

Samhain 1998

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celtic
studies

association
newsletter

C S A N A

Celtic Studies Association of North America

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Maria Tymoczko, President
Dorothy Bray, Vice-President
Elissa R. Henken, Secretary-Treasurer

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Karen Burgess
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Michael Meckler

Incorporated as a non-profit organization, the Celtic Studies Association of North America has members in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Europe, Australia, and Japan. CSANA produces a semi-annual newsletter and bibliographies of Celtic Studies. The published bibliographies (1983-85 and 1985-87) may be ordered from the Secretary-Treasurer, Prof. Elissa R. Henken, Dept. of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 (email: ehenken@arches.uga.edu). The new electronic CSANA bibliography is available at: <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/celtic/csanabib.html> or visit our Web site at: www.cis.upen.edu/~csana. The electronic bibliography is available at cost in printed form to members who request it.

The privileges of membership in CSANA include the newsletter twice a year, access to the bibliography and the electronic discussion group CSANA-L (contact Prof. Joe Eska at eska@vtais.cc.vt.edu to join), invitations to the annual meeting, for which the registration fees are nil or very low, the right to purchase the CSANA mailing list at cost, and an invaluable sense of fellowship with Celticists throughout North America and around the world.

Membership in CSANA is open to anyone with a serious interest in Celtic Studies. Dues are payable at Bealtaine (May 1). New and renewing members within the U.S. should send cheques, payable to CSANA, to Elissa R. Henken at the address above. Members outside the U.S. should send an international money order or a cheque drawn on a U.S. bank for the equivalent of the dues as stated in U.S. dollars; dues can also be paid in British sterling by sending a check to Elissa R. Henken for £10.50 (Student) or £17.50 (Member).

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| Student Member | \$15.00 |
| Member | \$25.00 |
| Contributor | \$50.00 |
| Patron | \$100.00 |
| Benefactor | \$250.00 |

Contributors, Patrons, and Benefactors support the creation of the CSANA bibliography, help to defray expenses of the annual, and allow CSANA to develop new projects. Please join at the highest level you can.

Call for Papers

The Annual Meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America will take place on April 8-11, 1999, at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York and Ireland House at New York University. Papers are invited on any topic in Celtic languages, literatures, folklore, art and archaeology, or in the history of any of the Celtic peoples. Abstracts (200-300 words) of twenty-minute papers should be submitted before 1 February 1999 to: Professor Catherine McKenna, The Medieval Studies Certificate Program, The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036; tel. 212-642-2314; email: cmckenna@email.gc.cuny.edu or cmckenna@cuny.campus.mci.net. Speakers must be members in good standing of CSANA. Information about conference hotel accommodations will be forthcoming. There will be a modest registration fee of \$15. For further information, please contact Professor McKenna.

The 21st Annual University of California Celtic Studies Conference will be held April 16-18, 1999, on the Berkeley campus. Submission of abstracts is solicited on a wide variety of Celtic topics. We especially encourage papers from fields such as archaeology, anthropology, history, art, and music, in addition to literature and linguistics. This year there will be a special session on

the teaching of Celtic Languages in the New World. Our invited speakers include Professors Helen Fulton and Geraint Evans of the University of Sydney, Australia, Professor Joseph Nagy of UCLA, and Professor Patrick Ford of Harvard University. Papers should be no more than 20 minutes in length, and abstracts of one page only should be sent by 25 January 1999 to: Dr. Annalee Rejhon, Celtic Studies Program, 6303 Dwinelle Hall #2690, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 94720.

Seminar Text for 1999 Annual Meeting of CSANA

The seminar text for the 1999 annual meeting is the Passion from the Cornish Ordinalia. The most accessible version of the Passion, according to Amy Hale, is the Nance/Smith translation in Unified Cornish edited by Graham Sandercock/ The paperback version is known as *The Second Play of the Ordinalia: Christ's Passion* and is only available at this time from An Lyverjy Kernewek (The Cornish Bookshop), 39 Menage Street, Helston, Cornwall, UK. Amy is willing to provide sections of the text; you can contact her at A.Hale@exeter.ac.uk.

