



# The History and Meaning of Celtic Art

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# Etymology

'Celt' comes from the Greek word Keltoi and later, from the latin *Celtae*.



# History Of Celts

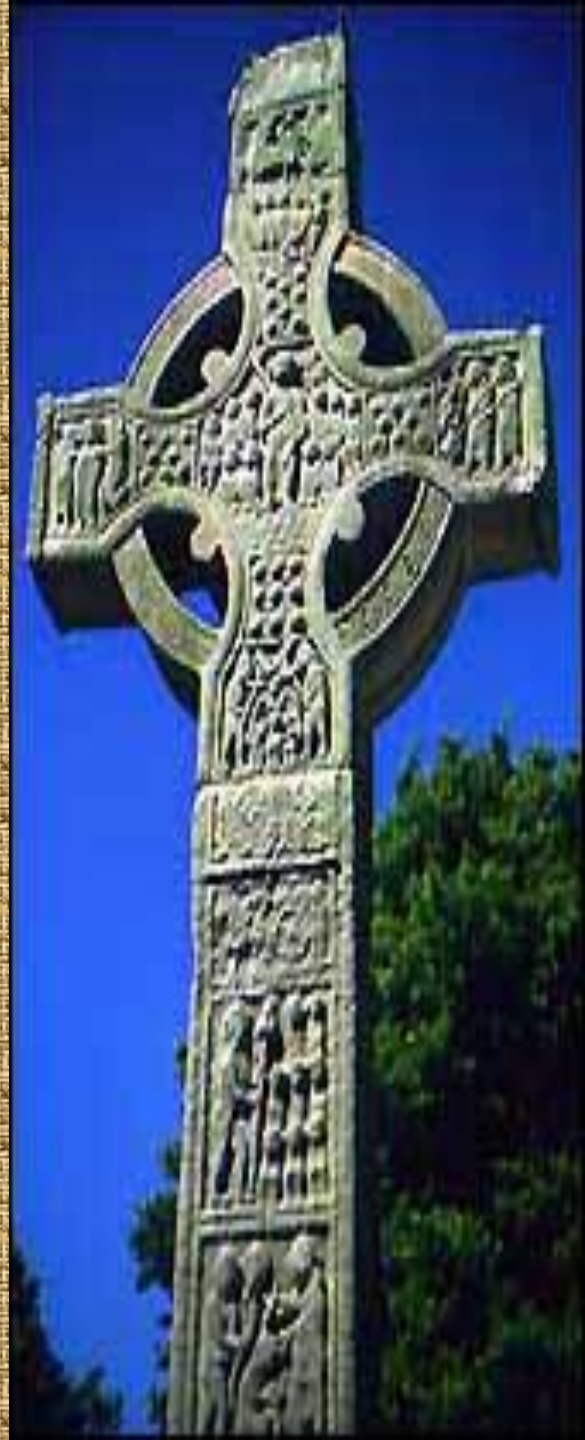
- Celtic society and culture is believed to have originally emerged around 500-450 BC in northeast France.
- Later Celts expanded southwards into Italy, eastwards to the Balkans and Asia and westward into western France and the British Isles.
- They occupied these lands until the Roman conquest.

# Minor Issues with History...

- **Discovering information about the Celts is extremely difficult.**
- **It is presumed that only five percent of the artifacts left from pre-Roman Celts have been discovered.**
- **Writings have been left behind (such as the *De Bello Gallico* by Julius Caesar), but these are usually biased as they describe the Celts by comparing them to their own society.**

# Celtic Art

- “[Celtic art] encompasses elements of decoration beyond those necessary for functional utility.” – *Celtic Art* by Thames and Hudson
- Most celtic art is in metalwork. It is usually found on weapons, cups, pots and jewelry.
- Stone and wood carvings are rare and usually associated with religion.

