that point, the name of that Germanic tribe – the Teutones – is the origin of the modern term ‘Teutonic’ which is usually used as a term for things associated with Germany. But even though the Teutones were a Germanic tribe, their name actually comes from the Celtic word for ‘people which was *teuto*. And initially it was applied to this unnamed Germanic tribe. Over time, the term was applied by the Romans collectively to all of the Germanic tribes.

And what about the term *Germanic*? Well, it too comes from the name of a Celtic tribe which lived east of the Rhine known as the ‘Germani.’ The Romans applied this term to all of the people who lived north and east of the Rhine. However, many of those people were Germanic – not Celtic – because they spoke Germanic languages. To the Romans, the distinction was largely irrelevant because the Romans considered them all to be barbarians. But over time the name *Germania* stuck with regard to the people who inhabited this region beyond the Rhine. So the non-Celtic peoples in this region simply became known as the ‘Germanic’ peoples. And of course that is also the root of the modern word *Germany*. So the great irony is that all of these terms which mean Germanic today – words like *Teutonic* and *Germanic* and *Germany* – they are all of Celtic origin. So you can see how these distinctions between Celtic and Germanic were often blurred. Especially from the perspective of the Romans who were often unconcerned about those distinctions.

So we have the two tribes – the Teutones and the Cimbri – both Germanic or both Celtic or perhaps one of each – you take your pick, but they were moving southeastward to the region around modern Hungary and in the middle Danube region. But then, all of a sudden, around 113 BC, they turned westward, and they soon approached Italy. As they came closer to Italy, a Roman army intervened but the Roman army was defeated by those migrating tribes. And then, many of the citizens of Rome began to panic as they began to think back to Rome being sacked by the Celts from Gaul a couple of centuries earlier. But these migrating tribes didn’t move south into Italy. Instead, they continued to move westward into Gaul. And the Romans could actually breathe a sign of relief for a while as they were apparently spared by those ‘barbarian’ tribes. And the Romans actually continued to engage those tribes in Gaul for the next few years, but they didn’t really have any success against them.

Eventually, for some reason, the Teutones and the Cimbri decided to divide their armies, and the old ‘divide and conquer’ strategy finally came to the Roman’s rescue. The Roman legions finally defeated the Teutons in southern Gaul in 102 BC, and they defeated the Cimbri tribe in northern Italy in 101 BC.

But the Celtic threat didn’t end there. By this point, the Germanic tribes in northern Europe were expanding southward into Celtic territory. And in the east, the new kingdom of Dacia formed in the Balkans was expanding as well. And a Celtic tribe in Switzerland called the Helvetii outgrew its homeland, and it began to spread westward as well. And all of this expansion on the northern and eastern sides of the Celtic lands was having a domino effect, and it was pushing more and more Celtic tribes westward and southward into the fringes of the Roman territory. And skirmishes were starting to break out between Celtic tribes on the northern border of Rome.

All of this uncertainty and instability caused more and more concern within Rome itself. The Romans already had a deep fear of the Celtic tribes since the initial sacking of Rome. Now the fear of invasion was a frightening reality. The stage was set for someone who could take advantage of the situation by leading a Roman expedition against the Celtic tribes and delivering peace and security to Rome. And Rome had such a person. His name was Julius Caesar.

Julius Caesar was an aspiring politician looking for a great propaganda victory to match the exploits of his rival Pompey who had acquired territory for Rome in the east. And Gaul was an obvious

target. Caesar also needed to keep his professional army employed. So in 59 BC, Caesar steered a special law through the Roman Senate which gave him a 5-year command over Gaul. He argued that the Germanic tribes to the far north were beginning to threaten the states allied with Rome in the region of Gaul. And he said that Gaul would either become Roman or it would be overrun by those Germanic tribes. The next year, he began his conquest of Gaul. He began by attacking that Helvetii tribe which I mentioned earlier and which had been expanding into Gaul from its homeland in modern-day Switzerland. He defeated the Helvetii, and then he focused his efforts in northern Gaul, and he finally subdued the tribes there. Caesar completed his conquest of Gaul, at least temporarily, in 55 BC. Estimates – some based on Caesar's own accounts – are that hundreds of thousands of Celts (perhaps more than a million) were killed as a result of Caesar's conquest. It was nasty and brutal business.

But everything didn't go well for Caesar. In that same year – 55 BC – Caesar attempted to invade Britain for the first time with two legions. But the conquest of Britain turned out to be a lot more difficult. Britain was considered the very edge of the Roman world. And you had to get there by boat, which was never really the forte of the Romans. This first “invasion” was really more of an expedition. The Romans didn't intend to establish a permanent settlement there. It was partly a show of force to discourage the British Celts from supporting their fellow Celts in Gaul who they routinely traded with and aided. Except for a few skirmishes with some southern Celts, the expedition didn't really have any military consequences.

A year later – in 54 BC – Caesar tried again. And this second invasion of Britain was a proper invasion with intentions of establishing a permanent Roman settlement there. But the native Celts were prepared this time. Caesar fought the Celts in Britain, but he could never secure a decisive victory after three months of fighting. And at this time, there was a revolt of Celtic tribes back in Gaul, so Caesar withdrew from Britain to deal with the uprising in Gaul. He never returned to Britain – and Britain would remain outside of the Roman Empire for almost another century until the Emperor Claudius finally returned to conquer Britain for Rome.

Now this revolt that was happening back in Gaul was very big deal. Remember that the various Celtic tribes shared some common cultural characteristics, but there was no political cohesion there. They were more likely to fight against each other than unify as a common military force. This gets back to the ‘divide and conquer’ approach which the Romans used to great effect against the Celts. But now – in 53 BC – they had finally started to unite under a single leader named Vercingetorix.

Vercingetorix was the chieftain of a tribe of Central Gaul. He had encouraged the various Celtic tribes to unify against the Romans. He soon emerged as the supreme military commander of the Celts. As the leader, he actually burned Celtic towns and crops to prevent the Romans from accessing to the food. And he adopted guerrilla tactics to interrupt and cut off Roman supplies. His rebellion was initially successful against the Roman army and their Germanic mercenaries. But the Romans eventually got the upper hand due to their superior discipline and organization. The Romans were finally able to surround Vercingetorix and force him to surrender. And this effectively marked the end of any real Celtic threat to Roman power in Gaul.

Caesar's conquest of Gaul had taken 8 years. And that is an incredibly short period of time to conquer such a large territory. And needless to say, it was a huge political victory for Caesar. But politics is a messy business. Caesar's political rival back in Rome was Pompey. And Pompey recognized what Caesar's victory meant for Caesar – and therefore meant for Pompey himself.

Technically, Caesar's term as the Governor of Gaul had expired. So Pompey was able to get the Roman Senate to order Caesar to disband his army and return to Rome. But Caesar was having none of it. Pompey had accused Caesar of insubordination and treason, and Caesar suspected that he would be prosecuted if he returned to Rome as a civilian. So he took his army and headed for Rome with his army in tow. In 49 BC, Caesar crossed the Rubicon River which was the northern boundary of Roman territory at the time. By crossing this river, Caesar was entering Rome with his own army in violation of the Senate's order. For Caesar, crossing the river was basically a point of no return. He knew that it would mean civil war. And this is where we get the modern English phrase 'crossing the rubicon' to mean 'going beyond the point of no return.'

Civil war in Rome did ensue, and Caesar emerged victorious. He also emerged as dictator of Rome by 48 BC. And we can also now start to speak of the 'Roman Empire' as opposed to the earlier Roman Republic. I am going to talk a lot more about Caesar and the Roman Empire in the next episode, but let's turn our attention back to Gaul because that is the focus of this episode.

After the Romans finally subdued the Celts in Gaul, the Celts there were largely assimilated into the Roman Empire. Rome began an extended period of Romanization which I described a little bit in the last episode. Rome promoted trade, farming and industry within Gaul. But the most important part of this story for our purposes is that the native Celtic languages began to disappear in Gaul. And Latin gradually began to replace those languages. The Latin dialects spoken in this region would eventually evolve into an early form of French. And as I have noted throughout this podcast series, this was the avenue by which English inherited a very large portion of its modern vocabulary. The Latin words evolved into French, and then passed into English with the Norman invasion of England in 1066. So the Roman conquest of Gaul was a crucial event in the overall story of English.

But what about those Celtic languages that were now being replaced by Latin? What was the long-term impact of those languages on English? The answer is not very much. I have already mentioned a few Celtic words that have found their way into English. But the fact is that most of the Celtic tribes were eventually conquered by the Romans in the west and by the Germanic tribes in the north and east. They were basically caught between a rock and a hard place. And after the Celts were conquered in continental Europe, their languages largely disappeared. Of course, the Celts held on in the British Isles – at least for a while until the Romans returned there under Claudius. And I will look at that part of the story next time. So there was some Celtic influence on English from the lingering Celtic languages that were still being spoken when the Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain. And of course, some of those languages have held on to this very day in places like Ireland, Scotland and Wales. So there was some limited Celtic influence on English when the Anglo-Saxons encountered these Celts in Britain. But I will address those influences when we get to the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

The other Celtic influence on English comes in the form of a few words used by those continental Celts in Gaul which were adopted by the Romans and the Germanic tribes. And a few of those words have found their way into modern English through Latin or through the Germanic languages.

I have already mentioned a few words like *breeches*, *bracket*, *Teutonic*, and *Germanic* – all of which have roots in the ancient Celtic languages of Gaul.

We also get lots of place names from the original Celts. For example, the names of London and Paris are both rooted in Celtic names – as is the River Thames which runs through London and the River Seine which runs through Paris. And since Gaul eventually evolved into the territory we know today as France, it is not surprising that we can find a fair amount of Celtic words in modern French. It is estimated that there are about 500 Celtic words in modern French, and there may actually be quite a bit more than that.

But what about English? Well, the Latin word *bulga* meaning ‘a leather bag or knapsack’ came from a Celtic term used in Gaul. The word came into English from French as *bowgette*, and later becoming *budget*. It originally retained its meaning as a small bag, then a leather purse or wallet, then it came to mean the collection of papers in the wallet. And much later in the 18th century it came to be used in its sense as a financial record or document today. So *budget* comes from Celtic origins.

And the Old English word *rice*, which is the original version of our modern word *rich*, also came from Celtic origins. I mentioned this word back in the episode I did on the letter C.

Well this word *rice* was almost certainly borrowed from the Celts by the early Germanic tribes on the continent before they migrated to Britain. The word meant ‘kingdom’ in Old English, and it’s directly connected to the German word *Reich* as in ‘Third Reich.’ It eventually came to also serve as an adjective meaning ‘rich or powerful.’ And that is the sense that we have it today. So the word *rich* comes to us indirectly from these ancient Celts.

Another very common English word which comes from these Celts is the word *car*. And this word comes from early Roman contact with the Celts. The Celts in Gauls had used the term for their war chariots, and Julius Caesar borrowed the term during his wars there. The term passed through Latin and French before finally making it into English.

And the English word *bin* – B-I-N as in ‘trash bin’ – may have come from a word used by the Celts in Gaul. The word was *benn*, and it was a type of cart which usually carried a woven wicker form which was made to look like a person. These forms may have been used to contain bodies that were sacrificed by burning. And the term was adopted into Middle English to mean ‘crib or manger.’ It eventually came to mean a type of storage container. And of course, that is the sense that we have it today as in ‘trash bin.’

Beyond those words, we get a few words from the Celts in Britain after the Anglo-Saxons arrived there. A word like *ass*, for example, was probably adopted from a Celtic word by the Anglo-Saxons.

But it is estimated that no more than a dozen or so Celtic words (other than place names) were adopted by the Anglo-Saxons prior to the Norman invasion. So in terms of vocabulary, Celtic influence on English is very limited. There may be some Celtic influences on English grammar, but again, I will deal with that topic when we get to Old English and the Anglo-Saxons.

Now I should re-emphasize the fact Celtic languages are still being spoken in parts of the British Isles and northern France. And a few of these words have passed into English mainly during the late Middle Ages and thereafter. This includes words like *bard, bog, glen, banshee, flannel, clan, whiskey, plaid, loch, galore, brogue, shamrock* and *leprechaun*.

There was also a Gaelic term which combined the Gaelic words for ‘war’ and ‘cry.’ It was something like *slaugh-ghairm*. I don’t speak Gaelic, so sorry for butchering that. But it literally meant ‘war cry or shout of the troops.’ And it was the rallying cry of a Celtic chieftain in battle, and it was used in the middle of a battle to rally the troops and bring them together. And it came into Modern English as *slogan* around the 1700s.

But again, that’s about it for Celtic influences on English vocabulary. But as I said earlier, the biggest impact of this episode on the overall story of English is the fact that much of western Europe was now under Roman control and that meant the spread of Latin.

So next time, I’m going to look at this later period of Roman history and the large number of Latin words from this period which found their way into Modern English. This is also the story of the Roman conquest of Britain and the rise of the Germanic tribes in the north. So I’ll be setting the stage for the fall of Rome and the Germanic invasions of Europe.

So, until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 18: KEEPING TIME WITH THE ROMANS

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 18: Keeping Time With The Romans.

Last time we looked at the emergence of the ancient Celts who once dominated much of central and western Europe. And we looked at the defeat of those same Celts by the Romans in the region known as Gaul which is basically modern-day France. And the Latin dialect spoken in this region eventually evolved into an early form of French known as Old French. And it was this version of French which the Normans brought with them to England in 1066 and which radically transformed English into the language we have today.

Now this time, I want to talk about time. Or at least the Roman concept of time. Because, not only do many of our time-related terms come from Latin, but also because it helps to illustrate how the language of the Romans permeates Modern English. It also makes for some good etymology.

So let's return to where we left off last time, with Roman Gaul – the region that would eventually become known as France. At this point in our story, Gaul was a newly conquered Roman territory. And the conqueror was Julius Caesar. And Caesar was also now the dictator of what would soon become the Roman Empire.

Now Julius Caesar was a historical figure who has impacted the English language in many ways. His name exists in modern English as the medical procedure known as the Caesarian Section or C Section. This is supposedly because Caesar himself was born by this method. By the way, that's probably a myth because during the time of Caesar, babies were only surgically removed from the womb when the mother died in childbirth. And Roman medicine wasn't capable of surgically removing a baby in the way modern medicine can. So it was basically a last-ditch effort to save a baby when the mother died or was destined to die in childbirth. But Caesar's mother was alive during Caesar's lifetime according to recorded sources, so Caesar himself was apparently not born by that method. Now, some historians have noted that Caesar had a somewhat prominent relative who was also named 'Julius Caesar,' and this other Julius Caesar was apparently born by this method. And so there is some speculation that the similarity of names caused the confusion and that's why the 'Caesarian' has generally been attributed to the more famous Caesar.

Now I should note that the Modern English pronunciation of 'Julius Caesar' is quite different from the way the name would have been pronounced in Latin during the time of Caesar. And I mention this in part because a few listeners with a background in Latin have asked me about the name of the god Jupiter. In an early episode, I noted that the name of the god Jupiter developed from an original Indo-European word meaning 'sky father.' Technically, Classical Latin didn't have the 'j' sound. So Jupiter was pronounced /yoo-piter/ during this period of Latin. And the 'y' sound in /yoo-piter/ was represented by the letter I. And the same was true of the name 'Julius.' It was actually pronounced /yoo-lee-us/ during the period of Classical Latin. And again it was spelled I-U-L-I-U-S.

