**Faculty of Letters and Languages – M’sila**

**Department of English**

**Level:** Second year license

**Course:** British Civilization.

**Lecture**: The Foundation of a New Nation. (The Romans, The Celts and the Geography of Britain)

**Lecture number**: 01

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**INTRODUCTION:**

However complicated the modern industrial state may be, land and climate affect life in every country. They affect social and economic life, population and even politics. Britain is no exception. It has a milder climate than much of the European mainland because it lies in the way of the Gulf Stream, which brings warm water and winds from the Gulf of Mexico. Britain is an island, and Britain's history has been closely connected with the sea. Until modern times it was as easy to travel across water as it was acrossland, where roads were frequently unusable. At moments of great danger Britain has been saved from danger by its surrounding seas. Britain's history and its strong national sense have been shaped by the sea. Britain has not always been an island. It became one only after the end of the last ice age. The temperature rose and the ice cap melted, flooding the lower-lying land that is now under the North Sea and the English Channel. Around 10,000 BC, as the Ice Age drew to a close,

Britain was peopled by small groups of hunters, gatherers and fishers. Few had settled homes, and they seemed to have followed herds of deer which provided them with food and clothing. By about 5000 BC Britain had finally become an island, and had also become heavily forested. For the wanderer-hunter culture this was a disaster, for thecold- loving deer and other animals on which they lived largely died out.

**I-The Celts**

Around 700 BC, another group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall, and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe or further east, from southern Russia, and had moved slowly westwards in earlier centuries. The Celts were technically advanced. They knew how to work with iron, and could make better weapons than the people who used bronze. It is possible that they drove many of the older inhabitants westwards into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Celts began to control the lowland areas of Britain, and were joined by new arrivals from the European mainland. They continued to arrive in one wave after another over the next seven hundred years. The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland Scotland, Wales, and Ireland today. Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since that time, are still spoken. The British today are often described as Anglo-Saxon. It would be better to call them Anglo-Celt.

**I-1-Celtic Lifestyle**

According to the Romans, the Celtic men wore shirts and breeches (knee-length trousers), and striped or checked cloaks fastened by a pin. It is possible that the Scottish tar tan and dress developed from this "striped cloak". The Celts were also “very careful about cleanliness and neatness”, as one Roman wrote. “Neither man nor woman,” he went on, “however poor, was seen either ragged or dirty.”

**I-2-Celtic Society**

The Celtic tribes were ruled over by a warrior class, of which the priests, or Druids, seem to have been particularly important members. These Druids could not read or write, but they memorized all the religious teachings, the tribal laws, history, medicine and other knowledge necessary in Celtic society. The Druids from different tribes all over Britain probably met once a year. They had no temples, but they met in sacred groves of trees, on certain hills, by rivers or by river sources. We know little of their kind of worship except that at times it included human sacrifice.

**II-The Romans**

The name “Britain” comes from the word **“Pretani,”** the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island “Britannia.” The Romans had invaded because the Celts of Britain were working with the Celts of Gaul against them. The British Celts were giving them food, and allowing them to hide in Britain. There was another reason. The Celts used cattle to pull their ploughs and this meant that richer, heavier land could be farmed. Under the Celts Britain had become an important food producer because of its mild climate. It now exported corn and animals, as well as hunting dogs and slaves, to the European mainland. The Romans could make use of British food for their own army fighting the Gauls.

**II-1-Roman Culture and Society**

The Romans brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The written word was important for spreading ideas and also for establishing power. As early as AD 80, as one Roman at the time noted, the governor Agricola “trained the sons of chiefs in the liberal art as ... the result was that the people who used to reject Latin began to use it in speech and writing. Further the wearing of our national dress came to be valued and the toga [the Roman cloak] came into fashion. While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic speaking, a number of town dwellers spoke Latin and Greek with ease, and the richer landowners in the country almost certainly used Latin. Bur Latin completely disappeared both in its spoken and written forms when the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth century AD. Britain was probably more literate under the Romans than it was to be again until the fifteenth century.

Julius Caesar first came to Britain in 55 BC, but it was not until almost a century later, in AD 43, that a Roman army actually occupied Britain. The Romans were determined to conquer the wholeisland. They had little difficulty, apart from Boadicea's revolt, because they had a better trained army and because the Celtic tribes fought among themselves. The Romans considered the Celts as war-mad, “high spirited and quick for battle”, a description some would still give the Scots, Irish and Welsh today.

The Romans established a Romano-British culture across the southern half of Britain. This part of Britain was inside the empire. Beyond were the upland areas, under Roman control but not developed. These areas were watched from the towns of York, Chester and Caerleon in the western peninsula of Britain that later became known as Wales. Each of these towns was held by a Roman legion of about 7,000 men. The total Roman army in Britain was about 40,000 men.

**III-The Geography of Britain**

See supporting documents. (Attached)

**Exercises**

**1-**Explain and examine the following terms

Britain- Celts - Pretani- Gauls- B.C- A.D.

**2-**Write a paragraph (That includes topic, supporting, and concluding sentence(s)) describing the difference between Great Britain and the U.K, in geographical and political terms.

**REFERENCES**

Oakland, John. 2002. *British Civilization: an Introduction.* London: London University Publication Office.

Mcdowall, David. 2008. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.