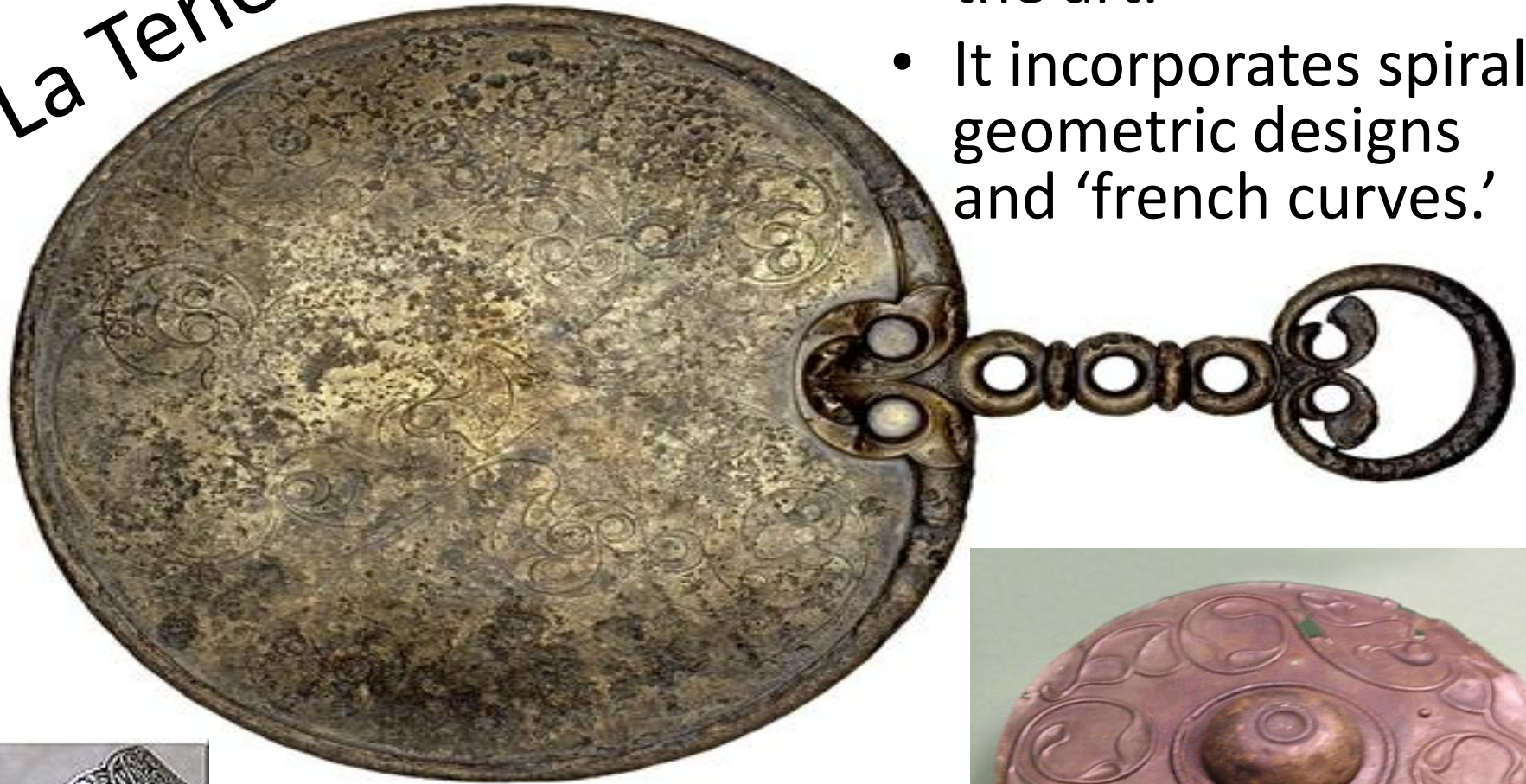


# Hallstatt 700BC

- Mainly geometric designs with repeated patterns.



La Tene' 450BC



- Animals and faces are often disguised within the art.
- It incorporates spirals, geometric designs and 'french curves.'



# Early Christian 400AD

- Celtic knot (most recognizable) is introduced. It can be described as a single or multiple strands weaving amongst themselves.
- One of the most famous is the trinity knot. It contains three outward pointing petals with weavings in the middle.