The ‘j’ sound actually developed in very late Latin beyond the Classical Latin period. And one place where it developed was in Gaul. Many parts of the Roman Empire has a local Latin dialect which are sometimes called Vulgar Latin dialects because they were the dialects of the common people of that region, and those local dialects weren’t the standard Latin dialect of the Classical period. In Gaul, the Latin dialect developed several new sounds. I have already discussed in an earlier episode how the ‘k’ sound began to shift to an ‘s’ sound before certain letters. And the ‘h’ sound also began to disappear from the language – which is why we still sometimes have silent ‘H’s in certain words borrowed from Latin. And the ‘y’ Sound began to shift to a brand new ‘j’ sound in many words. So /yoo-piter/ became *Jupiter*. And /yoo-lius/ became *Julius*. These changes were part of the transition from Late Latin into a very early form of French called Old French. These changes would be further impacted by the arrival of a Germanic tribe called the Franks who would eventually oversee the transition of Gaul into the Frankish kingdom, and then eventually into the nation we know today as France. But that is all much later in our story.

So that is how /yoo-lee-us/ became *Julius*. But what about *Caesar*? Well, during the period of Classical Latin, *Caesar* was actually pronounced /kae-sar/. Remember that the C always had the ‘k’ sound in Latin. And, as I just noted, the ‘k’ sound shifted to an ‘S’ sound before an E and an I in Old French. So from /yoo-lee-us kae-sar/ to *Julius Caesar* we can hear the impact of sound changes in late Latin and early French. And we can see how those changes impacted modern English. Modern English may not sound like French, but the way many English words are pronounced is a direct inheritance from French. And it also starts to explain why modern English spellings can seem so random and complicated.

Now after Caesar’s assassination, the name ‘Caesar’ was adopted as a general name for Roman emperors. So Rome actually had many Caesars after Julius Caesar. And because of the heavy influence of the Romans, the term *Caesar* passed into German and Russian as well where it also meant the top military or political leader. Remember, Caesar was pronounced as /kae-sar/ in Classical Latin. So the term passed into German as *Kaiser*, and it was still in use in Austro-Hungarian Empire until World War I. The term also passed into Russian as *czar*. And it too was in use in Russia as late as the 20th century.

The term *czar* has also been borrowed into English as a term for certain top political leaders. So the ‘drug czar’ in the United States is the person responsible for enforcing US drug laws. Again ‘drug czar’ literally means ‘drug Caesar’ in its original sense.

There is something else that we typically associate with Julius Caesar – and that’s the Julian calendar. This calendar was developed at the instruction of Caesar, and it is the direct ancestor of the calendar we use today.

So let’s talk about time – and how the ancients measured it. Last time, I discussed the ancient Celts, and I explained how Caesar conquered the Celtic territory of Gaul. And I mentioned that the ancient Celts didn’t have a written language. And that is generally true. But as the Celts began to encounter other literate people, like the Greeks and the Romans, it does appear that they began to adopt some very limited writing – like for inscriptions. And this occurred around the same time the Romans

invaded Gaul. Caesar actually noted that the Celtic tribes had adopted some very limited writing for inscriptions.

And this was confirmed about 150 years ago when the remains of a Celtic calendar dating from the first century BC was discovered in France – which, as we now know, was once the Roman territory of Gaul. So given that date – the 1st century BC – it means the calendar was being used by Celts in Gaul around the time Caesar invaded the territory. And the writing on the calendar used Roman lettering and numerals, but it was written entirely in a Celtic dialect. The calendar highlights several dates which were important to the Celts for ceremonial or agricultural purposes (or perhaps for both). And that makes it the oldest surviving document in a Celtic language, and it confirms that the Celts were not the barbarians the Romans considered them to be. As I said, the calendar predates the Roman occupation, and it shows a sophisticated series of astronomical calculations which is completely independent of the calendar developed by the Romans.

Now I mention this Celtic calendar for two reasons. First, to make the point that shortly before the languages of the continental Celts died out, they had begun to adopt some limited writing for inscriptions and notations. But the other reason is to talk about the importance of ancient calendars and time-keeping. Many of our modern English words related to dates and time-keeping come from the Romans. In fact, many of them come indirectly from Julius Caesar himself. For example, the name of the month of **July** comes directly from the name **Julius** in Julius Caesar. And as I said earlier, the so-called ‘Julian Calendar’ comes from certain reforms to the calendar implemented by Caesar himself. So let’s take a closer look at the ancient Roman calendar.

In ancient times, the most important measurements of time were days, months and years. Today, we spend a lot of time focusing on hours, seconds and minutes. But that is largely a product of modern technology and our fast-paced culture. But to the ancients, it was much more important to keep track of days, months and years. Seasonal measurements were essential to an agricultural society. Determining when to plant and when to harvest was essential for survival in ancient agricultural societies. And that is why ancient monuments like Stonehenge – which predate both the ancient Celts and the Romans by many centuries – probably had an astrological function at least in part. And seasonal measurements were also important for military purposes. Military campaigns were generally avoided in the colder climates of Europe during the winter months.

So the three basic forms of time measurement for ancient people were days, months and years.

Now a day is very simple. As we know that is the length of time it takes for the Earth to make one complete rotation on its axis. Or as the ancients would have viewed it, the length of time it takes for the Sun to make one complete revolution around the Earth. So since the day was measured by the perceived movement of the Sun, the Sun was closely associated with the concept of a day.

The original Indo-European word for ‘sky’ was something like ***diēu**. This word also meant ‘to shine’ – like ‘sun shine.’ So it came to be associated with the concept of a day. And you may remember this word as part of the original Indo-European word for ‘God’ which was ‘sky father.’ It produced Sanskrit **dyaus pitar**. It also produced Greek word **zeus pater**, which was later shortened to **Zeus**. And it also produced the name of the Anglo-Saxon God **Tiu** which gave us **Tuesday** –

another time-related term – but more on that later. And that same original Indo-European word produced the Latin word *dyu-pater* – which became /yoo-pater/ – and then *Jupiter* in late Latin and early French as I mentioned earlier.

Well this Indo-European word for ‘sky’ or ‘shine’ – **diēu* – it ultimately produced two other words in Latin. One word was *deus* which came to be a generic term for God. And we see that word in Modern English words borrowed from Latin – for example, in words like *deity* and *divine*, and even in the French word *adieu* which literally meant ‘to God’ and came to mean ‘God be with you’ as in a standard way of saying ‘goodbye.’

The other word which developed in Latin from that original Indo-European word *dieu* was *dies* – which meant ‘day’ in Latin. So there we can see how that original Indo-European word for ‘sky’ or ‘shine’ developed the Latin words for both ‘god’ and ‘day.’

Now with regard to the Latin word for ‘day’ – which remember was *dies* – it produced Modern English words like *diary* which was a journal of the day’s events. And it produced a word like *dial* as in the part of a sun dial that marks the daylight hours. And it produced the word *diet* which was how much you ate each day. And it also produced the word *adjourn* which meant to put off to another day. Now during the Middle Ages, it was common for calendars to set aside two days of each month – so 24 days total for the year – as ‘evil days’ or ‘unlucky days.’ In Latin, the term ‘evil day’ was *dies malus* – combining the Latin word *dies* for ‘day’ and *malus* for ‘evil.’ Well, an ‘evil day’ – or *dies malus* – became Anglicized during the period of Middle English, and it became known as the ‘dismal’ days. And from this, we get the Modern English adjective *dismal* meaning ‘dreary or unfortunate.’

So the Latin word *dies* meant ‘day.’ So did the Modern English word *day* come from this Latin word *dies*? Well, according to most modern linguists, the answer is actually ‘no.’ The English word *day* comes from an Old English word *daeg* which has a different Indo-European root. And you may think there is a connection between the English word *day* and the word *date*, but again linguists tell us that each of those words are not actually cognate. The word *date* comes from a Latin word unrelated to those I have mentioned earlier and having an altogether different Indo-European root.

So I have discussed the ancient concept of a ‘day,’ which was directly connected to the concept of the Sun, the sky and sunshine or daylight.

So let’s consider the concept of a ‘month.’ And as you may suspect, just as a ‘day’ is connected to the Sun, a ‘month’ is connected to the moon. A month was based on the movement of the moon around the Earth. Specifically, one complete orbit of the moon around the Earth represented a month. For the ancients, this cycle was based on observing the changing phases of the moon. So from one new moon to the next, you had a month.

Now we can easily see the connection of *moon* and *month* in Modern English because both words come from Old English, and ultimately from the same Indo-European root word. The Indo-European root word was **men(s)es*, and it produced the original Germanic word **menon* for ‘moon’ and **menoth* for ‘month’. And that Germanic language gave us the Old English word *mona* for ‘moon’

and *monath* for ‘month.’ So *moon* and *month* have a direct lineage and they still closely resemble each other because they have both come to us via the same sources – Indo-European to Germanic to Old English to Middle English and then to Modern English. Words that do that tend to maintain a close resemblance over time, and we still see that in those two words – *month* and *moon*.

Now Latin also developed a word from that same original Indo-European root word **men(s)es*. The Latin word was very similar – pronounced *mensis*. And this word is the root of *menstruate* and *menstrual* in Modern English, again referring to a monthly cycle.

The Romans also used this word *mensis* to represent a period of 6 months. They combined the Latin word for six which was *sex* with this word *mensis* to create the word *semester* – which originally meant a period of 6-months or half a year. Of course, it has evolved in Modern English to mean half of a school year.

So *month*, *moon*, *menstrual*, and *semester* are all cognate. All relate back to the original Indo-European word for ‘moon.’

But Latin also developed a separate word for ‘moon.’ And that other word is the more familiar Latin word in Modern English. That word was *luna* which gives use the Modern English word *lunar* as in ‘lunar eclipse’ or ‘lunar phase’ or as we will see shortly ‘lunar calendar.’

Now there is a direct connection between the Latin words *mensis* and *luna* – both meaning ‘moon.’ And that’s because the ancient Romans had a Moon Goddess named ‘Luna.’ So the Romans eventually associated the term *luna* with the moon itself. And so *luna* came to refer to the Moon and things associated with the Moon.

Now this Latin word also came from an original Indo-European word which was something like **leuk* and meant light or brightness. And this Indo-European root word gave us a Germanic word which came into Old English as *leoht*. And that is the original version of the word *light*. So *light* came from the same root word which produced *luna* in Latin. This Indo-European root word **leuk* actually produced several words in Latin. And from those Latin words we get Modern English words like *luster* referring to the way certain bright things look. We get *lucid* which originally meant ‘shining.’ We get *illustrate* and *elucidate* which meant ‘to shine a light on something.’ We get *translucent* which is ‘something that light can shine through.’ We get *luminous* and *illuminate* which again refer to the brightness of something. And as I said earlier, we get the Latin word *luna* which produced both *lunar* and *lunatic*. So what is the connection between *lunar* and *lunatic* you ask?

Well, since the Roman Goddess Luna was the goddess of the sphere which was closest to the Earth, the Romans thought that she had a great deal of power. The phases of the Moon were thought to reflect changes in her mood. And they also thought that her changing mood was responsible for many mental conditions. So people who acted abnormally or crazy were thought to be under the influence of Luna. And again this was thought to be connected to the moon in some way. So this condition has come to be known as *lunacy*, and a person who suffers from it is sometimes called a *lunatic*.

Of course, the idea that the moon makes people a little crazy has passed into our modern culture as well. We still speak of people acting a little strange on a full moon. Some of this is an inheritance from Germanic culture which had notions which were similar to the Romans. The Germanic culture developed the concept of a 'werewolf' which was a human who turned into a wolf on a full moon. Remember from an earlier episode that the Old English word for man was *wer*, and a 'man-wolf' was a *werewolf*.

And we still have notions of someone going crazy and howling at the moon. Again, it was a common belief in ancient cultures that the Moon affected the mental and psychological condition of people. So we see that reflected in Modern English as well.

So I've talked about the connection of a 'day' to the Sun, the sky and sunlight. And I've discussed the connection of a 'month' to the moon and moonlight. So what about a year?

Well, like a day and a month, a year was based around astronomy. A year was the length of time it took for the seasons to complete a full cycle. So in modern astronomical terms, it is the length of time it takes the Earth to make one complete orbit around the Sun. Now ancient people didn't really understand that the Earth moved around the Sun, but they did understand the concept of seasons like Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring. And they understood that those seasons came in regular cycles. And they were able to measure those cycles by the trajectory of the Sun's movement across the sky at various points during the year. And also by measuring the length of the days and the nights. Long days meant more heat and therefore good conditions for planting. Long nights meant more cold and a time for harvesting and storing food.

And of course, the Sun's trajectory and the length of the days and nights vary because the Earth is tilted on its axis. When the northern hemisphere is tilted toward the Sun we get longer days and thus Spring and Summer. But when the earth moves around the Sun as part of its natural orbit, eventually the earth is located on the opposite side of the Sun, and now the northern hemisphere is tilted away from the Sun. So the days become shorter, and we get Autumn and Winter.

But twice a year the night and the day are the exact same length – or almost the exact same length if you want to be technical. This occurs when the Earth reaches the two transition points in its movement around the Sun.

The Romans called these two dates the 'equal night' since the night was equal to the day on those dates. The Latin term for 'equal' was *aequus*, and the term for 'night' was *nox*. So when these two words were combined, they gave us the word *equinox*.

Now one equinox occurs in March, and it's called the 'vernal equinox' from the Latin word *ver* which meant 'Spring.' And this marks the point when the days start to become longer than the nights. So it marks the beginning of Spring. And the other equinox occurs in September, and it marks the transition point at which the days start to become shorter than the nights. So in other words, it marks the beginning of Autumn. And this was called the 'Autumnal Equinox' by the Romans from the Latin word *autumnus* meaning 'Autumn.'

Now, similar in concept to the Equinox was the solstice. The solstice also occurs twice a year, and it is basically the opposite of the equinox. The first solstice is the day when the daylight is at its longest and the night is at its shortest. This longest day of the year occurs in June and is called the Summer Solstice and it marks the beginning of Summer. And the other solstice is the day when the daylight is at its shortest and the night is at its longest. And this shortest day of the year is the Winter Solstice, and it marks the beginning of Winter.

Now the trajectory of the Sun through the sky – that trajectory moves over the course of the year. And on the Summer Solstice, the Sun reaches its highest trajectory, and on the Winter Solstice, the Sun reaches its lowest trajectory.

And ancient people could very easily measure the beginning of Summer and Winter by keeping track of the Sun's trajectory. When it reached its height, it was Summer. When it reached its lowest, it was Winter. On the two dates when it appeared to stop for the day before changing directions, it was a 'Solstice' – which combined the Latin terms for 'Sun' (which was *sol*) and 'to stand still' (which was *sistere*). Thus, since the trajectory of the Sun appear to stand still on those two days before it changed directions, those days were called a *solstice*.