CSANA Brochures

If you are going to a professional meeting and would like to take along a small supply of brochures about CSANA, please contact Paula Powers Coe at coe@usc.edu.

Reviews

Benjamin T. Hudson, ed.
Prophecy of Berchán: Irish and Scottish High-Kings of the Early Middle Ages. xii + 271 pp., bibl., index. Westport, CT; Greenwood Press, 1996. \$60.

Prophecy and history have often been joined in the service of another couple, that of religion and politics. The ancient Greek texts that have come down to us under the name of the *Sibylline Oracles* are poetic reworkings of Roman imperial history, with allusions replacing proper names and grandiloquent language only partially obscuring events. The various creators of the *Sibylline Oracles* used the dramatic setting of apparently pagan prophecy to promote Jewish and Christian views of history and contemporary political situations.

Among the Irish and Scots of the Middle Ages, a similar reworking of history occurred in the text known as the *Prophecy of Berchán*. The poem is ostensibly the inspired utterances of a late 8th-century bishop, but the stanzas seem the accumulated work of more than one author and provide thinly veiled descriptions of Irish and Scottish kings of the 9th through 11th centuries.

Benjamin T. Hudson attempts to reveal historical details about these kings in his edition and translation of the *Prophecy of Berchán*. Hudson's edition contains three chapters on the composition, purpose and attribution of the text, and

five chapters on the political history of Ireland and Scotland from the arrival of the Vikings to just before the arrival of the Normans.

Hudson's task is not easy. Reconstructing the history of the period involves sifting through annalistic entries, legendary tales from Irish and Norse literature, as well as narrative histories from later in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Hudson demonstrates a thorough familiarity with a wide variety of sources, and he provides a dizzying array of detail to explain the historical allusions in the text.

Readers interested in textual or literary issues will be disappointed. Hudson's stated editorial procedure is to print the text from the Book of Uí Maine where available: for the introductory stanzas, the section on the Irish kings, and a brief excursus on saints Patrick, Brigit, and Columba. The Scottish material is taken from the an 18th-century manuscript copied by John O'Kane, a manuscript that also contains the Irish material. The only exception to this editorial scheme involves three early stanzas found in the Book of Leinster version of the *War of the Gaels against the Foreigners (Cogad Gaedal re Gallaib)*, which Hudson follows because of the manuscript's antiquity.

Hudson has examined other manuscripts and the earlier editions of the *Prophecy of Berchán* by A. O. Anderson (in ZCP 18 (1930): 1-56, based on O'Kane's manuscript). Hudson limits his apparatus and textual notes to exclude

emendations and transcription differences that appear in Anderson's edition. Hudson's text, moreover, seems plagued by unexplained editorial choices. For example, in stanza 7 (one of the stanzas whose text is taken from the Book of Leinster), the first word appears in the Book of Leinster with the spelling *ticfait* ("they will come"), but Hudson prints *ticfat*. Two stanzas later, the Book of Leinster text describes a future abbot *can Latin acht Gallberla* ("without Latin but instead a foreign language"). Every other manuscript of the *Prophecy of Berchán* reads in place of *Latin* a form of *Gaedelg* (so the Book of Uí Maine), "Irish." The reading "Irish" also appears in the two later manuscripts of the *War of the Gaels Against the Foreigners*, and this reading was adopted by James H. Todd in his 1867 edition of this work (Rolls Series, volume 48).

I believe a solid argument could be made for following the Book of Leinster's "Latin" over the other manuscripts' "Irish." The identification of Latinity as an aspect of Irish culture would be significant in understanding the mindset of the author for this section of the *Prophecy of Berchán*. Hudson, who prints the Book of Leinster reading in his edition, notes the manuscript alternatives in the apparatus, but he fails to comment on his editorial decision.