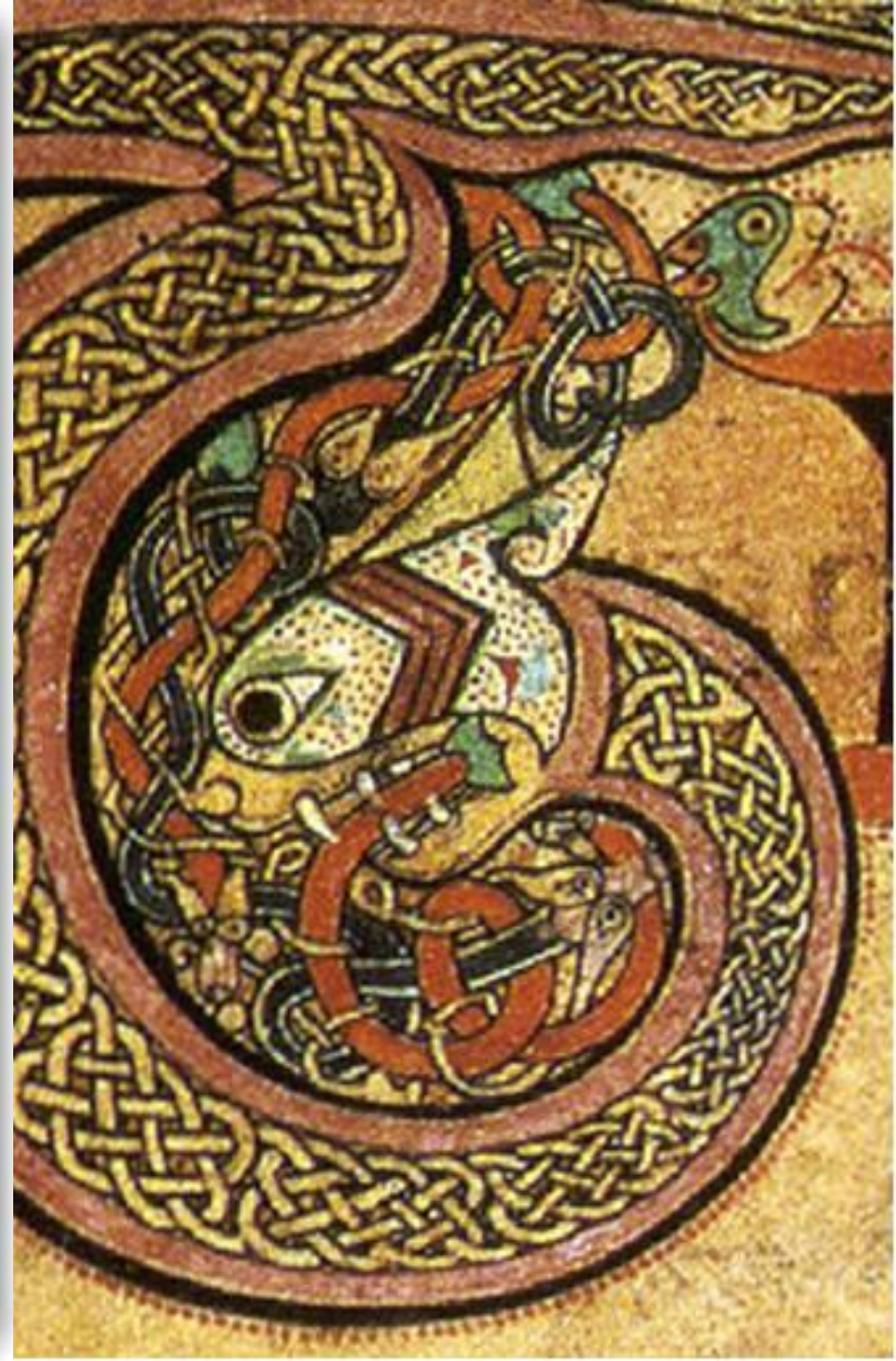


**Late Christian  
or Insular  
750AD-1000AD**

- Height of Celtic Art
- Began working with gold and silver.



Book of Kells



# Believed meanings

- Knotwork Interlace: interconnection of life (our place in the universe)
- Spirals: personal spirit, heavens, or water
- Maze Patterns: journey through life



## Works Cited:

[http://www.aon-celtic.com/trade\\_history\\_meanings.html](http://www.aon-celtic.com/trade_history_meanings.html)

Celtic art From its Beginnings to the Book of Kells By: Thames and Hudson