So by keeping track of the Sun's movement in the sky, and by keeping track of the length of the days and nights, ancient people could predict the seasons. So these transition dates were easy to measure and they were very important. As I noted earlier, for agricultural purposes alone, it told the people when to plant, and when to harvest, and when to begin storing food for the winter. Remember even the stone age people who build Stonehenge understood these concepts because the stones at Stonehenge are arranged in a way that they actually measure the movements of the Sun for these purposes. And like the Romans who associated the Sun with God, the builders of Stonehenge also apparently used the monument for both astronomical and religious purposes. And the Celtic druids who eventually migrated to Britain, also recognized this purpose because they too used Stonehenge for both astronomical and religious purposes.

So we can really see the connections here between the heavens and the ancient concept of 'heaven.'

Now even though ancient peoples may not have understood that the Earth revolves around the Sun, they did understand how to measure the movement of the Sun's trajectory in the sky and how to measure the relative length of the days and nights. And they understood these events occurred at fixed intervals, and that they marked the changing of the seasons. So they had a definite concept of a year.

Now the English word *year* comes from Old English, and it actually goes back to the original Indo-European language. The Indo-European root word bears a remarkable similarity to the Modern English word. It was something like **yer* and it meant 'year' or 'season' in the original Indo-European language. It also produced a Greek word *hora* which originally meant 'season' in Greek and it produced the word *horoscope* in Modern English.

Now the Greek word *hora* later came to be used to refer to a part of the day – like morning, noon or night. And it eventually evolved into our modern word *hour*. Here's what happened. The Greeks

had encountered the Babylonians who were using sundials, and the sundials were divided into 12 segments. Remember from an earlier episode that I mentioned that the Indo-Europeans tended to count in increments of 10 as is reflected in our modern numbers. But the Babylonians tended to count in terms of 12s and 60s. And that tendency was reflected in the Babylonian sundials. So the daytime was divided into these 12 equal segments on the sundial. Since these were sundials, they didn't really measure the nighttime. So initially it was only the daytime that was divided into 12 segments.

Now the sundial began measuring time at dawn, so that was the first hour. And that meant that darkness came at the twelfth hour. And it is in this sense that we have the term the *eleventh hour* in Modern English to mean 'near the very end' or 'the last opportunity before time runs out.'

The Greeks had encountered the Babylonians and had borrowed their sundials, and thus their concept of dividing the day into 12 segments. And the phrase *eleventh hour* is actually a phrase used in the Book of Matthew in the New Testament of the Bible. Remember that the New Testament was written in Greek, and it borrowed this Greek concept of time with the twelfth hour being the onset of darkness at night. So the *eleventh hour* was nearly at the end of the day. And that's actually the origin of the term the *eleventh hour* in Modern English.

Now the Greeks had borrowed the concept of time from the Babylonians. And the Romans borrowed this same concept from the Greeks. And they also borrowed the Greek word *hora* which remember came from the same original Indo-European root as the English word *year*. By this point, the Romans no longer pronounced the initial 'h' in the word *hora* so it became /ora/, and eventually in Modern English it became *hour*. I mentioned earlier that Latin eventually lost the 'h' sound. And we see that here. And that is why the word *hour* has that silent 'H' at the beginning – because it was originally pronounced by the Greeks in the original Greek version of the word.

Now I've already mentioned that the amount of daylight varies throughout the year, so a Roman hour was merely 1/12 of the daylight – ever how long that was on a given day. So an hour was longer in the Summer months since a day were longer then, and by the same token an hour was shorter in the Winter months when a day was shorter. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that the hour was given a precise measurement by allocating 12 segments to the day and a corresponding 12 segments to the night. These 12 segments thus created 24 total segments in the day. And this created our modern concept of an hour. This also reflects the movement away from using the Sun to measure hours. As early mechanical watches began to be developed, the Sun was no longer needed to measure time. And this begins the movement toward measuring time more in terms hours and minutes, rather than days, years and months.

So based on the information I just presented, the words *year*, *horoscope* and *hour* are all cognate, having evolved from the same Indo-European root word. But again, they get to us in various ways. *Year* from the Germanic languages, and *horoscope* and *hour* from Greek and Latin.

But again, just like with the word *month* which I discussed earlier, the Roman word for 'year' didn't come from the same root as the English word *year*. The Roman word came from a separate Indo-European word which was **at* which meant 'to go' or 'a period gone through' in the original Indo-

European language. This word **at* later evolved into the word **atnos* in an early form of Latin, and then evolved into the word *annus* in Classical Latin. And that is the word which the Romans used for year. Of course, we get that word in English as *annual* and *anniversary* (meaning once a year), and *annuity* (which originally meant a sum that was paid yearly). In finance, we sometimes calculate interest *per annum* which again means ‘per year.’

So let’s take a breather for a second and consider where we are. So far in this episode, I’ve discussed some words which came from the name of Julius Caesar. And I’ve explored the etymology of words which we have related to hours, days, months and years. Now I want to put those two together because, as I noted earlier, it was Julius Caesar who oversaw the revision of the Roman calendar and gave us the roots of the calendar we use every day.

Now there has been a lot of discussion in recent months about the Mayan Calendar and the purported end of the world. So even if you don’t know a lot about keeping time in the ancient past, you probably know that ancient peoples had many different calendars and many different ways of measuring months and years. I also mentioned a Celtic calendar from Gaul earlier in this episode which had its own methodology. So you may wonder why this was all so complicated in ancient times. I mean, why didn’t everybody just figure out how to keep track of time? After all, everybody was measuring time based on the same basic principles. A day was the period from sunrise to sunrise. A month was the period from one new moon to the next. A year was the period from one Summer Solstice to the next. Pretty much everyone used these same celestial events to keep track of time, so why couldn’t they all get on the same page – the same calendar page in this case?

Well, part of the answer is because these three celestial events – an astronomical day, an astronomical month, and an astronomical year – they don’t divide into each other evenly. They’re three events which we just happen to use to measure time. But none of them fit neatly and evenly into the others.

So let’s take a day. That’s the most basic form of measurement. And even in ancient times, everybody generally agreed on what a day was. From sunrise to sunrise.

But the first problem is that you can’t divide an astronomical month into an even number of days. There is no perfect division for a month. The amount of time it takes the moon to orbit the Earth (ie, to experience a complete moon cycle from new moon to new moon), is about 29.5 days. Now, as a practical matter, there was no way ancient people could keep track of a precise measurement of 29.5 day. So they had to round it off to the nearest day. And that meant if they were counting strictly by days, over a period of many months, the moon cycles were out of phase. So they had to readjust from time to time.

And we encounter the same problem when we look at a year. A year is based on the amount of time it takes the Earth to orbit around the sun. Based solely on this factor: 1 orbit = 365 and 1/4 days (ie. 365.25 days). Again, if you round this off to 365 days, as we do today, every four years you have to re-adjust by adding a day which we call leap day.

The point here is that the three astronomical events which were the basis of days, months and years are three completely different things – and you can't use one to measure the others without using complicated fractions which were impractical in ancient times. And if you round off to the nearest number, then the measurements soon fall out of line without constant readjustments. So these constant fractions and left over hours and days confounded these early calendar makers.

Yet, as I've noted, these calculations were very important to people during ancient time. If you didn't plant and harvest crops and the right times, it was often a matter of life and death. So early people struggled with the proper calculations for these activities. And they devised all sorts of calendars to make the necessary adjustments which were required to make these numbers reconcile and balance out over time.

So how did the Romans handle this problem? Well, if we go back to the very beginning of Rome – around the time Rome was founded – the Romans used a 10-lunar month year with an additional winter period that was not even part of the calendar. So they didn't measure a year by a certain number days like we do today. Instead, it was based on a certain number of months. That is why we call it a lunar calendar.

So let's look at how the Romans did this. Like many ancient peoples, the Romans kept track of the lengths of the days, and they could determine the vernal equinox in Spring when the length of the day and the length of the night were the same. This marks the beginning of Spring, and it was an indicator of the planting season.

So when the vernal equinox occurred, the Romans began counting. This was the date when their 10-month lunar calendar would begin. So it ran from modern-day March until around modern-day January. They then waited through the undefined winter period (where they were basically 'off the grid') until the vernal equinox occurred again, and then they began counting the 10 months all over again.

This original 10-month calendar also explains some of the names of the months. If you're familiar with Latin or any of the Romance languages, you probably recognize the Latin prefixes of *septem* for 7, *octo* for 8, *novem* for 9 and *decem* for 10. And I've discussed some of these prefixes in earlier episodes, and we see them all the time in English in words like *octopus* for a sea animal with 8 legs, and *decade* for a period of 10 years. But *September* is not the 7th month, it's the 9th month. And *October* is not the 8th month, it's the 10th month. And *November* is not the 9th month, it's the 11th month. And *December* – which is based on the Latin root *decem* – well, it's not the 10th month, it's the 12th month.

Part of the reason why these month names seem out of sorts is because the original Roman calendar only had 10 months. And the names of the last four months were based on the Roman numerals: *septem* for 7, *octo* for 8, *novem* for 9 and *decem* for 10. And those month names became *September*, *October*, *November* and *December*. Those were the months 7 through 10, and just as today they were the final four months of the year. In the original Roman calendar, those months matched.

But what about the first 6 months beginning with the vernal equinox in Spring?

Well, the very first month was called *Martius* after the Roman God Mars. Mars was originally a god of agriculture before becoming a god of war. And since the first month came at the beginning of Spring, it meant the time for planting crops and preparing to plant crops. It was also the month in which military campaigns were often initiated since the cold weather was starting to break. So that's why this Spring month was named after Mars since he was the God of both agriculture and war. The name of the month became *March* in Old French, and English took the name from the French after the Norman Invasion.

The second month was called *Aprilis*. Historians are not certain where this name originated. Some have suggested an Etruscan origin from the Greek goddess Aphrodite or from Apollo who also had Etruscan origins. It became *Avrill* in Old French, and again English took the name from the French after the Norman invasion and eventually converted it to *April*.

The third month was called *Maius* after the goddess Maia who was the mother of Mercury by Jupiter. It became *Mai* in Old French, and English took the name from the French after the Norman invasion and eventually converted it into *May*.

The fourth month was called *Iunius*, probably after the goddess Juno (/yoo-no/) which eventually became Juno in late Gallic Latin and early French. Remember this was the same change that made /yoo-lee-us/ into Julius, /yoo-piter/ into Jupiter, and the month /yoo-nee-us/ became Junius. The name later evolved into *June* during the Middle English period after the Norman Invasion.

So the first four months, we still have in Modern English – *March, April, May* and *June*. And the last four months we also have – *September, October, November* and *December*.

But what about the two months in the middle of the original 10-month Roman calendar – months 5 and 6. Well these two months used the same Roman numbering system which was also the basis of *September, October, November* and *December*.

The 5th month was *Quintilis* which was based on the Latin adjective for 'fifth' (which was *quintus*) since this was the 5th month at the time.

And the 6th month was called *Sextilis* which was based on the Latin adjective for 'sixth' (which was *sextus*) since again this was the 6th month at the time.

But as we will see, the names of these two months were eventually replaced. So today, we just pick up the Latin numbering of the months with September.

So that was the original 10-month calendar. Remember that the Romans basically went 'off the grid' after December when winter kicked in. They just waited for the vernal equinox in Spring and they started all over again. And also remember that these months were based strictly on the cycle of the moon. From one new moon to the next new moon was a 'month.' So it wasn't really based on a set number of days. It was strictly a lunar calendar.

Well, at some point during the Etruscan period, the Romans filled in that winter period with two additional months. The first was named *Iānuārius* (/yan-war-ius/) after the god Janus (/yan-us/) which at this very early date was the most important God in early Roman culture. Again, thanks to the French ‘j’ sound, we know the God as *Janus* today and the month as *January*. Janus was actually more important than Jupiter (or /yoo-piter/) early on. But as the Romans encountered the Greeks and they began to align their Roman gods with Greek gods, they came to realize that the Greek sky god Zeus was the preeminent God in Greece. The corresponding sky god in Rome was Jupiter. So Jupiter got an upgrade thanks to his association with the Greek god Zeus. But prior to that Janus (or /yan-us/) was the preeminent Roman god. So that is why this new winter month was named after him.

The second winter month was named *Februārius*. This month was either named after the Roman god ‘Februus’ or a feast of spiritual cleansing called ‘Februa’ which was held during this time of the year – or perhaps it was named after both. But in either case, the name comes to us eventually as *February* in Modern English.

Now remember that these early Roman months were still based on lunar months which required constant revisions to be kept accurate. This was a lunar calendar which meant that each month changed when the moon cycles changed. But that meant that the Romans needed to make constant adjustments by adding days or subtracting days to keep these lunar months in sequence with the seasons. Remember that the movement of the moon around the earth is not tied to the movement of the earth around the sun. So if you counting months based on the moon cycles, you have to readjust to keep it in line with the seasons which are based on the Sun. This wasn’t a problem originally with that 10-month calendar, when the Romans began each season with the vernal equinox. At that point, the calendar year was pretty much always in alignment with the seasons. You just started over each year on that date – the vernal equinox.

But now the Romans had filled in that winter gap with two new months. They were no longer ‘off the grid’ in winter, and allowed to re-adjust when spring kicked in. They were now ‘on the grid’ all year. But they were using moon cycles to determine when the months changed – not the equinox or solstice. And they weren’t making regular adjustments to account for this discrepancy. Occasionally they did make an adjustment when things were really out of sorts. Since February was the last month of this early Roman calendar which began in the Spring, this last month of February was used for adding days to resolve discrepancies (which is why we still use it today for adding the leap day every 4 years.) It is also partially why it has an odd number of 28 days while the other months have 30 or 31.

Now in 153 BC, the Romans decided to shake things up a bit, and they decided to use January as the official beginning of the year since that was when they installed their consuls. So just as modern businesses can have a fiscal year which is often different from the calendar year, the Romans had an ‘official’ period which began with the installation of consuls, and they had this separate calendar year which began in basically modern-day March – in the spring. So they decided to readjust, and just make January the first month since that corresponded with the beginning of their official or political year.

But this meant that all of those months which were named after Roman numbers were now out of phase. The 5th month, *Quintilis*, was now the 7th month. And the 6th month, *Sextilis*, became the 8th month, and so on. And that is how September, October, November and December went from months 7, 8, 9 and 10, to months 9, 10, 11 and 12.

Now let's skip forward about a century to the time of Julius Caesar. Remember that the Romans were not making the regular adjustments to the calendar that they should have been making. And as a result, by the time of Caesar, the whole calendar was completely out of phase with the seasons. It was actually an entire season off. So everything was a mess.

So Caesar employed the Greek astronomer Sosigenes to come up with a plan to revamp the calendar. And Sosigenes proposed that they completely abandon the idea of using lunar months (in other words, the 29.5-day moon cycles) to measure time. And they decided instead to just convert to a lunar year. The lunar year would be 365 days with a leap year added every 4 years to account for the extra 6 hours which accrued each year. And in keeping with tradition, the extra day would be added to February. The lunar phases of the moon would cycle through the year but they would no longer be tied to any particular month. And this is the calendar which Caesar adopted on January 1, 45 BC, and which we know today as the Julian calendar.