Hudson should not be too strongly censured, for his interest in the *Prophecy of Berchán* is that of the historian. While literary critics and philologists will

not wish to rely on Hudson's work, his efforts have made available an important source for historians of the Viking period in Ireland and Scotland. Nearly seventy years ago, A. O. Anderson called for a critical study and analysis of the *Prophecy of Berchán* to determine the text's historical value. In this endeavor, Hudson has succeeded.

Michael Meckler
The Ohio State University

Kenneth R. Dark, ed. *External Contacts and the Economy of Late Roman and Post-Roman Britain*. vii + 182 pp., figs., bibl., index. Woodbridge, England: Boydell Press, 1997. \$63.

K.R. Dark has put together a fine selection of articles which makes available a wide range of material, discussion and analysis concerning the areas of Roman Britain to revert to Celtic political control in the period 400-800 A.D. Archaeological, palaeoecological, historical, and epigraphic sources are used to look at continuity and discontinuity in Britain's domestic economy, social base, and overseas trade. The authors make it clear that they are not trying to produce an integrated synthesis, or to set out a common interpretation, but rather to present some of the latest analysis and evidence, and to introduce new viewpoints into old debates on important issues. The book does this successfully, using a firm and varied bibliographic base, as

well as sparse, but clearly drafted, maps and diagrams throughout the work.

Several of the contributors put forward the hypothesis that the post-Roman economy in Celtic areas was structured around elites lodged in fortified sites, who controlled the production and export of tin, lead, silver and salt. Sparey-Green notes that the Poundbury, Dorset, site has yielded evidence of continuity in Late Roman technology, the types of cereals in use, and the quality of iron-edge tools available. Small advances in technology and cereal production had perhaps been made, but what was lacking was Roman ostentation and material disparity within the Poundbury society. S.P. Dark suggests that in areas of intensive disruption due to recent Roman occupation, the economy of the Roman period was largely dependent on the Roman military machine. However, in Celtic areas, where little disruption had taken place, and in highly romanized areas of Roman Britain, local economies have acquired enough stability so that little change happened in landscape use and occupation after the Imperial withdrawal. These findings overturn previously stated views that fort-communities along Hadrian's Wall continued on intact after the end of Roman rule.

K.R. Dark maintains that both the economies of Late Roman and post-Roman Britain were not wholly agricultural, but rather comprised many different "proto-industries." Although he argues in favor of a fully industrialized Late Roman economy and a proto-

industrial post-Roman economy of Britain, he fails to define in contextualized terms certain essential prerequisites of both such as a "market economy," "money in circulation," "efficient transport," and "towns." He does not ask or evaluate the questions of whether the Roman roads or Britain were built on a previously existing Celtic road network, or whether there was a difference between more remote areas of Britain and more accessible ones.

K.R. Dark argues that there was a collapse after the Imperial withdrawal, but fails to evaluate the role of traditional pre-Roman Celtic industries such as pottery production, cooperage, salt production, iron-smelting, and international trade played during the post-Roman period. Campbell and Bowman suggest that while the emerging Anglo-Saxon areas of Britain developed a full-market economy towards the end of the period, the Celtic areas of Britain and Ireland did not, as trade was conducted under monastic monopolies which Viking raiding and settlement heavily disrupted starting in the 8th century and thereafter. They discuss how Celtic areas also suffered from quality of land, lack of urban nucleation, lack of surplus production, and different social attitudes towards the accumulation of capital and its investment, as well as a general lack of human and natural resources.

