

Monday, August 16th 2021

[ancient links](#)

<https://scroll.in/video/809559/watch-what-kerala-and-ireland-had-in-common-2000-years-ago-hint-music>

Watch: What Kerala and Ireland had in common 2,000 years ago (hint: music)

An archaeologist has found some startling similarities between the musical traditions in iron-age Ireland and present day Kerala.

[Scroll Staff](#)

Jun 09, 2016 · 11:00 am



Musical traditions and instruments that Irish archaeologist Billy Ó Foghlú thought long extinct are alive and well in South India. "Archaeology is usually silent. I was astonished to find what I thought to be dead soundscapes alive and living in Kerala today," [said](#) the PhD student at the ANU College of Asia-Pacific.

These traditions are very similar to those found in Ireland close to 2,000 years ago. "There are horn instruments being used in a completely different way to Western melodic horn instruments. And that's the exact same way they were used in parts of Ireland, Gaul, British Isles and all of the Northern Scandinavian regions as well."

Foghlú has published his research in the *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology* and says that his findings show that European and Indian cultures had a lively exchange and interaction of musical traditions and cultures even then.



According to him, an example of this interaction can be seen in a carving of a celebration in Sanchi dating from circa 300 BC, that shows a group of musicians playing two European carnyces, a wind instrument in the shape of an animal's head that was played by Celts circa 200 BC.

In the video below, Foghlu plays a horn that he constructed through close approximation via 3D printing. "These horns were not just hunting horns or noisemakers. They were very carefully constructed and repaired, they were played for hours. Music clearly had a very significant role in the culture."



Below is a short documentary on ancient Irish musical traditions that compiles what different instruments from ancient Ireland would sound like.



This short documentary made by Kerala Tourism depicts a Panchari Melam, an orchestra consisting of four instruments: Chenda, Kuzhal, Kombu and Ilathalam.



CHRISTIAN
MUSICOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF INDIA



Support our journalism by contributing to [Scroll Ground Reporting Fund](#). We welcome your comments at letters@scroll.in.