But two more revisions were later made to the calendar. In 44 BC, shortly after the assassination of Caesar, the Roman Senate renamed the 7th month *Quintilis* as *Julius* (/yoo-lee-us/) to honor Julius Caesar who was born in that month. And as you will recall, /yoo-lee-us/ became *Julius*, and it eventually passed into English as *July*.

Lastly, the 8th month *Sextilis* was renamed as *Augustus* in honor of Augustus Caesar – Julius Caesar's successor and the first Emperor of Rome. *Augustus* also made its way into Modern English as *August*.

A few other minor adjustments were made to the calendar by Pope Gregory XIII in the 1500s – thereby giving us the modern 'Gregorian Calendar.' But most of what we know and recognize as the modern calendar comes from the reforms commissioned by Julius Caesar.

And since I've discussed the names of the months, let me conclude this episode on time by looking at the days of the week.

Now, I have repeatedly expressed the idea that Modern English is – at its core – a blend of Germanic Old English and Latin. And the way we keep track of time is a perfect example of that blend. Whereas the names of our months came from Latin – via French after the Norman Invasion – the names of our days of the week are rooted in the Germanic language of the Anglo-Saxons. But even so, the days were still not immune from Latin influences. Four days are named after Germanic Gods. One is named after a Roman God. And the other two have origins in Latin but were modified by the later Germanic Anglo-Saxons.

So let's begin with the Greco-Roman astronomer and mathematician Ptolemy. Now according to Ptolemy, there were seven planets which revolved around the Earth, and those planets were the Sun,

the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. So the Sun and the Moon were considered planets at this time. The idea also probably dates back to the Babylonians. And during the pre-Christian era, the Romans adopted the 7-day week, and they decided to name the seven days after the seven planets.

The first day was the Sun's day. Since 'Sun' in Latin was *sol*, the Latin name for the day was *solis dies*. The Germanic tribes took the name, but they substituted the Germanic words for 'sun' and 'day.' And thus we get *Sunday*.

The same thing happened for the next day. The next day was the moon's day. So in Latin it was *lunae dies*. Again, the Germanic tribes simply substituted the Germanic words for the Latin words, thereby yielding 'Moon's Day' or *Monday*.

These two translations were easy, because the Germanic tribes had their own words for 'Sun' and 'Moon.' But the other days were named for planets which were named after Roman Gods. So the Germanic tribes just substituted their own Gods.

The next day was named for the planet and Roman God Mars. We know it in modern French as Mardi – as in Mardi Gras – meaning Fat Tuesday. Well, the Germanic tribes substituted the Roman god Mars with the Germanic god Tir – or as the Anglo-Saxons knew him – Tiu. And we thereby get *Tuesday*.

The following day was named for the planet and Roman god Mercury. We know it in modern French as *Mercredi*. But the Germanic tribes substituted Mercury with the Germanic god Odin – or as the Anglo-Saxons knew him – Woden. So 'Mercury's Day' became 'Woden's Day' in Old English – and *Wednesday* today. Now Woden was one of the most important Germanic gods. When soldiers died in battle, it was believed that they went to Woden's Valhalla in the afterlife. And I'm going to talk more about Woden and these other Germanic gods when we get to the Germanic tribes in an upcoming episode.

The next day of the week was named after the planet and Roman god Jupiter. In modern French, it is *Jeudi*. The Germanic tribes substituted Jupiter with their god Thor – long before he became a comic book and movie hero. And the day became 'Thor's Day' – and is now known as *Thursday*.

The next day of the week was named after the planet and Roman goddess Venus. Being a female God, the Germanic tribes substituted her with Woden's wife, Frigga, thereby creating the modern *Friday*. Frigga was closely associated with another female Germanic god named Freya. And it appears that some of the Germanic tribes named the day after her instead. In Icelandic, for example, Freya may be the source of the name for their version of Friday. Some historians believe that these two goddesses may have originally been a single goddess as some very early point, and that there was a later evolution that divided them into two separate goddesses. And this might also account for some of the confusion as to which goddess was used as the source for the name of Friday in the various Germanic languages.

That leaves us with the final day which the Romans named after the planet and God Saturn. Apparently the Germanic tribes didn't have an equivalent god for Saturn – or at least not one that they wanted to use to make this substitution. So they kept the Roman god Saturn, and we ended up with 'Saturn's day' – or as we know it today – *Saturday*.

The important point with respect to the names of the week is that these names were adopted before the Anglo-Saxons migrated to Britain. Because names – or versions of these names – are found throughout the Germanic languages. So these names were adopted by the Germanic tribes while the Romans were still in control of Gaul and before the Roman Empire began to collapse. So these are very old Germanic words which pre-date Old English.

So I hope you have found this discussion of time-related terms interesting. Not only does it make for some interesting etymology, but it also illustrates how Modern English is a blend of Germanic and Latin roots.

Next time, I'm going to look at the period of the Roman Empire in western Europe. I will explore the Roman invasion of Britain and the growing contact with the Celtic tribes in Britain. And I will also look at the growing Roman contact with the Germanic tribes in northern and eastern Europe. And I will continue to look at Latin words which have found their way into Modern English. After that, I'm going to turn our attention to the Germanic tribes themselves. I will explore the emergence of the Germanic tribes in northern Europe, the nature of the original Germanic language, and the spread of those Germanic tribes into western Europe. And the story of the Germanic tribes will culminate with the migration of the Anglo-Saxons into Britain in the 5th century AD. And that will bring us to Volume 2 of this podcast series – which will be dedicated to Old English.

So until next time, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 19: THE ROMANIZATION OF BRITAIN

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a Podcast About the History of English Language. This is Episode 19 – The Romanization of Britain.

In this episode, I'm going to look at the emergence of the Roman Empire following the death of Julius Caesar. And then I'm going to look at what happened when the Romans decided to make another attempt to conquer Britain. As you probably already know, the Romans had more luck this second time around. Britain finally became part of the Roman Empire. Well, at least part of it did. And so I'm also going to explore how Roman economics and culture began to transform Celtic Britain into a new Romanized Britain. And along the way, I will look at how modern English reflects some of these changes.

So this episode will focus on the early period of the Roman Empire and the Roman occupation of Britain. As for the end of the Roman Empire – at least in western Europe – that part of the story is closely associated with the rise of the Germanic tribes to the north. And so next time, I'm going to begin looking at those Germanic tribes in detail. I have intentionally delayed any detailed discussion of those tribes up to this point. But after this episode, we'll be ready to look at the ultimate Germanic roots of English. But let me note that Latin will continue to be an integral part of the story of English. So we won't be leaving Latin behind – not by any means. But the overall focus will shift across the Rhine next time into Germany and the Germanic tribes.

As for this episode, let's pick up with the spread of the Roman Republic into western Europe under Julius Caesar. As you will recall, Caesar led the expeditions which ultimately resulted in the Roman conquest of Gaul. And this was part of the overall spread of Rome throughout Europe and the Mediterranean.

And with the spread of Rome into western Europe, we can see the early fault lines for the division of the Empire into western and eastern sections. In the east, there were pre-existing ancient civilizations with a common lingua franca in Greek. But in the west, the Celtic cultures of Europe were far less advanced. So Roman culture was able to replace the native cultures there much more easily. Roman wealth and culture was actually embraced in many of these regions, even if the Romans themselves were not always welcome. So Romanization was much more effective in these western regions, and the new societies which emerged bore a distinctly Roman appearance.

Following Caesar's conquest of Gaul, the territory was thoroughly Romanized. The Roman culture and the Roman language soon replaced the native Celtic traditions and languages there. Caesar's victory over Pompey in the Roman civil war had left Caesar as the dominant political and military leader in Rome. He effectively became the dictator of Rome – but unlike his predecessors – he did not serve for a period of 6 months. He was dictator for life – which as it turned out was actually not all that long. In 44 BC – less than 5 years after his victory over his political rivals in Rome – Caesar was stabbed to death by a group of senators who were alarmed by his rise to power and his disregard of traditional Roman institutions. If the plan was to return Rome to some form of rule by the Senate,

it failed. Left with a choice between anarchy and one-man rule, Rome was ultimately forced to accept one-man rule.

A civil war followed Caesar's assassination with Mark Antony briefly emerging as the leader of Rome, but fortunes soon turned against him and his wife, the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra. And in 31 BC, their forces were defeated by those led by the grandnephew and adopted son of Caesar – Octavian. After their defeat, Mark Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide. And Octavian finally emerged from all of this civil strife as the ultimate victor in the battle for control of Rome.

Under the leadership of Octavian, Rome completed the transformation from Republic to Empire. His reforms were actually very successful in bringing about peace and prosperity to the Empire. And this period came to be known as 'Pax Romana' – meaning the Roman Peace. Octavian preserved the Senate as an institution, but it offered very little check on his powers. Octavian controlled the army, and he concentrated many political positions in himself. He could initiate legislation himself, and he could veto the Senate's legislation.

In 27 BC, Octavian was given the name 'Augustus' – which was a name that carried with it a sense of reverence. And as I mentioned in the last episode, he had the 7th month of the Roman calendar named in his honor, thereby creating the month of August. This followed July which had been named for Julius Caesar. By the time of Octavian – or Augustus – the terms *Rome* or *Roman* no longer meant the city of Rome itself. It now referred to the entire Rome Empire. By the 3rd century, every free inhabitant of the Empire received Roman citizenship. So *Rome* started to become a very general term for things associated with the Empire itself.

Augustus was a very young man when he became the ruler of Rome and he died at the age of 76. His rule is considered by many historians to represent the peak of Roman culture with its blend of Greek and Roman elements. Augustus was succeeded by Tiberius and then Caligula. The rule of Caligula was marked by cruelty, excess, incompetence – and probably mental illness. I'm not going to deal with all of his exploits here, like attempting to make his own horse a consul, But it was his successor who is far more important to our story of the history of English.

Caligula's cruelty and insanity ultimately led to his assassination in the year 41 AD. And from this point on, we can just assume that all dates are AD – or Common Era – unless I note otherwise. After the death of Caligula, his uncle Claudius became Emperor. And it was Claudius who once again looked to Britain as a possible location for Roman conquest.

One thing to keep in mind about Claudius is that he had been very sick as a child, and he was still frail as an adult. He had a limp, a stutter and a slight deafness. And his poor health may have actually been an asset earlier in his life – because he wasn't considered much of a political threat and he survived the political attacks and assassinations which befell other Roman nobles during the reigns of Tiberius and Caligula. But now that he was Emperor of Rome, his frailty was a major liability. He knew that he would become the target of attacks. So what was the best way for a Roman Emperor to secure his position? The answer was simple – conquest! When an Emperor conquered a foreign territory, the Emperor himself was the conqueror and it gave the Emperor a great

deal of prestige and clout. And in the case of Claudius, it would remove any doubts as to his physical ability to rule.

Now to the Romans, Britain was considered to the edge of the world. It was beyond Gaul, across the sea. And even Julius Caesar wasn't able to fully conquer it during his two campaigns there. There were all kinds of rumors about the savages who lived there. And the Romans were particularly concerned about the mysterious power of the Celtic druids.

Between Caesar's attempts to invade the island in the first century and BC – and Claudius's expedition around a century later, there was actually a fair amount of trade with Rome. There were about 20 major Celtic tribes in Britain. And Rome had actually entered into alliances with some of these tribes in southern Britain. And Roman coins were being minted by this point in and around modern Belgium, which was part of the northernmost region of Roman Gaul. And these coins were actually in demand among the Celtic tribes in southern Britain. These coins were payment for British goods like cattle, grain, tin, iron, hunting dogs, and even slaves. Rome also traded Roman luxury goods for these items, including wine and olive oil. But the Celtic tribes had reached a stage of economic development where Roman coins were also an acceptable form of currency. Some of the Celtic tribal kings had even established their own mints to make their own coins. Interestingly, these Celtic British coins were inscribed in Latin – because the Celtic languages wasn't written down at that point. The inscriptions even called the Celtic kings *rex* using the Latin term for 'king.' So even at this early stage, we can see an economy that was in transition to an economy based on currency and minted coins – even before the Roman conquest.

But trade and political alliances were not enough for Emperor Claudius. He needed a new territory to conquer, and Britain would serve that purpose very well.

In the year 43, four Roman legions consisting of about 25,000 men landed in southeastern Britain. From there, the Roman armies advanced northward and westward. The exact location where the Romans landed – and exact tracks of the Roman army after that – they're really unknown. But we do know that one of the first major obstacles for the Roman army was the River Thames. They apparently built a bridge to cross it, and a settlement soon began to emerge at this crossing point. This early Roman city was called Londinium – and of course it is known today as London. Interestingly, though, that original name Londinium appears to be a Celtic word which the Romans borrowed and modified.

The story of the Roman invasion of Britain actually parallels the Roman invasion of Gaul in many respects. Just like in Gaul, the various Celtic tribes in Britain were prone to infighting, and they were never able to form a cohesive alliance against the Romans. One tribe would ally itself with the Romans for the sole purpose of defeating a neighboring tribe. This 'divide and conquer' approach – which the Romans had used so effectively in Gaul – it continued to be Rome's best weapon in Britain as well.

The Romans initially conquered and settled in the southeastern region of Britain. This region already had established trading relations with the Romans and remember that some of these tribes had alliances with the Romans before the Roman invasion occurred. So its not surprising that Romans

found the least resistance in these areas. Many of the native elites in this region actually embraced Rome which helped Rome establish a secure base there.

Within the next 3 years or so after the Roman invasion, Rome had conquered much of modern-day England. But the native Celtic tribes continued to resist the Romans to the west in Wales and Cornwall and further to the north in central and northern Britain.

These tribes had elected to engage in a guerilla war against the Romans, and that was something the Romans weren't really accustomed to. The Romans eventually realized that a regional base in the south wasn't going to be enough if they wanted to conquer the entire island. They were going to have to engage those western and northern tribes. And that's eventually what they did.

The Roman campaigns against these western and northern tribes ultimately proved successful – at least in part. After several decades of hard fighting, the Romans were finally able to subdue the tribes in Wales as well as the tribes in some of the northern portions of Britain. But the Romans were never able to conquer the northernmost region which we know today as Scotland. In fact, the later Emperor Hadrian built the now-famous Hadrian's Wall across northern Britain to establish the limits of Roman occupation and to protect it against the tribes to the north.

These tribes in modern-day Scotland included the Scots and another group called the Picts. The Picts occupied northeast Scotland. And they were known to paint their bodies. The term *Picts* means 'painted people' in Latin. And there is some disagreement among modern historians as to whether they were Celtic or not. Their language actually appears to be a blend of Celtic and an older native language. But the bottom line is that the Romans finally gave up on trying to conquer that northernmost region. And Hadrian's Wall became the defacto border of the Roman territory.

The Romans also never tried to invade Ireland to the west. So that meant that the regions which we know today as Scotland and Ireland retained their Celtic culture and languages.

So just like the Anglo-Saxons several centuries later, the Romans never realized a complete conquest of the British Isles – only a portion of it – albeit a very large portion of it.

