

**AN ESSAY ON THE ANTIQUITY  
OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE: BEING  
A COLLATION OF THE IRISH  
WITH THE PUNIC LANGUAGE**

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An Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language: Being a Collation of the Irish with the Punic Language by Charles Vallancey

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**CHARLES VALLANCEY**

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**AN ESSAY**  
ON THE  
**ANTIQUITY OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE:**  
BEING A COLLATION OF  
THE IRISH WITH THE PUNIC LANGUAGE.  
WITH A PREFACE,  
PROVING IRELAND TO BE THE THULE OF THE ANCIENTS.  
*Addressed to the Literati of Europe.*

To which is added,

A Correction of the Mistakes of MR. LHWYD in reading the ancient Irish Manuscript Lives of the PATRIARCHS; And of those committed by MR. BARETTI in his Collation of the Irish with the Bisayan Language.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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BY  
LIEUT.-COL. CHARLES VALLANCEY, LL.D.  
OF SOCIET. ANTIQ. HIB. SOC.

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AND,  
**REMARKS**  
ON THE  
ESSAY ON THE ANTIQUITY OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE,  
*Addressed to the Printer of the London Chronicle,*  
IN THE YEAR 1772.



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**ADVERTISEMENT**

TO THE

**THIRD EDITION.**

FROM the great inquiry that has been made lately for Works relating to Ireland and on the Irish Language, it is imagined the Republication of the following Tract will be an acceptable offering to the Public.

It is printed verbatim from the Second Edition in Colonel VALLANCEY's Collectanea, and is respectfully Dedicated to the Natives of Ireland, and the Lovers of Irish Antiquities, by

**THE PUBLISHER.**

## P R E F A C E.

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**I**RELAND, properly so called, was probably the first of the British isles that got the Name of Thule, as being the first the Carthaginians met with steering their course northward, when they departed from Cape Finestre the northern head-land of Spain. And this island seems to be the same said by Aristotle to have been discovered by the Carthaginians, Lib. de mirabil. auscultat. where he says, "extra columnas Herculis aiunt in mari a Carthaginensibus insulam fertilem inventam, ut quæ tam sylvarum copia, quam fluminibus navigationi idoneis abundet, cum reliquis fructibus floreat vehementer, distans a continente plurimum dierum itinere," &c.

Bochart confirms this by what he observes, that the ancient writer Antonius Diogenes (who wrote twenty-four books of the strange things related of Thule, not long after the time of Alexander the Great) had his history from certain tables of cypress wood digged at Tyrus out of the tombs of Mantima and Dercelis, who had gone from Tyrus to Thule, and had remained some time there.

The situation of Thule has been much controverted; yet all agree it was some place towards

the north, with respect to the first discoverers, and many make it to be one of the British isles. This agrees perfectly with the situation of Ireland, for the Carthaginians in sailing from Cadiz having once cleared Cape St. Vincent, had Ireland in a direct northern course before them.

The ancients seem mostly to agree, that Thule was one of those islands that are called British. Strabo, one of the most ancient and best geographers extant, speaks thus; Pytheas Massiliensis says, it is about Thule, the furthest north of all the British isles. Yet he himself maketh it nearer than Pytheas did: But I think, says he, that northern bound to be much nearer to the south; for they who survey that part of the globe, can give no account beyond Ireland, an isle which lies not far towards the north, before Britain; inhabited by wild people almost starved with cold; there, therefore, I am of opinion the utmost bound is to be placed; so that in his opinion, that which he calls Ireland must be Thule (a).

Catullus is of the same mind.

Sive trans altas  
Graditur Alpes,  
Cæsaris visens  
Monumenta magni,  
Gallicum Rhenum,  
Horribilesque et  
Ultimos Britannos.

Whether he o'er the Alps his way pursue  
The mighty Cæsar's monuments to view,  
As Gallic Rhine and Britons that excel  
In fierceness, who on the earth's limits dwell.

(a) *Camd. Br.* p. 1407.



Serves iturum Cæsarem in ultimos orbis  
Britannos. HOR. (b)

Preserve thou Cæsar safe, we thee implore,  
Bound to the world's remotest Britons shore.

Cærus haud aliter cum dimicat incola Thules,  
Agmina falcifero circumvenit acta covina.  
SILICUS ITALICUS.

