

Emer Purcell, Paul MacCotter, Julianne Nyhan and John Sheehan (eds), *Kings, Clerics and Vikings: Essays on Medieval Ireland in Honour of Donnchadh Ó Corráin*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015. 584pp. €60.00 (hardback). ISBN 978-1-84682-279-7

Author, editor and co-editor of eight books and nearly 170 papers and articles, Donnchadh Ó Corráin is one of Ireland's most prolific scholars. Described in the preface of this *festschrift* as 'a man of many parts: scholar, teacher, editor, innovator, bibliographer and educationalist', he has made an enormous contribution to the study of Medieval Ireland. Evidence for the sheer scale of this contribution can be found in the impressive publication list charting Professor Ó Corráin's career from 1968 to 2015, and this *festschrift* itself is a glowing tribute to a distinguished scholarly legacy. The book is divided into three thematic sections: (i) History, (ii), Archaeology and (iii) Language and Literature. This highlights the impact the honorand has had in areas well beyond his own traditional area of study: history. Though these divisions are somewhat artificial, this is not meant as a criticism. Rather, there is a considerable degree of cross-over between these themes and associated disciplines within the book, mirroring a broad approach to the past often championed by Ó Corráin throughout his career. The manner in which many of these essays complement one another is perhaps most evident from the series of contributions dealing with the Vikings and their impact upon the politics of the Irish Sea world. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this review, I will focus on each individual thematic section.

Section One is by far the largest and contains nineteen essays covering numerous historical topics. Michael Herren begins with an examination of two early-seventh-century Papal letters to the Irish, cited by Bede. Despite the fragmentary nature of these sources, Herren draws upon a broad range of material, contemporary and later, to investigate both their content and context. Using annalistic and other material,

coupled with a careful reading of the historical landscape, Edel Bhreathnach provides a fresh interpretation for the erection of the West Ossory crosses which she dates to the late ninth century. Charles Doherty presents a brief, though very useful overview of pertinent source material for studying the development of early Irish roads, including a very helpful discussion on the terminology associated with the various types of road found in early Medieval Irish sources. Evaluating internal linguistic evidence against the wider contemporary context, Joseph Flahive explores a previously unpublished note in early Irish from Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 512 that deals with the status of the chief churches in early medieval Munster, offering insights into the dating and composition of the text.

Wendy Davies compares early Irish law, for which a great quantity of legal texts survives (though few records of actual legal cases) with the practice of law in early medieval northern Iberia, where a substantial body of material pertaining to legal proceedings does survive. By locating Ireland within the broader context of European legal tradition, Davies has provided an interesting interpretative model which can undoubtedly be applied elsewhere. Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel and Pádraig Ó Riain outline the history of the eleventh and twelfth-century *Schottenkloster* community in Regensburg, providing a transcription and examination of a litany of Irish saints contained in University College Cork, Boole Library, MS U.331. Their contribution offers a window into the devotional practices of the monks at Regensburg.

In two stimulating and complementary essays, Paul Holm and Colmán Etchingham explore the impact of the Vikings in Ireland. Drawing upon a broad base of historical and archaeological material, Holm investigates the naval power of Norse Dublin in the eleventh century and considers whether or not the Norse of Dublin would have been capable of mounting a conquest in Ireland similar to that of their

Danish kinsmen in England. This certainly raises new research questions regarding the extent of Norse power in the wider Irish Sea world during this period. As counterpoint, Etchingham examines the growing capacity of Irish lords to wage maritime warfare, particularly the O'Brien and MacCarthy dynasties of Munster.

The next group of essays explores the impact of the Normans in Ireland. By investigating material such as the *Críth Gabhlach*, Catherine Swift traces the monetary resources of Diarmait Mac Murchada, demonstrating that the king of Leinster was able to comfortably sustain himself during his protracted period of time abroad while seeking assistance from Henry II. Séan Duffy further develops this Norman theme but from a very different perspective. Using material from both sides of the Irish Sea, he explores the extensive role of the Welsh in the so-called Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland. Indeed, the role of the Welsh in the later Tudor conquest of Ireland has only begun to receive the attention it deserves: its earlier origins, however, are clearly illustrated here.