Now I mentioned in an earlier episode that the word *breeches* was a native Celtic word for pants. And we know from recorded sources that the Romans – who were once amused by these barbarian garments, but they soon decided that they weren't such a bad idea after all. The Roman togas didn't provide much warmth in the chilly and wet climate of Britain. So the Romans themselves soon began to wear breeches or pants in Britain.

Now no discussion about the Roman invasion of Britain would be complete without mentioning one of the earliest known military heroes in British history. And this native military and political hero was in fact a heroine. And I am referring to the Celtic Queen Boudicca (or as she is sometimes called Boudicea). I noted that there were many parallels between the Roman occupation of Britain and the earlier Roman occupation of Gaul. As you may recall from the earlier episode on Caesar's invasion of Gaul, just as he had completed his initial conquest, a full-scale revolt broke out under the leadership of Vercingetorix. And something very similar happened here again in eastern Britain.

Shortly after the death of the Emperor Claudius, his successor Nero became Emperor. The Iceni tribe was located in eastern Britain. It was a very large and important Celtic tribe which generally had a good relationship with Rome. In the year 60, the Iceni king died without a male heir. So he divided his wealth between his two daughters and the Roman Emperor Nero. Now he apparently thought that this would ensure Imperial protection for his family. But he couldn't have been more wrong. The Romans seized the opportunity and annexed his kingdom. But more than that, they flogged his wife Boudicca, and they raped his daughters, and they confiscated the property of the Iceni chiefs. Queen Boudicca and the Iceni were incensed.

And under Boudicca's leadership, the Iceni tribe launched a full-scale revolt. After they began their attacks against Roman forces, other Celtic tribes in Britain began to join the revolt. The Iceni sacked several towns occupied by Romans including Londinium. The Romans had to withdraw from London, thereby leaving it to be plundered by the rebels. And according to the Roman historian Tacitus, about 70,000 Romans and their allies and townspeople were killed by the Iceni and their allies.

All of this happened at a time when the Romans had initiated a campaign in Wales. So they had to immediately recall those troops to deal with the rebellion in the east. The Romans were then able to inflict a defeat on Boudicca just west of London. And the tide by this point had started to change, and the Roman army finally put down the revolt in the following year – 61 AD. In response, Boudicca poisoned herself, thereby effectively ending the last real chance the Celtic tribes had to get rid of the Roman invaders.

After the revolt, the process of Romanization was able to take place in southern and central Britain with relatively little resistance. The Romans often converted the existing Celtic towns into Roman towns. This was unlike in Gaul where Celtic towns were often depopulated and new Roman towns were built. The Romans also built roads between the existing towns in Britain. And in fact, these roads form the basis of many modern roads in Britain.

By this point, the Romans had 'conquest and colonization' down to a science. Prominent local leaders were made auxiliary officers and were encouraged to adopt Roman culture. The Romans took the sons of Celtic chiefs and they educated them as Romans – including grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, and music. They also learned Latin. And the sons grew up to be local leaders. And their sons were given the same education. These subsequent generations welcomed Roman culture. And since this Romanization was focused at the higher levels Celtic society, it tended to filter down to the lower levels and tended to ensure there was little organized opposition to the Roman presence.

Latin was also made the official language of Roman Britain, but that didn't mean that everyone started speaking Latin. During the period of the Roman occupation, most native Britons continued to speak Celtic languages – especially in the rural areas. Latin was spoken by some people in Britain, mainly by the governing classes and administrators, and by the soldiers stationed there and by certain traders. And some of the better educated natives also learned Latin. So basically Latin was spoken in and around the Roman-occupied towns. But it is important to understand that Britain never experienced the degree of Romanization that Gaul did. The Romans arrived later in Britain – and ultimately they left earlier. And it was also much further away from Rome. So Latin never

made the in-roads in Britain that it did elsewhere. It remained a second language – although it did have a great deal of prestige among those who spoke it. And it should be noted that Latin was the only written language in Britain at the time because the Celts in Britain were still illiterate.

Speaking of writing, the Latin word for writing was *scribere*, and a professional who copied texts was a *scriba*. And this word comes into English as *scribe*. It also comes in as the word *script*. We see it in the word *description*. When actors learn their parts, they have to memorize their *script*, which is a shortened version of the word *manuscript*.

Postscript and *inscription* are just a few of the other words which contain the word *script* and which derive from the Latin word for ‘writing.’ The power of Roman civilization in western Europe is reflected in the fact that the Romance languages, and most of the Celtic languages, and most of the Germanic languages all use this Latin *scribere* as the basis of their respective words for ‘write.’ Interestingly though, English is one of the few exceptions to that rule. Even though English has borrowed in the Latin word in certain contexts – like *scribe* and *script* – the English word *write* comes from an Old English word – *writan*.

Of course, if you were someone who could read and write, you were *literate* – another word that comes to use from Latin. The Romans used the word *littera* to mean individual letters of the alphabet. The plural version *litterae* referred to a letter written to someone. Ultimately, English lost the distinction between the individual and the plural versions, and today it uses the word *letter* for both. So we use ‘letters’ to write ‘letters.’ As I noted, the words *literate* and *literacy* come from the same root. *Alliteration* (which is the repetition of a sound) also comes from the same root.

Now even though many Britons continued to speak Celtic languages during this period of Roman occupation, there is no doubt that the overall culture of Britain began to change during this period. Even though the overall effects of Romanization in Britain were more limited than in Gaul, we can still start to see a society that was becoming more and more Roman.

And one place where we can start to see the Roman influences is in the names of certain cities. After the Roman army arrived, it established camps which were basically forts or military stations, and they did it throughout the region. These camps also recruited locals for enlistment in the Roman army. And some of these camps emerged as modern cities. The Latin word for ‘camp’ was *castra* – and many modern cities in Britain that begin or end in ‘caster’ or ‘chester’ come from this Roman word for camp. So we see it in city names like Chesterfield, Manchester, Dorchester, Winchester and Lancaster. It’s also found in city names like Gloucester and Worcester which are no longer pronounced like they’re spelled. Both words end in ‘c-e-s-t-e-r’ when spelled out, so we see the same Roman word for ‘camp’ in those names as well.

So from that word *castra* which meant camp or fort, the Romans developed the word *castellum* which meant a fortified village. And *castellum* passed from French into English as *castle* meaning a type of fortress. And it’s no coincidence that the word *castle* came into English from French. As we will eventually see, when the Norman French invaded England in 1066, they not only brought the French language with them, but they also constructed many large castles to subdue the native population.

Now some of these early Roman camps emerged into modern cities. But they were merely villages during the Roman period. And I want to talk about that word *village* because it actually provides a nice transition to the next topic I want to discuss – which is Roman law.

The word *village* comes from the Roman word *villa*. And shortly after the ancient city of Rome emerged as an actual city, some wealthy Romans decided they didn't like living in such a crowded place. So they built houses outside of Rome in the country. This type of estate was called a *villa* in Latin. And this same basic process happened in Britain after the Romans took over there as well. Villas began to pop up in Britain around and outside of the Roman towns.

Researchers have identified over 600 sites in Britain which were once occupied by a Roman-style villa. And like so much of the Roman influence in Britain, these villas were primarily located in the southern and eastern portions of the island. Some of them were very small and some were very grand consisting of hundreds and even thousands of acres. But most were somewhere in the middle. But they were all constructed in a style that was common throughout the Roman Empire at this point – including Italy and the Roman territory of Gaul.

Now this word *villa* has filtered down to modern English in its original form. But it had also created several new words. These country houses were often so large that they required caretakers and other help. And this eventually resulted in an entire community around the villa. And this was the origin of the term *village* to refer to a small settlement.

But what about the people who lived in these villages. Well the Romans called them *villani*. Early French adopted the term as *vilain*. And as the Romans began to occupy much of western Europe, we can start to see the emergence of the later-day feudal system with this arrangement. In later France, the term *vilain* came to refer to the peasants or common people who provided service to the lord who occupied the estate. These people were often viewed as crude, uncivilized and amoral. And English later borrowed the word as *villain*. So *villain* comes from the same Latin root as *village*. And much like the creation of the word *castle* from the original Latin word meaning 'camp,' we can see in the evolution of these words a changing economic and social system. Roman *campus* and *villages* gave us Medieval French *castles* and *villains*.

Again, the Medieval Feudal system emerged after the decline of the Roman empire. But certain aspects of that system did have its roots in Roman law and economics. Roman law distinguished between wealthy men and poor men. A poor man would get harsher punishment than a rich man for the same crime. And this wasn't just a consequence of having better representation in court like today. It was actually part of the law itself.

Despite this obvious unfairness given our modern sensibilities, many historians consider the formal Roman legal codes to be one of the greatest gifts to the modern world. Roman law actually began with something called the 'Laws of the Twelve Tables' which were adopted shortly after the last Etruscan king was expelled from Rome. And these laws were engraved on bronze tablets and displayed in the Roman Forum. And this was really the foundation of Roman law. You may remember from an earlier episode that the Roman word *forum* gave us the modern English word *forensic* referring to the law or the courts.

Over time, these laws were expanded – first during the Roman Republic – and then later under the Empire. And as the Roman Empire expanded and acquired new territories and new peoples, they encountered new systems of law and justice. The Romans adopted elements of these non-Roman laws into a universal Roman legal code which could be implemented throughout the vast and varied Empire.

The Romans had also adopted from the Greeks the concept of ‘natural law’ or ‘universal law.’ This was the notion that there are certain forms of behavior which we all share as humans and which are not tied to a specific society or culture. So murder, rape, theft and incest were considered unlawful based on universal concepts. Now modern anthropologists would probably quibble with this notion of a ‘universal law’ which we all share, but the Greeks and the Romans accepted it. And the Romans based their legal code around it.

The Roman legal code was codified by the 6th century by the emperor Justinian, and it still serves as the basis of many modern European legal systems.

Roman Law was highly developed and, not surprisingly, it is the source for many of our legal terms. The Latin verb *stāre* meant ‘to stand,’ and it is the root of the words *stance*, *staunch*, *status*, *stationary*, and *constant*. This verb was combined with *tres* or *tria* meaning ‘three’ and produced a reconstructed Latin word **tristis*. And this is the basis of legal words like *testimony* and *testament* in Modern English. So why would *three* be incorporated into the verb *stand* to produce these words – *testimony* and *testament*? Well, it’s because it reflects an aspect of ‘threeness’ that was common in Roman law. The *testimony* of a witness is the perspective of a ‘third party.’ In certain cases under Roman law, three people has to witness an action before a person could be found guilty of the accusation. A Last Will and *Testament* reflects the fact that traditionally it had to be signed by the person making the Will as well as two witnesses. So that makes three.

The Latin term *obligatio* meant the actual physical binding of a person to something. Under Roman law, a defaulting debtor was physically bound and delivered to his creditor as a prisoner. After the debtor’s prison was abandoned, the term came to represent just the legal duty owed by a debtor to a creditor. This is the context in which the term *obligation* arose.

A common source of disputes for Roman authorities was use of small streams and rivers by property owners and traders. Sometimes multiple individuals would claim competing rights to use the same steam or some portion of it. In Latin, a stream was called a *rivus* – and those who competed for the use of the stream were called *rivales*. And this is the same word which comes into English as *rivals* meaning ‘competitors.’ And Roman legal records confirm many court cases between *rivales* over the use of rivers and streams. So the Modern English words *rivals* and *rivalry* come from this source.

Words like *subpoena* and *libel* also came from Latin. In fact, legal systems throughout the English-speaking world are dominated by Latin terms. But many of these legal terms came into English after 1066 with the Norman French who had to impose law and order on those defeated Anglo-Saxons. So I will cover some of those legal terms later. But modern legal traditions also borrow words directly from Latin without any modification. And many of these terms are now part of the common English language. This includes terms like *bona fide*, *de facto*, *in absentia*, *in toto*, *per annum*, *per*

capita, per se, prima facie, quid pro quo, status quo, verbatim and *vice versa*. All of these terms have passed into Modern English in basically their original Latin form.

Now I mentioned that Roman law was connected to the Roman Forum which was the center of Roman politics and law. And now, in Britain, the Romans transferred the idea of the Roman Forum to the new towns built by the Romans. Roman style forums were established in towns like Exeter, Lincoln, and St. Albans. And courts of justice were also established there. These courts consulted the written Roman legal codes and applied Roman law. So the Celtic tradition of trial by druids in the forest was gradually being replaced by these formal legal proceedings. And this is just one example of the transition of Britain from an ancient Celtic tribal society to a more rigid, formal and structured Roman society.

Now I mentioned that the Romans constructed their own mini versions of the Roman Forum in the occupied towns in Britain. But keep in mind that the Roman Forum was not just a place for legal and political activities. It was also the commercial center of Rome. In fact, the Forum in Rome began as a marketplace. Over time, as people congregated there, it became the location for aspiring politicians to give political speeches. And from there, the legal and political aspects of the Forum grew. But it always remained a commercial center.

And these new British forums also served as Roman-style marketplaces. And after the Roman occupation, trade between the native Britons and the Roman Empire grew exponentially. And as a result, wealth began to flow into the Romanized areas of Britain as British exports to the Empire grew.

The new-found wealth also had its own Romanizing effects. Roman-style public baths became common. And Roman luxury goods were consumed. And by the way, all those new straight roads which the Romans built to facilitate the movement of troops, well they also facilitated the movement of goods. As we know from modern economics, you have to have an infrastructure to support economic growth. And since military conquest and economic growth was intertwined in the Roman mind, its not surprising that the Romans figured out how to transform military infrastructure into economic infrastructure. The same roads that allowed the Romans to easily move troops from one town to the next – well they also allowed traders to move goods between those towns. That meant goods produced in one town could easily be sold in another town. That meant that even the domestic market for local goods was bigger. And with more potential buyers, you can sell more produce for more money. And when exports to the rest of the Roman Empire were taken into account, you can see how quickly the economy began to grow in some of these regions. And of course, the Romans got to tax all that new wealth. So the economic benefits were mutual.

It's also part of the reason why the Roman Empire was so wealthy as it was growing and expanding, but it's wealth began to decline when the Empire ran out of new territories to conquer. Empires are expensive, and massive empires are really expensive. So if you're not growing the empire, it starts to stagnate and collapse under its own weight. And this was one of many factors that contributed to the ultimate decline of the Roman Empire. But for now, with the conquest of Britain, it was pretty much at its peak of power and territory.

And as I said, Britain was enjoying the mutual economic benefits of being a newly acquired Roman territory. And all of this wealth – and the luxury goods it could buy – helped to ensure the ongoing cooperation of the native Britons. This was how Romanization worked. And it worked pretty well, at least in the southeastern portions of Britain where the Roman presence was strongest. And for these same reasons, Latin probably had its strongest impact in this same region.

Now speaking of the growing wealth in Britain after the Roman conquest, I noted earlier that Roman coins were actually being used throughout southern Britain even before the Roman occupation there. And of course, after the occupation, Roman currency poured into Britain. And this too was another catalyst for economic growth. A common, stable currency makes it much easier to buy and sell goods than the old-fashioned barter or trade system. And if that currency happens to be an international currency, well that's even better. So now, the Romanized Britons were operating on the same monetary system – with the same currency – as the rest of the Roman Empire.