As Thule's blue inhabitants surround  
Their foes with chariots hook'd, and them confound.

Pliny places Thule among the British isles, and Tacitus (c) says, when the Roman navy sailed about Britain, *despecta est et Thule*, "they saw Thule also."

Statius ad Claud. Uxorem, describes Thule to the westward of Britain.

— et si gelidas irem mansurus ad Arctas,  
Vel super Hesperiae vada caligantia Thules.

If in the cold north I go to abide,  
Or on dark seas which western Thule hide.

Although the Romans never were in Ireland, yet Statius, with the liberty of a poet, has certainly brought them there in this verse, apparently for the honour of having them in Thule.

— tu discè patrem, quantusque nigram  
Fluctibus occiduis, fessoque Hyperione Thulen  
Intravit, mandata gerens.

Learn, from thy sight, how glorious he was,  
When he did with the senate's order pass

(b) Lib. I. od. 35.

(c) Vita Agric. supra.

O'er to dark Thule, in that ocean, west,  
Where Phoebus gives his weary horses rest (d).

Qu. Where could he conduct them westward from Britain, but to Thule—to Ireland?

Sir R. Sibbald explains the transmarinæ Gentes or Scotorum a Circio, i. e. the Scots from the north-west and beyond the seas, mentioned by Bede, to be Scots and Pights, because, says he, Ireland cannot be said to lie to the north-west of the Roman province. I do affirm the Scoti or nothern Irish, from whom all expeditions passed into Albion, lie due north-west of the Roman province.

Ireland was ever anciently remarkable for learning, it was the insula sanctorum. Stephanus Byzantinus says, ΓΕΡΝΗ, νῆσος ἐν τῇ πέρατι, πρὸς δυσμαῖς. Upon which words Holstenius thus remarks, Γέρνη illa insula est, quæ hodie Hibernia dicitur. Aristoteles de Mundo: Εἰν τῇ ἰσηκενῶ γε μὴν νῆσοι μέγιστα τε τυγχάνουσι ἴσαι δύο, Βρετανικαὶ λεγόμεναι, Ἀλβιον καὶ Γέρνη. *In Oceano insulæ duæ sitæ sunt, quam maxime, quas Britannicas apellant, Albion et Ierna: de hac vide plur. apud Andr. Schottum lib. 11. Observat. cap. 20. Festo Avieno in ora maritima Hibernia vocatur sacra insula. Quod quam aliam ob causam fecerit nunc non succurrit, nisi quod\* Γέρη legerit pro Γέρνη. Τὸ ἔθνηκον, Γερναῖος, ὡς Λερναῖος. Et fœmininum Γερνίς, quod apud Orpheum legitur Argon. v. 1179. Πὰρ δ' ἄρα νῆσον ἄμειβεν Γερνίδα (e).*

(d) Camd. supra.

\* Γέρνις: Sacerdos. Augur a Plotarcho vectitur Γερῆος pro εἰρῆος, τὸ, victima, sacrificia.

(e) Holsten. in Steph. Byzant. de urb. p. 144.

Festus Avienus lived in the fourth century, therefore this was not named the holy island after St. Patrick's conversion, as some think, for he did not arrive here till the beginning of the fifth century; this must therefore be the island sacred to Apollo (that is to Baal) of which Diodorus Siculus makes particular mention. See p. 51.

Thus, Arngrimus Jonas describes Thule (*f*):

———— penetravit ad Indos,  
Ingeniumque potens ultima Thule colit.

His eloquence did reach the utmost Indies,  
And powerful wit enlightened farthest Thule.

And then he adds; from whence it may fairly be inferred, that either Britain or (as Pliny will have it) some island of Britain was the ultima Thule; yet Sibbald will interpret *some island of Britain* to be Britain itself.

Again, "In the history of the kings of Norway, it is said that king Magnus, in an expedition to the Orcades, Hebrides, Scotland and Britain, touched also at the island of Thule and subdued it." Here Scotland, Britain, and Thule are very plainly distinguished.

Wernerus Ralwingus says, in the time of Pope Linus arose the Scottish nation of Picts and Hibernians in Albion, which is a part of England; that is, a nation of Picts and Hibernians arose in Albion a part of England. As plain and intelligible as this is, Sibbald will have Hibernia to be part of Scotland.

Strabo always mentions Thule and Britain as the British isles. Speaking of Pytheas's blunders,