David Dumville outlines an engaging argument, questioning previous conceptions of Irish identity before and after the Anglo-Norman Conquest. Moreover, these questions can easily be applied to later periods of Irish history, the Tudor–Stuart period in particular. Marie Therese Flanagan includes a transcription and commentary on some previously unknown charters from St Thomas's Abbey, Dublin, which relate to Cork in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Flanagan's essay underlines the importance of exploring personal relationships between the early Anglo–Norman settlers/adventurers in Ireland during this period.

The section then moves briefly on to Irish ecclesiastical affairs. Based on an examination of Irish annals, Diarmuid Ó Murchadha suggests that scribes may have dictated to one another when writing. Paul MacCotter discusses the emergence of the rural deanery in Ireland,

in an insightful contribution which explores both the manner in which the deaneries functioned as ecclesiastical divisions as well as their relationship to the medieval cantred. Drawing upon a broad range of material across a wide time span, John Bradley investigates the origins of the myth surrounding the transferral of the See of Ossory from Aghaboe to Kilkenny. There follow three essays on medieval Irish cultural and genealogical affairs. Kenneth Nicholls provides a brief, though insightful, explanation of the ‘named son’ in Late Medieval Ireland, once again demonstrating how many aspects of Gaelic and Gaelicised culture are taken for granted. Nollaig Ó Muraíle includes a highly detailed re-edition and correction of an Uí Chearbhaill genealogy, originally contained in Dineen’s edition of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*. Using the Uí Mhaoil Chonaire family as his main case study, Benjamin Hazard outlines some of the main social and cultural changes witnessed by the Irish learned class immediately before and after the Tudor conquest of Ireland. This section concludes with an essay by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín charting the personal story behind Alice Stopford Green’s *The Old Irish World*, from within the backdrop of political, cultural and social change during the early twentieth century.

The second section deals with archaeology, with the first five essays exploring the Hiberno–Scandinavian world during the Viking age. Based primarily on excavation work, Dagfinn Skre examines some of the broader Scandinavian and European factors underpinning the intensification of Viking expansion in Ireland from the mid ninth century onwards. John Maas explores the Lough Ennell hoards associated with the period 902–919. Using a combination of archaeological and environmental data, he examines the Viking migrations to Ireland during the early tenth century. James Graham–Campbell and Patrick Wallace each explore the material culture associated with the Viking presence in Ireland. The former discusses the significance of an early horse harness

mount that was discovered in Yorkshire, underlining the more immediate connections between Viking Dublin and Viking York as well as the more distant links between Ireland and Norway in the early ninth century. Wallace discusses the importance of lead in Norse Dublin, its practical uses for fishing weights, spindle whorls and jewellery, demonstrating that Norse Dublin was a major centre for the manufacture of leaden goods.

Moving away from the Norse stronghold of Dublin, Éamonn Kelly charts the extent of the Viking presence in the west of Ireland. Archaeological evidence from coastal regions stretching from Mayo south to Limerick not only suggests that the Norse were particularly wealthy and successful but that Vikings houses in the West mirror those found in Dublin. The remaining essays in this section focus on Irish archaeological matters. Ragnall Ó Floinn suggests a new provenance for the so-called 'Shannon' shrine. Based on a re-examination of earlier history and archaeology of the shrine, Ó Floinn argues cogently that the shrine can be provenanced to Keeloge Ford, on the boundaries of the modern day counties of Galway and Offaly. Niamh Whitfield discusses the material culture surrounding the *líá lógmar* or 'precious stone'. Drawing upon linguistic, historical and archaeological examples, she concludes that *líá lógmar* can denote high-status stones, including both man-made jewellery and those found in Old Irish fictional tales.

Michael Monk's essay reassesses the importance of tillage farming in Early Medieval Ireland. Utilising a broad range of recent archaeological and palaeoenvironmental research, he demonstrates that tillage farming was a far more central aspect of early medieval Irish farming than has previously been acknowledged. Conleth Manning's brief note on the *dairthech* helps postulate what this oaken structure would have resembled (including some of its key features). Tomás Ó Carragáin concludes this section with an essay reinvestigating the layout of

Cormac's Chapel at Cashel. Based on an examination of the chapel's interior with reference to contemporary Irish and European developments, his main conclusion is that the chapel most likely contained an anchorhold (i.e., a small cell where an anchorite — a type of religious hermit — resided).