Again, this makes trade much more efficient. That's why the United States adopted a common currency soon after it gained its independence. And that's why we have a Euro today. So let's talk about Roman currency, and the effect Latin has had on modern English words related to money and currency.

Roman coins can be traced back to the first Roman mint which was established around 289 BC. Like everything else in ancient Rome, it had a Goddess and she was named Juno. Juno was actually one of the most important Roman deities. She was the wife and sister of Jupiter. And Jupiter's daughter was Minerva. And a temple was constructed in honor of all three of these deities on the Capitoline Hill in the 4th century BC. This temple was divided into separate sections for each of the three deities.

Now with regard to Juno, she was the queen of the gods and goddesses. And as I mentioned in the last episode, her name is the basis of the name of the month of June. She was also considered a goddess of warning. The Romans believed that Juno warned them in times of imminent danger. Now the Latin verb meaning 'to warn' was *monere*. And since Juno was the Goddess of warning, she was sometimes called 'Juno Moneta' which came from that Latin word meaning 'to warn.'

Now I mentioned that the first Roman mint was established around 289 BC. And as it turns out, this mint was constructed in a building which adjoined Juno's temple, which was known as the temple of Juno Moneta. And since Roman money was coined there, many of the coins minted there featured Juno on one side of the coin. Eventually, the term *moneta* became associated with both the mint itself and the coins that were produced there. And that is how the term *moneta* came to be associated with Roman coins and money. It is the ultimate root of the English word *money*, as well as the word *mint*. Both come from the name Juno Moneta.

The modern British pound sterling originated well after the Romans during the Anglo-Saxon period in Britain. The word *pound* comes from the Old English word *pund* which was used as a weight measurement in the same sense that we use the word *pound* today as weight measurement. But the Anglo-Saxons called a 'pound of Silver' simply a *pound*. So the use of the word as currency comes

from its original use as a weight measurement. And it literally meant a ‘pound of silver,’ or more particularly, it meant a silver coin weighing a pound.

But the Anglo-Saxons didn’t invent the idea of minting silver coins weighing one pound. That idea actually came from Charlemagne in the Frankish kingdom which had emerged from Roman Gaul. The Romans had established the weight measurement which we know today as the pound. And in fact, the Romans called it a *libra*, and that’s why when we abbreviate a pound of weight in modern English, we still use the initials ‘lb’ which reflects the Latin origin of the weight measurement.

By the time of Charlemagne, this word had evolved into early French as *livre*. And that is what Charlemagne called this early French one pound silver coin. Since it weighed a livre, he called it a *livre*.

The Anglo-Saxons picked up on this idea. They not only adopted the idea of a silver coin weighing a pound, but they also copied the idea of naming the coin after how much it weighed. But again, Old English had its own native term for a Roman libra. It was the English *pund*. So the coin was called a *pund* and eventually passed into modern English as a *pound*.

By the way, the terms *pence* and *penny* each derive from a separate Old English word which was *pening*. But the American term *cent* for a penny developed after the establishment of the US currency after the American Revolutionary War. Now as I have mentioned in earlier episodes, *cent* ultimately comes from the Latin word *centum* meaning ‘hundred.’ The word was shortened in French, and the ‘k’ sound became an ‘s’ sound thereby giving us the word *cent*, as in *percent* meaning ‘per 100.’ And it was in this sense that the word *cent* was used to refer to 1/100 of a dollar.

The word *dime* comes from Latin word *decima* which meant ‘tenth’ and has the same root for 10 (*deca*) that is found in words like *decade* and *decathlon*. Of course, a dime is 1/10 of a dollar. And the ‘k’ sound in the middle of the word *decima* eventually fell away and the word went from *decima* to *dime*.

A *quarter* in Modern English means 1/4 of something. And it comes to us from Latin where it meant the same thing. And that is why was call the US coin which represents 1/4 of a dollar a *quarter*.

A *nickel* is actually named for the metal nickel which comprises about 1/4 of the nickel’s weight. *Nickel* itself is a Germanic word originally used by miners to refer to a demonic spirit believed to live in mines.

But what about the *dollar*? Well, *dollar* actually comes from the name of a coin that was minted in the area we know today as Germany in the 1500s. Around the year 1516, a silver mine was discovered in a small town in Bohemia called Joachimstal. Within a couple of years, one-ounce silver coins were being minted there. The coin was called the ‘Joachimstaler.’ Over time, the name was shortened to ‘taler.’ The Dutch and Low German speakers pronounced it ‘daller.’ By the 1700s, the coin was being used internationally. And English colonists in America used the term in reference to both the original German ‘daller’, as well as other coins that were designed to resemble it like the Spanish peso. After the Revolutionary War in the United States, Thomas Jefferson recommended

that the *dollar* be used as the standard name of the currency of the new county. This name was partly a demonstration of independence by the early American founders. They didn't want to use the term *pound* for the new currency since that term was associated with Britain. Since the Spanish peso was also in common use in America at the time – and since the peso was sometimes called a *dollar* in the US since it resembled the German 'daller' coin – that seemed like a good name for the new US currency. So the new currency became the *dollar*.

But what about a *dollar bill*. Well, the *bill* part takes us back to the Romans.

Roman children often wore a round, bubble-like locket called a *bulla*. And in the Middle Ages, it became common to seal official documents with a round bubble-like seal. This type of sealed official document came to be called a *bulla* as well. The term eventually became *billa*, and it meant an account or an invoice during the Middle Ages. And a 'bill of exchange' eventually was shorted to simply *bill* to mean a piece of currency – as in 'dollar bill.' It is also the root of the use of the term *bill* to mean a piece of legislation.

Now again, let's go back to Rome, to the year 309 AD. So this would have been a couple of centuries after the Empire had expanded into Britain. In that year, the Roman Emperor Constantine minted a coin called a *solidus*. This is the root of the English word *solid*. But more significantly, it is the root of the word *soldier*. Now *soldier* originally meant 'mercenary' in Old French. And payment to someone was called *soulde* in Old French from the name of the early Roman coin – the *solidus*. And that made a person who received payment to fight in a war a *souldier*. The word came into English after the Norman Invasion as *soldier*.

And speaking of paying Roman soldiers, I mentioned in an earlier episode that Roman soldiers were paid a salt allowance which was called a *salarium* from the word *sal* meaning 'salt.' And this eventually gave use the word *salary*. It's also the basis of the phrase 'worth one's salt.'

By the way, the term *bank* actually comes to us from Medieval Italian where modern banking first emerged. The moneylenders operated from *bancas* which meant 'benches.' When an Italian moneylender ran out of money, his *banca* was disbanded and he became a *bancarotto* – which is the origin of the term *bankrupt*.

And speaking of bankruptcy, it reflects the fact that some people had lots of money and some people had very little – if any at all. And I noted earlier that these distinctions were important in Rome because the Roman legal code actually made distinctions between wealthy men and poor men.

And I also noted that these distinctions can be seen in the evolution of the word *villain* from the original Latin word *villa* for a home or estate in the country. A common person or peasant was a *villein* which eventually produced the English word *villain* – meaning someone not to be trusted. But again, this evolution of the word *villa* into *villain* happened after the Roman period.

As for the Romans themselves, they actually had lots of different terms for people, and some of those terms were based around the class or social status of certain people.

The term *populus* was a very general term which referred to human beings in general. And from that word, we get words like *people*, and *population* (which refers to the people who inhabit a certain area), and *popular* (which is something that reflects the wishes of the people).

Now the Latin word for father which I've mentioned quite a few times in this podcast series was *pater*. And this word was used as the basis of a Latin word describing wealthy, prominent or powerful Romans – basically Roman nobles and aristocrats. This word was *patricius* which ultimately produced the word *patrician* in Modern English.

Now in contrast to the patricians, Rome also obviously had many commoners. The Romans also used the word *plebe* to refer to a commoner. We sometimes see that word in English words like *plebeian* or *plebiscite*. But the key here is to note that the Romans were making these general class distinctions very early on.

The Romans also used the term *vulgar* to refer to lower-class commoners. We see that word in the term *Vulgar Latin* to refer to the Latin dialects of the common people in various regions of the Roman Empire. Originally, it just referred to things associated with commoners. But it has since taken on a more negative connotation in modern times, and it is reflected in Modern English words like *vulgar* and *vulgarity*.

Another Latin word sometimes used for common people or peasants was the adjective *paganus*. This eventually came to mean people who didn't serve in the military. So it came to mean civilians. During the spread of the early Church, the early Christians considered themselves 'soldiers' of Christ. So that term *paganus* came to describe those people who were not Christians, and it's the basis of the later English term *pagan*.

There's an old saying that 'misery loves company.' And that was probably true for the Romans as well. The Romans combined the words *cum* (meaning 'with') and *panis* (meaning 'bread') to produce the word *companionem* meaning the person with whom you shared bread or food. This became the word *companion* in English. And it is also the root of the word *company* which initially meant a close relationship as in, "We enjoy each other's company." But it later came to mean a close business relationship as in, "I'm tired of working for this company."

Now, I've mentioned in earlier episodes that the Romans also had a term for crude or uncivilized foreigners which has passed into Modern English. That term was *barbarian*, and it was ultimately borrowed from Greek. The Latin term *barbarus* was an adjective used to describe crude and savage foreigners. Medieval Latin created the term *bravus* meaning 'cutthroat or villain.' And some linguists think this word *bravus* came from that original word *barbarus*, but this etymology is disputed. We do know that this word *bravus* created the word *brave* meaning a wild savage as in an Indian 'brave' as used by European settlers in reference to Native Americans. It is also the origin of the word *bravo* to describe a brave or bold performance.

And speaking of foreigners, there is another English word which has an interesting etymology related to the Latin word for foreigners. In an earlier episode of the podcast, I mentioned that the Latin term *ager* meant 'field' in Latin. It shares the same Indo-European root with the Greek word *agros* which

gives us Modern English words like *agriculture*. And this same root provided the English word *acre* from Old English. Well, the Romans combined the Latin prefix *per* meaning ‘through’ with that term *ager* meaning ‘field’ to create the term *peregrinus* which literally meant ‘through the field.’ And this term was used to describe a visitor who came from another place, and therefore had to cross the field to arrive from elsewhere. This term *peregrinus* evolved into the word *pelegrin* which meant ‘foreigner.’ And this term eventually evolved into the modern English word *pilgrim*, but it was initially used to refer to Christians who traveled to sacred sites in foreign lands. And it also resulted in the term *pilgrimage*.

And lastly in my look at Roman words for people, the Romans called a young boy a *pupus* and a young girl a *pupa*. Now *pupa* also meant ‘doll’ in Latin, so apparently they equated little girls and dolls. Since those who began their learning in school were young boys and young girls, the terms became the source of the word *pupil* in English meaning a ‘student.’

The Romans also noticed that when you look into the very center of a person’s eye, you can see a very small image of yourself reflected in the eyeball. They therefore used the word *pupula* (which literally meant ‘little doll’) to name that part of the eye, which also became *pupil* in English. The same word *pupula* meaning ‘little doll’ is the source of the English word *puppet*. And even the English word *puppy* meaning ‘little dog’ also comes from the same word *pupula*. So *pupil* meaning ‘student,’ and *pupil* meaning ‘part of the eye,’ and *puppet* and *puppy* are all derived from the same Latin root words.

So let’s turn our attention back to Roman Britain. As I have noted, despite problems in the north and the west, the Romans were able to establish a strong foothold in the southern and eastern portions of Britain. And in this region, Romanization was at its strongest. Even though Latin had to compete with the native Celtic languages, it had its strongest presence in this southeastern region. The Latin names for the months, which I mentioned in the last episode, they began to be used in Britain during this Roman period. The Germanic names for the days of the week would arrive later with the Anglo-Saxons.

The Romans also had a version of ‘Bless You’ in response to a sneeze, and some historians believe that the modern ‘Bless You’ came into Britain with the Romans during this period. Wedding customs like a wedding cake, a wedding ring, a bridesmaid, and a bride’s veil, these were all Roman wedding traditions which came into Britain with the Romans. Also, the tradition of putting flowers on a grave came to Britain with the Romans. And if you have ever heard someone say that their ears are burning because someone is talking about them, well that too is a saying and belief that came to Britain within the Romans.

So at this point in our story, we now have the Roman Empire at its peak. Its influence was spread throughout the Mediterranean and western Europe. But Rome’s days were numbered. To the east, the Roman army had pretty much given up on trying to conquer the vast territory occupied by the Germanic-speaking tribes. The Rhine and the Danube had become the de facto border between the Romans and the early Germans. And since Rome could no longer expand, economic decay began to set in. Internal corruption and struggles for power made the problems even worse. And all of this was exacerbated by invading Germanic tribes who sought to take advantage of the weakening

Empire. And one group of those tribes were the Anglo-Saxons who would eventually find their to that Romanized island of Britain in the North Atlantic.

So next time, I'm going to begin looking at the Germanic tribes who were ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons.

So until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.

EPISODE 20: THE EARLY GERMANIC TRIBES

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – A Podcast About the History of English Language. This is Episode 20: The Early Germanic Tribes.

In this episode, I'm going to look at the emergence of the first Germanic tribes in northern Europe. So we'll be looking at the peoples and the languages which gave birth to English. That means that from this point forward in the podcast, we'll be establishing a continuum – from the original Germanic language spoken by those northern European tribes – to the Germanic dialects spoken by the Anglo-Saxons – to Middle English and then ultimately Modern English. So this is really the prelude to Old English. And that means that it's the last chapter in our look at the development of pre-English.

Of course, we'll continue to look at outside influences like Latin and French and Old Norse, but from this point on, we'll be looking at those languages as outside influences on this continuum from the original Germanic language to Modern English.

But before I begin, let me remind you that the website for this podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And my email address is kevin@historyofenglishpodcast.com. And also, I wanted to remind you that I do have a twitter account which is [@englishhistpod](https://twitter.com/englishhistpod). And also, I am still working on that alphabet series. I have everything recorded. I just need to edit it now and figure out how I'm going to make it available. So I'll keep you updated on that, and hopefully that will be available very shortly.

Now, in this episode, I want to examine where the Germanic tribes came from and how they came to occupy central Europe east of the Rhine.

Back in Episode 11, I looked at the emergence of the Usatovo culture near the Black Sea which many linguists believe to be the link between the original Indo-Europeans and the Germanic tribes. So let me begin by reviewing the key points from that episode.

Sometime around 3500 BC, the Usatovo culture emerged in the Northwestern corner of the Black Sea around the mouth of the Dniester River. This appears to have been a hybrid culture which combined the cultures of the Indo-European steppe herders to the immediate north with the people of the fixed agricultural settlements around the Balkans to the south. It is generally believed that the people who inhabited this region spoke an Indo-European dialect. And a few centuries later, after this culture emerged, some of the people who inhabited this region began to migrate northwestward along the Dniester River. That took them along the northern side of the Carpathian Mountains into northern Europe. And these Usatovo people encountered other peoples in northern Europe which are known as the Corded Ware people based upon a type of pottery they produced which had cord-like designs around the outside. And I also noted back in that episode that the early Germanic languages were on the ground and being spoken in and around Scandinavia by around 500 BC. But that obvious leaves a pretty big gap in both time and knowledge between the first migration of Usatovo people around 3300 BC and the emergence of Germanic-speaking tribes around 500 BC.