Both K.R. Dark and Campbell emphasize "that Celtic Britain and Ireland were not isolated from the mainstream developments of continental Europe" during the

period 400-800 A.D. Imports to Britain included pottery from the Aegean and North Africa, as well as pottery and glass from northwestern Europe. Byzantine merchants supplied southwestern Britain with amphorae containing wine and olive oil, as well as manuscripts, textiles, knowledge, beliefs, and art. Sparey-Green notes a lack of domestic pottery and amphorae at Poundbury, Dorset. He hypothesizes that long-distance trading links were maintained by importing wine and grape-juice products from the continent in Celtic-invented wooden barrels. Knight suggests that cross-slab series indicate a continuing routine interchange of ideas and artistic motifs between the continent, Britain, and Ireland.

External Contacts and the Economy of Late Roman and Post-Roman Britain is a thought-provoking collection of articles which challenges the reader to examine complex issues within an interdisciplinary framework. These include the transformation of the Late Roman period into the Early Medieval one in the context of a province where romanization had been less than thoroughly accomplished and where Celtic nations would survive into the modern era. The authors also provide insightful commentary concerning the impact of romanization on the indigenous Celtic peoples of the continent and the western European islands during the post-Roman period.

Timothy Bridgman
Trinity College Dublin

E-Mail Address Update

The following people have changed their addresses, or have been added to the list, or have been incorrectly listed:

Louis and Donald Badone
badone@ican.net

Anna Bosch
bosch@pop.uky.edu

James Doan
doan@polaris.acast.nova.edu

Kathleen Fisher
fisher@nh.ultranet.com

Clodagh Harvey
charvey@med1.medsch.ucla.edu

Charles MacQuarrie
macq@darkwing.voregon.edu

Catherine McKenna
cmckenna@cuny.campus.mci.net
cmckenna@email.gc.cuny.edu

Michael Meckler
meckler.12@osu.edu

Kenneth E. Nilsen
knilsen@stfx.ca

Kelly O'Connor-Salomon
kconnor@mail.trincoll.edu

Kristine Rabberman
rabberma@sas.upenn.edu

James K. Walter
j-walter@onu.edu

News of Members

Former CSANA President Joseph Nagy's book, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Cornell UP/Four Courts Press, 1997) has received the 1998 Katherine Briggs Prize, awarded by the Folklore Society in London and given in acknowledgement of outstanding and innovative contributions to folklore and mythology studies. In October of this year, Professor Nagy gave the keynote address at a conference on "Indo-European Mythology and Religion," sponsored by the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. The title of presentation was "Celtic Infidelities and Indo-European Myth." Congratulations to Professor Nagy!

International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language

The ICDBL was first established in 1975 in Brussels; the US branch was established in 1981 and publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Bro Nevez* (contact Lois Kuter, U.S. ICDBL, 169 Greenwood Ave., B-4 Jenkintown, PA 19046; tel. 212-886-6361). In January 1998, a Canadian branch of the ICDBL was relaunched. It publishes a newsletter, *Brittany*. For more information, contact: Jeffrey D. O'Neill, 58 Century Drive, Scarborough, Ontario M1K 4J6, Canada; tel. 416-264-0475; email: jdkoneill@sympatico.co.

Welsh Language Course

Cymdeithas Madog's 23rd annual Cwrs Cymraeg is coming back to Toronto, July 18-25, 1999, at York University. Cwrs Cymraeg is an intensive, week-long Welsh-language course with classes for every level of learner from complete beginners to advanced students. For more details, contact John Otley, Trefnydd Lleol/Local Organizer, 43 Regina Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6A 1R4, Canada; tel. 416-782-7169; email: cwrs99@madog.org; web site: www.madog.org.

Our Thanks and Gratitude

CSANA wishes to express its heartfelt thanks to John McGill for his elegant and professional designing and constructing of the CSANA Web page. Check it out at www.cis.upenn.edu/~csana. Thank you, John!

Your intrepid editor wishes to express her sincere thanks to Maria Tymoczko, Elissa Henken and Catherine McKenna for help with this newsletter. Please send items for the next newsletter to Dorothy Bray, Department of English, McGill University, 853 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal, QC H3A 2T6, Canada; email: indy000@musicb.mcgill.ca.