The final section contains a number of richly detailed and largely specialist essays on language and literature. The first six deal with Latin learning in Early Medieval Ireland. Using a range of sources, including biblical and material from Late Antiquity, David Woods examines the symbolism associated with clothing in the *Vita Columbae*. He considers that clothing served to remind Adomnán's audience both of the power of Columba's relics as well as the charitable monastic practice of sheltering those in need. In an engaging and lively essay that draws upon Classical Latin, Greek, and, in one instance, Hebrew, Anthony Harvey provides an interesting overview of the development of Hisperic Latin. David Howlett includes both a critical edition and an incredibly detailed analysis of the earliest surviving cosmological poem in Insular literature, the *Altus Prosator*. Building on the theme of cosmology, Marina Smyth explores early Irish concepts of the seven heavens through an examination of four key sources, including *Saltair na Rann* and the *Liber de numeris*. Sinéad O'Sullivan looks at the oldest gloss tradition of Martianus Capella, examining how scribal editorial practice affected textual transmission, particularly the manner in which manuscripts acquired new levels on annotation as well as fresh glosses. Jonathan Wooding's essay examines the ocean-going voyage tales of the *peregrinatio*. Despite the largely fictional content of the tales, Wooding highlights that these sources represent rich material for studying both the theology and symbolism associated with early medieval ocean voyaging.

There follow seven essays dealing with Medieval Irish literature including one on Old Norse saga material. Based on an examination of

the *Immacallam Choluim Chille*, Elva Johnston poses a series of thought-provoking questions relating the transferral of knowledge in Early Medieval Ireland. John Carey, working both with annalistic and other literary material, considers the identity of Mael Muru Othna and whether or not a series of early Irish poems can indeed be attributed to him. Likewise, Bart Jaski examines the curious case of Ailill mac Mágach and Cet mac Mátach, two characters from the *Táin*. Considering the extant manuscripts of the *Táin*, Jaski investigates the relationship between these characters. Kevin Murray's contribution outlines the importance of place-names in the early *fianaigeacht* narratives. He demonstrates that this was particularly important both to the creation and dissemination of much of this literature.

Peter Smyth presents a new, critical edition of the text *Tigernmas mac Follaig aird*, a poem attributed to Gilla Cóemáin. Using internal evidence against the backdrop of the extant manuscript tradition, Smyth scrutinises this assumption, providing very detailed textual notes throughout. Emma Nic Cárthaigh examines the manuscript tradition of the famous poem, *Mo cheithre rann duit, a Dhonnchaidh*, a praise poem from Tadhg Mac Bruaideadha to Donnchadh Ó Briain, fourth earl of Thomond. In doing so, we are presented with a very impressive textual analysis of numerous versions of the poems. Using Norse sagas, Gísli Sigurðsson considers the extent of Norse geographic knowledge of the Irish Sea world during the Viking age. In doing so, he demonstrates that the Norse were quite familiar with the geography of the Hebrides, western Scotland and the Irish Sea, but that geographic knowledge was far more limited for the north and east of England. The final two essays deal with Professor Ó Corráin's role in promoting the CELT (Corpus of Electronic Texts Online) project. Beatrix Färber provides a history of CELT, charting its progress, some of the associated challenges, and what remains to be

done. Willard McCarthy concludes with a brief note on the importance of CELT in the new digital age.

Ultimately the editors, Emer Purcell, Paul MacCotter, Julianne Nyhan and John Sheehan, have produced an excellent publication, a fitting tribute to one of Ireland's most prominent scholars. *Clerics, Kings and Vikings* will appeal to a wide audience, both specialist and non-specialist. The broad range of essays included in this publication will be of interest to students of history, Celtic Studies, Latin, archaeology, and linguistics, to name but a few disciplines. Many of the essays will undoubtedly inspire future research. However, despite the fact that many of the contributions are specialist in nature, established scholars, postgraduates, undergraduates and general readers will each find this book an engaging, stimulating read.

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