So what about that gap? What do we know about the links between the original Indo-Europeans and the first Germanic tribes? Well, the answer is we don't know very much with any certainty. But there are few reasonable conclusions that we can draw from this period.

First, since the original Germanic language was an Indo-European language, we know that the original Germanic tribes in Scandinavia were connected to the Indo-Europeans of the Black Sea region – at least linguistically. This is the same assumption we can make about the first Greeks, the first Latin-speaking tribes, and the first Celts. They all spoke Indo-European languages, so there has to be some type of connection to the Indo-Europeans. And the connection appears to be those corded ware people of northern Europe, at least in the case of the Germanic tribes.

Now there is archaeological evidence from northern Europe during this period between the Usatovo Culture and the emergence of the Germanic tribes, but there are no inscriptions, so we don't know much about the languages in this region during this period. So instead of linguistic evidence like inscriptions, scholars have to look for cultural links between these peoples.

So let's take a closer look at the Corded Ware people.

The first thing I should note about the Corded Ware people is that they occupied a very large portion of northern and central Europe during the later period of the original Indo-Europeans. To put some actual dates on this culture, they appear to have spread across northern Europe from around 3200 BC to around 2300 BC. And as you may recall from earlier episodes, the period of the original Indo-Europeans is estimated to be between 4500 BC and 2500 BC. So during the later half of the Indo-European era, the Corded Ware culture was in place in Northern Europe.

And just to emphasize the point, that means the Corded Ware people were in place before the emergence of the original Germanic language, and before the original Celtic, Baltic and Slavic languages. So these people lived in northern Europe around the same time the original Indo-Europeans were starting to expand outward from the Black Sea region. And to get a better idea of the region where these people lived, check out the map which Louis Henwood was kind enough to prepare for Episode 11. Just go to historyofenglishpodcast.com and click the link for Episode 11.

So these people lived in northern Europe at a time when the Indo-Europeans were starting to expand into that region. But we don't really know anything about the language of the Corded Ware people. But we do know that the culture began to take on many characteristics associated with the Indo-Europeans to the south. And that is a major signal that Indo-Europeans were expanding into this region and affecting the culture of the region.

Archaeologists have determined that the Corded Ware people were mobile, and they were pastoral since relatively few fixed settlements have been found in the Corded Ware region. Their mobile nature is also suggested by the wide territory which they covered. There is also evidence that they had domesticated horses and were using ox-drawn wagons at this very early stage. And since horses were domesticated in the steppe region to the southeast during the Indo-European period, that is a strong sign that the Indo-Europeans were expanding into northern Europe and were bringing domesticated horses with them.

And since wheeled vehicles were also in common use on the steppes by this point, the presence of ox-drawn wagons in northern Europe is another sign of Indo-European expansion into this region to the north. Also, bronze objects began to appear in the Corded Ware region during this period. And bronze technology and bronze objects can be traced from the Balkans and Carpathian basin around the Black Sea, through the steppe region and into this area of northern Europe. So this is further evidence of the spread of Indo-European peoples and culture into this region.

So all of this suggests that this Corded Ware culture was comprised of either Indo-European people who had migrated into northern Europe, or it was a blended culture consisting of Indo-European people who had become assimilated with native people in this region. This second option is probably the most likely because there are some clear differences between this culture and the Indo-European culture. For example, the Indo-Europeans tended to use a particular type of burial called Kurgan burials, and those types of burials are not generally found in the Corded Ware region. So that suggests more of a blend of cultures.

As I said, there is no clear evidence of the language of the Corded Ware people, but we do know that Indo-European languages eventually emerged throughout this region a few centuries later. To the west, the Germanic languages emerged. To the south, the Celtic languages appeared. And to the east, the Baltic and Slavic languages came about. So again, this is a sign that the early Indo-European language spread into this Corded Ware region during this transitional period.

And it may very well be the case that the later Indo-European languages which emerged in this region were not the product of a single Indo-European tribe or dialect. It could be the case that there were waves of Indo-Europeans entering this region with each new wave bringing its own Indo-European dialect.

Historical linguists note that when two different languages meet in the same region, there is usually a period of bi-lingualism in which the two languages exist side by side. But sometimes, over a period of several generations, one of the languages loses its status and prominence. And new generations only learn to speak the more dominant language. And that is very likely what happened here. The Indo-European dialects may have emerged as the dominant languages because the chiefs who spoke those dialects had larger herds of cattle and sheep, and they may have had more horses than could have been raised by the native people of Northern Europe. And it is also possible that there was more linguistic variation during this time. In other words, local languages and dialects may have been common, but there might not have been a common language spoken throughout the entire region. And in that environment, a single dominant language like the Indo-European language could have emerged as a common lingua franca spoken throughout the entire region. So future generations would have tended to speak that language to the exclusion of the local dialects and languages. Again, these are some of the theories to explain how Indo-European dialects replaced the native languages in these regions. While the specific process is still up for debate, there is no doubt what the ultimate result was. During the first millennium BC, the original or 'proto' versions of the modern languages of northern Europe began to emerge. And this included the Germanic languages, the Celtic languages and the Balto-Slavic languages.

But this fact also produces a dilemma for historical linguists. Remember that the Germanic and Celtic languages are considered Centum languages, whereas the Balto-Slavic languages of eastern Europe are considered Satem languages. So did all of these languages evolve together as part of a common dialect which later fractured into separate dialects? Or did all of these languages evolve separately from each other in different places at different times? Again, the answer depends on who you ask.

In the mid-1800s, some early linguists attempted to put together the first family tree of Indo-European languages. One of those linguists was August Schleicher. And Schleicher noticed similarities between the Germanic languages and the Baltic and Slavic languages. For example, all of those languages had similar case endings in certain situations. In his early Indo-European family tree, Schleicher created a basic 'Slavo-Germanic' branch in which the Germanic languages of northern Europe and the Baltic and Slavic languages of eastern Europe were all part of the same language family. He then indicated a later separation of the Germanic languages from the Baltic and Slavic languages. So in essence, he thought the Germanic languages and the Balto-Slavic languages had emerged from a common dialect spoken in Northern Europe.

But there was an obvious problem with Schleicher's model. By the point, linguists had already started to make that distinction between the Centum and Satem languages. Supposedly, this distinction represented a very early split in the Indo-European languages between a western Centum group and an eastern Satem group. And the Germanic languages were part of the western Centum group and the Balto-Slavic languages were part of the eastern Satem group. So this suggested that the Balto-Slavic languages developed separately from the Germanic languages. And it also suggests that the similarities between the two language groups were the result of long-term borrowing. And all of these languages were spoken in close proximity, so that would explain some of the similarities.

We should also keep in mind the wave theory I mentioned earlier. And that might also account for some of the fundamental similarities and differences between those languages. There might have been an initial Indo-European dialect brought by early settlers. And in certain places, there may have been later settlers who brought a related, but different, Indo-European dialect. So these theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

This is still a subject of ongoing debate among some modern linguists. But at the end of the day, the proper classification of the Germanic languages isn't really all that important to our story of the history of English. While the linguistic evidence is unclear and somewhat contradictory, we can say that an early 'proto' Germanic dialect had emerged in Scandinavia and northern Germany early in the first millennium BC.

So let's turn our attention to those early Germanic speakers.

During this very early period, the Germanic tribes were confined to a relatively small portion of northern Europe – from Scandinavia down into modern-day Denmark. Now even though there are no inscriptions or writings from this period to confirm that the people who lived there were early Germanic tribes, there are other clues which lead to this conclusion. For example, this is the only area in the region where there are no pre-Germanic place names. And that suggests that Germanic-

speaking people were in this region very early on. But again, it's difficult to put any actual dates on the arrival of these tribes into this region.

Regardless of the date of their arrival, it does appear that early Germanic dialects were being spoken in this region by about 1000 BC – and perhaps earlier than that.

South of this region were the Celtic tribes. And remember that early on the Celts dominated much of central Europe. But some time later around 1000 BC, some of the Germanic tribes began to move southwestward into Celtic territory. And within a few centuries, the dividing line between Celts and the Germans had moved all the way westward to the Rhine. And these Germanic tribes continued their migration and displacement of the Celts further south – down into modern Germany. And these migrating tribes soon became distinct from the tribes which remained up in Scandinavia. And we now have an early split between the North Germanic tribes and the West Germanic tribes. The northern tribes would eventually produce a dialect called Old Norse which was the language of the Vikings, and it ultimately produced the modern Scandinavian languages like Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and Icelandic. And those western Germanic tribes ultimately produced the western Germanic dialects – including English, German and Dutch.

Meanwhile, around this same time, a separate eastward expansion of Germanic tribes out of Scandinavia occurred, and that occurred between around 600 BC and 300 BC. This movement was from Scandinavia to the opposite Baltic coasts down into the area of modern-day Poland. And this movement then continued southward and eastward from there. By around 300 BC, they were located in and around the Carpathian Mountains. The customs and dialects of these tribes were distinct from those of the western Germanic tribes. And these tribes are known as the East Germanic tribes. They eventually reached the Black Sea and the Danube. In fact, most of the tribes which overtook western Europe upon the collapse of the Roman Empire were these East Germanic tribes – not interestingly enough the neighboring West Germanic tribes.

These East Germanic invaders included the Goths, the Vandals, the Gepids, the Burgundians and the Lombards. Now these tribes and their dialects have long since disappeared. They were assimilated into other tribes and peoples over time, but their story is a very important part of the overall story of the Germanic tribes. So we will look at them in more detail in an upcoming episode.

So that gives you a very general overview of the emergence and division of the early Germanic tribes. But it also brings us to the point in our story where we actually start to have independent evidence of these tribes and their languages. Up to this point, we have to rely upon archaeological evidence of the peoples who lived in this region. But now, around 300 BC, we get the first written accounts from people who encountered these Germanic tribes. And soon thereafter, we get the first archaeological evidence of the language of these tribes. And this evidence comes in the form of some early inscriptions. So our knowledge of the Germanic tribes starts to grow significantly after about 300 BC. So let's look at some of that evidence.

The first documented encounter with these tribes can be attributed to the Greek traveler Pytheas. The last time I mentioned Pytheas was the episode on the Celts. And you might recall that he also gave

us our first glimpse of the Celts in Britain. He coined the term the ‘Pretanic Islands’ which eventually became *Pretania* and then *Britannia*. And of course later *Britain*.

Well, after he left the British Isles on his way back to Greece – around 325 BC – he traveled across the North Sea into the region of modern-day Denmark and northern Germany. And he mentioned two tribes in this region by name. He mentioned the Teutones in modern-day Denmark and the Gutones in northern Germany.

Now, I mentioned the Teutones back in that episode about the Celts. You might recall that the Teutones and the Cimbri were the two tribes that moved out of northern Europe down to the region around Hungary and then moved westward and threatened the Roman Empire. And the Romans eventually defeated them, but it was part of the overall threat to the Romans which led Caesar to invade Gaul in the 1st century BC. And you might remember that there is some uncertainty as to whether the Cimbri were a Germanic tribe or a Celtic tribe. And there is even some argument about the Teutones as well since their name comes from a Celtic word meaning ‘people.’ But most modern historians consider them to be a Germanic tribe. So thanks to Pytheas, we know that they were located around Denmark about 325 BC. And you may also remember that the name of the Teutone tribe gives us the modern word *Teutonic* to refer to things associated with Germany.

So that’s the Teutones, but what about that other tribe which Pytheas mentioned – the Gutones? Well, some scholars believe that the Gutones may have been the same tribe which we would later know as the Goths. And if that is true, that means the Goths were still located in northern Europe around 325 BC, before beginning their movement into southeastern Europe. And the time frame actually works, but there is no way to know for sure if Pytheas was referring to the early Goths. In fact, the reports of Pytheas are so sparse and limited, that they only give us a brief glimpse of these Germanic tribes and the region where they lived around 325 BC.

Now as I mentioned, the Romans encountered the Teutones and the Cimbri around 109 BC. That was a couple of centuries after Pytheas and his reports from the region. And that set in place a series of events which ultimately led to the Roman invasion of Gaul all the way to Rhine – and even beyond that on several occasions. So after that point – around the 1st century BC – we get more and more first-hand accounts of the Germanic tribes from the perspective of the Romans. But during the 300 year period between Pytheas and Caesar, our knowledge is limited to the archaeological evidence. Remember, the Celtic tribes and the Germanic tribes were both illiterate. So they didn’t keep their own recorded histories.

So based on the evidence we do have, it appears that the Germanic tribes in Scandinavia and northern Germany continued their migrations southwest and southeast during this period. We know the Teutones migrated from Denmark down into Hungary and then westward into Gaul. And if the Gutones were in fact the early Goths, we know that they moved from this region southeastward to the area around the Black Sea. And we know from the accounts of the Romans during this period that they were getting more and more concerned about these tribal movements to the north. There were more and more Celtic tribes knocking at the door of the Romans during this period, presumably because the Celtic tribes being pushed southward by the expanding Germans further north. So let’s take a closer look at the migrations during this period.

As I noted, by this point, the Germanic people had started to move southwestward towards Gaul where they had begun to settle down, and they had also begun to merge with native Celtic people. So in some of these regions Celtic tribes and Germanic tribes were already starting to become intermingled within the same general area by this point. And this is part of the problem we have in trying to classify early tribes like the Teutones and the Cimbri. They have Celtic names, but they originated in areas that were later associated with the Germanic tribes. So historians still debate whether some of these tribes spoke Celtic languages or Germanic languages.

As the Germanic tribes encountered the Celts to the south, we can also see the split between the western and eastern tribes. The west Germans eventually tended to settle down once they were in place. But the east Germans continued to be migratory. As I noted earlier, the earliest Germanic tribes were nomadic herders and shepherds in keeping with their Indo-European roots. And they continued to have very limited grain agriculture during this period between Pytheas and Caesar. And Europe was heavily wooded which tended to limit agricultural development. So expanding Germanic tribes tended to settle in areas that were open and unforested. In those areas, the Germans could live off of their flocks and herds. But as the population began to grow, the herds were not capable of sustaining the population. So given this dilemma, they had three options:

- (1) First, they could clear more land for larger herds,
- (2) Second, they could switch over to an agricultural economy and grow crops, or
- (3) Third, they could migrate elsewhere to an area that was not as congested.

Well, the nature of the Germanic tribes was to migrate, so they typically took the last option and moved on elsewhere. The first two options were contrary to their culture and lifestyle. So as they continued their migrations and expansion southward, the Germanic tribes continued to travel into Celtic regions. And the major point here is that this appears to be more of a migration than an invasion. Central and northern Europe was still very sparsely populated compared to today. There were no nation-states or standing armies. So generally speaking, these were merely nomadic pastoral people looking for new pastures. And this was the situation as we find it around the first century BC with Germanic tribes moving down into central Europe into Celtic territory. In fact, by this point, the Germanic tribes had reached all the way down into southern Germany. And that meant that some of the Celtic tribes were displaced in the process and were being forced southward as well.

So now we can start to see how all of these pieces fit together.

In the south along the Mediterranean we have the Romans. In the north were the Germanic tribes. And in most of central Europe were the Celts. And I mentioned in earlier episodes that the Celts were caught between a rock and a hard place. And the ultimate trigger here was the expansion of Germanic tribes southward. That had caused a domino effect which pushed the Celtic tribes further southward. And that caused pressures along the Roman border. And in response to those pressures and the general Roman fear of the Celtic tribes to the north, Julius Caesar invaded the Celts in Gaul in the first century BC. And when all was said and done, the Celts in Europe were consumed by these two expanding forces which left the Romans and the Germanic tribes as the two primary

players in western Europe, with the Rhine and the Danube as the de facto border between the two regions.

When Caesar invaded and conquered Gaul in the first century BC, the territory of Gaul extended all the way to the Rhine in the east. And in case you're not familiar with European topography, the Rhine flows from central Europe northward to the North Sea and the Danube flows from the same general region of central Europe eastward to the Black Sea. So the region west and south of these two rivers essentially became Roman territory. And as the Germanic tribes expanded southward, eventually consuming the Celts, the region north and east of these two rivers became the Germanic territory.

So this is a good point to stop and take a snapshot of the situation as we find it in Europe. We basically have a southeast and northwest divide between the Romans and the Germanic tribes, but Celtic tribes had not completely disappeared yet. To the west of the Rhine in Gaul, they were still there, they were just under the control of the Romans now. And over time, Romanization ensured that the Celtic nature of these tribes began to disappear and were replaced by Roman elements. But in the east, Germanic and Celtic cultures continued to co-exist for a while.

There was a Celtic tribe in this region called the Germani. And the Romans began to call all of the people in this region east of Gaul – in other words east of the Rhine – the Germani. But over time, as the Germanic languages and culture began to replace the Celtic culture in that region, the term *Germani* became specially associated with these Germanic peoples. So this is the origin of the words *Germanic* and *German*. Again, as I noted in an earlier episode, *Germanic* – like *Teutonic* – has Celtic origins. But we associate those terms with the Germans today because German culture eventually supplanted Celtic culture in these regions which became known as *Germania*.

It's also at this point that we start to see the transition of the western Germanic tribes from migratory herders to grain farmers. The Celts east of the Rhine had already begun to shift to grain agriculture, and they had begun to establish fixed settlements and villages. But with the Roman conquest of Gaul, the Germanic tribes couldn't penetrate the Roman territory which was defended by the Roman legions. So that effectively prevented any further expansion by the Germans in a westward direction. And migration of these tribes to the east was limited because the east was already densely occupied by other Germanic tribes which were migrating southeastward. So since they couldn't really continue to migrate to new regions as required by a nomadic herding lifestyle, they had no choice but to adopt grain agriculture and start farming the land. And that's what happened around this time in the west.

The West Germans began to adopt a lifestyle which was closely related to the Celtic tribes which they encountered and, in some cases, which they conquered. In some of these areas, the remaining Celtic expertise in agriculture would have been valuable. And some historians think there was a level of cooperation between the Celts and the Germans in many of these areas. In fact, it's possible that there was a mixing of Germanic and Celtic tribes in some of these regions. And this may account for the inability of the Romans to distinguish some of these groups as Germanic or Celtic.

But keep in mind that the eastern Germanic tribes didn't face this dilemma. There was no hard barrier like the Roman army in eastern Europe north of the Danube. So the eastern tribes continued

to migrate eastward and eventually southward. And so we see cultural and lifestyle differences emerging between the eastern and western Germanic tribes very early on.

But let's look back to the Rhine region to the west. With the Romans firmly entrenched in Gaul, and with more Germanic tribes coming in from the north, the region east of the Rhine became more and more densely populated with Germanic tribes. So it became more and more Germanic. And that meant less and less Celtic. But since the Germanic tribes weren't able to cross into Roman territory west of the Rhine, Gaul didn't become diluted by German tribes. Over time the area west of the Rhine evolved into a Romano-Celtic culture and the area east of the Rhine became more and more Germanic. So the linguistic and cultural divide on each side of the river became sharper over time.

Now initially the Romans conquered Gaul, but that doesn't mean they were content to remain in Gaul. Remember this is the Roman Empire we're talking about. So it was inevitable that Rome was going to set its sights on the Germanic region east of the Rhine. Rome initially crossed the Rhine on several occasions, but it wasn't with the intent of permanent occupation or conquest. The Germanic area was a greater challenge than Gaul. Remember that the Celts had become settled farmers in and around villages and small towns. So once these towns were conquered, the Celts could be subdued. But in the Germanic region, the tribes were only beginning to adopt agriculture. Many of them were still nomadic herders when the Romans arrived. So if the Germanic tribes were defeated in battle, they would just shrink into the forests and engage in guerrilla warfare.

But by the 1st Century AD, the Romans thought they were finally in a position to conquer and dominate the Germanic regions to the east just as they had done in Gaul. The Romans had actually engaged some of the Germanic tribes in battle and they had scored some several significant victories against them east of the Rhine between the years 12 BC and 7 BC. So the Romans decided to make a claim to the entire territory east of the Rhine which they now called the province of 'Germania.' And in the year 4 AD, the Romans entered Germania with the intention of making it the next Roman province.

They initially had success against the Germanic tribes they encountered there. And it looked like Germania was destined to follow the same course as Gaul.

But a couple of years after that initial invasion, a highly-respected and feared Roman General named Varus was sent to consolidate Roman power in Germania. His trusted advisor was Arminius – a German who had been handed over to the Romans as a child by his Germanic chieftain father during that earlier Roman invasion of the territory. This was a customary practice at the time. Defeated chieftains would sometimes hand over their child as tribute to the Romans and to confirm Roman victory over the tribe. So the young child Arminius had been raised as essentially a hostage in Rome, and he had been given a military education. He subsequently rose in the ranks of the Roman army. But Arminius had secretly forged an alliance among competing Germanic tribes to oppose the Romans. And while the Roman General Varus was on his way from his summer camp to his winter camp near the Rhine, he received reports of a rebellion in the province. He took a detour through unfamiliar territory in the Teutoburg Forest region of Germany probably at the direction of Arminius. What he didn't know was that the Germanic troops were waiting for him in the trees and the brush.

And when Varus and the Roman troops came through, the Germanic troops ambushed the Romans.

The Germanic soldiers surrounded the three Roman legions commanded by Vargus, and they hemmed them in. And they then proceeded to slaughter the Romans with estimates of 15,000 to 20,000 Roman casualties including Varus himself who committed suicide. This is known as the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. And it was a complete and shocking defeat for the Romans.

The contemporary Roman sources at the time acknowledged the complete defeat of the Romans. And even though the Romans did make a few more limited excursions into the region in subsequent years, the Teutoburg defeat effectively ended Roman expansion into Europe east of the Rhine. And that effectively set the Rhine River as the de facto boundary between Rome and Germania going forward.

Though the Romans could not conquer Germania, they could certainly trade with them. The Empire was in constant need of raw materials from Germania like amber and furs, and manpower (usually in the form of slaves). And the Germans desired Roman luxury goods especially gold and silver items like jugs, buckets, ladles, cups, brooches, rings and other jewelry. They especially desired Roman coins, particularly those of small denominations which they began using in their own burgeoning free market economy. Trade was primarily conducted between the Romans and Germanic tribes living within a hundred miles or so of the Rhine and Danube border. And these Germanic border tribes tended to act as intermediaries to facilitate the trade of those same items deeper into Germanic territory. So this was the state of the Romano-German relationship through the middle of the second century AD.

And so it should not be surprising that we start to see Latin words associated with the Romans flowing into the early Germanic language at this point.

Some linguists estimate that about 175 words were borrowed directly from Latin by these early Germanic tribes in continental Europe. In other words, these words made their way into the Germanic languages while the Anglo-Saxons were still on the continent – before they migrated to the British Isles. So the presence of these words in Modern English can be traced back to the Germanic tribes while they were still trading with the Romans in Europe.

So let's look at some of those words. We see the Latin influence in words associated with trade between the Romans and the Germanic tribes – especially portable articles. So the following words passed from Latin into the original Germanic dialects – words like *chest*, *dish*, *cup*, *kettle*, *pillow*, *sack*, *sickle*, *chalk*, *pear*, *pepper*, *butter*, and *cheese*. Now the Germans already had words for some of these items in their languages like butter and cheese, but the modern words which we use today were originally borrowed from the Romans.

The word *wine* was also borrowed by the Germanic tribes during this period. The Germans had *beer* and *ale* and *mead*. Remember that *mead* goes all the way back to the original Indo-Europeans. Beer and ale were drinks developed in and around Germany. *Ale* is a Germanic word, and *beer* has a disputed etymology. It is unclear if the word *beer* came from the Germanic languages or from Latin. There are actually possible roots within both languages. But fermented fruit juices did not come

from Germany. That was a speciality of the Mediterranean. So the word *wine* definitely comes from the Latin word for ‘wine’ which was *vinum*.

A trader or a huckster was called a *caupo* in Latin. And it may have also been used to mean ‘wine seller’ early on. This word was borrowed into the Germanic languages and ended up as *ceap* in Old English meaning marketplace, wares or price. But you may remember that the original Anglo-Saxon ‘k’ sound assibilated or shifted to a ‘ch’ sound. So /ceap/ became /cheap/ in Old English. But it was originally a noun. When the Norman French invaded England in 1066, they brought a French phrase for a bargain which was ‘bon marche.’ This was translated into Middle English as a ‘good cheap.’ And it appears that this phrase was shortened during early Modern English into the adjective *cheap* meaning inexpensive or low quality. So the word *cheap* can be traced back to this Germanic borrowing from the Romans.

The word *anchor* also came into the Germanic languages from Latin during this period. The Romans were far more adept at ship building than the central European Germans. So the Germans were apparently impressed by this Roman technology and *anchor* passed into the Germanic languages at that time.

In addition to words associated with trade, we start to see the introduction of words suggesting certain civilizing influences of the Romans.

The Romans introduced paved roads to the Germans. And the Latin word for ‘paved road’ was *strata*. And that word passed into the Germanic languages during this period and then eventually passed into English as *street*.

And speaking of *street*, the word *toll* can also be traced back to a borrowing by the original Germanic tribes from the Romans.

And in order to build roads and, for that matter, to build many of the large structures associated with the Romans, you needed to have very precise measurements of distance and weight. So this is where many of the Roman weight measurements entered the Germanic languages.

The Latin word for ‘thousand’ – *mille* – produced the measurement we know today as a *mile*. I discussed this measurement back in the episode on the early Romans. Well, the word now passed into the Germanic languages and then eventually into English as *mile*.

Now the Romans had a *mille* which was a precise measurement of a 1,000. But apparently the original Indo-European language didn’t have a word for ‘one thousand.’ Nor did the original Germanic languages. But the early Germanic languages had developed a word that was pronounced something like ‘thusundi’ which meant several hundred or a great many of something. And the Germanic tribes used this Germanic word to translate the Latin word *mille*. So that is how the word passed into English as *thousand*, and it now came to mean a specific measurement of 1,000. So even though the word *thousand* is a native Germanic word, its specific meaning today comes from its association with Latin.

And in the last episode I mentioned that the British ‘pound sterling’ came from the Old English word *pund* which meant a pound of weight as used by the Romans. Well, that Old English word *pund* – meaning pound – goes back to the Germanic tribes who borrowed the word from the Romans. But you may say – hey wait a minute – I thought the Latin word for pound was *libra*, which is why we still use ‘lb’ to abbreviate a pound. Well, that’s true. But the Roman word *pondus* meant weight – as in how much something weighs. And they often used the phrase ‘libra pondo’ to mean a ‘pound by weight.’ And it is in this sense that the Germanic tribes borrowed the *pondo* as the name for a pound of weight. And from there we get *pound*.

And with Roman construction, we get the words like *tile* and *table* via this same process. *Tile* meant a roof covering and was a technology introduced by the Romans. *Table* came from the Latin word *tabula* meaning a board or plank. I mentioned in an earlier episode that Romans sometimes covered small boards with a thin layer of wax used for writing. And from this word *tabula* we get the modern English word *tablet*. Well, this same word passed into the early Germanic languages meaning a board or plank. And since boards or planks were used to create certain pieces of furniture, the word *tabula* eventually gave us the word *table*.

The Romans had also developed advanced technology to grind grain into flour. And from this technology the Latin word *molina* passed into the Germanic languages and eventually gave us the English word *mill*.

And the civilizing influence of the Romans can also be seen in a word like *kitchen* which also comes from the Romans via the Germans. The original word was a Vulgar Latin word *cocina* (/ko-kee-na/) which meant ‘kitchen.’ This word passed into the Germanic languages. And again, we can see that Old English sound shift from the ‘k’ sound to the ‘ch’ sound in the middle of that word – from /ko-kee-na/ to ‘kitchen.’

The Latin word *vallum* meant a rampart or a row of stakes. Once again, the word was borrowed by the Germanic tribes from the Romans and eventually became the word *wall* in Modern English.

There is another word that followed this route into Modern English. It is in fact one word in Modern English, but it means two different things. It is the word *mint*. And in Modern English it can refer to an herb or it can refer to a place where money is coined. Well in Old English, the herb was *minte*. And that word came from the Germanic tribes, who borrowed it from the Romans. The Latin word for the herb was *menta* or *mentha*, and that’s also where we get the word *menthol* in Modern English.

As far as the place where coins were made, that word also comes from Old English. And the Old English word for ‘coins’ was *mynet*. That word came directly from the Latin word *moneta* which meant ‘money.’ I discussed that word in the last episode. As you may recall, the Latin word for ‘money’ or ‘coins’ was *moneta* from the name of the Roman Goddess ‘Juno Moneta.’ Well the word *money* comes from that original Latin word via the French. But the word *mint* comes from that word via the Germanic tribes. It passed into Old English as *mynet* – still meaning ‘coins.’ But its meaning eventually evolved to mean ‘the place where coins were made.’

So again, even though the words *minte* meaning ‘herb’ and *mynet* meaning ‘coins’ were once distinct in Old English, they have become identical in Modern English as the word *mint*. And both uses of the word come to us from the Romans thanks to the Germanic tribes.

So words which we still use everyday reflect a time in history when the early Germanic tribes were trading with the Roman Empire, and were adopting elements of Roman civilization. And it also helps to illustrate the many ways in which Latin has influenced Modern English. As we can see, Latin didn’t just come into English through French. At least a few Latin words came with the original Germanic Anglo-Saxons.

So in this episode, we have explored the origins of the Germanic tribes as best we can determine. And we’ve looked at their expansion throughout central Europe at the expense of the Celtic tribes. And we looked at the Roman influences on the early Germanic language.

Well next time, I’m going to focus on the Germanic language itself. Specifically, the development of that language and the structure and grammar of that language. And that will be very important as it relates to English. Since English is a Germanic language, we will see many features that are very familiar to us. So next time, we’ll look at the Germanic language.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.