

Tome. Studies in Medieval Celtic History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards. Studies in Celtic History XXXI. Edited by Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press 2011. 238 pages. ISBN 978-1-84383-661-2. Price £55.

Thomas Charles-Edwards is a scholar whose work has profoundly influenced subsequent studies on areas of Medieval Celtic history and law. In this impressive collection of essays colleagues and former students—selected from a much bigger number of willing contributors acknowledge with gratitude their debt to professor Charles-Edwards. The articles of the book have been arranged in two groups, reflecting Charles-Edwards's main fields of interest: the first half treats aspects of the history of Britain and Ireland, including archaeology and epigraphy and the other half legal institutions of medieval Ireland and Wales.

The impact that professor Charles-Edwards's wide-ranging scholarship has had on studies in the field of archaeology is acknowledged in three essays. Susan Youngs examines the iconography of hanging-bowls from Anglo-Saxon territories in post-Roman Britain, which she sees primarily as imported prestige items originally manufactured for wealthy Celtic patrons. Basing her argument on a comparison of the ornamentation on the enameled mounts of the bowls and the decoration of early medieval Christian manuscripts, she

suggests that these pieces are indicative of indigenous metal art from sixth and seventh century and the Christian beliefs of their commissioners. Nancy Edwards explores Viking-Age Sculpture in North-West Wales as evidence of cultural contact, wealth and patronage, but also for indicating Hiberno-Scandinavian influence and political ambitions in the region. Elizabeth O'Brien and Edel Bhreatnach examine some archaeological findings which may corroborate a suggestion made by professor Charles-Edwards's several decades ago that early Irish territories were marked by boundary burials, based on his study of the legal procedure of *tellach* or making claim to land. Recent excavations have brought to light cases where burials were inserted into prehistoric ancestral *fertá* (graves), presumably to legitimize or reinforce claim to territory. O'Brien discuss the physical manifestation of these sites while Bhreathnach surveys written evidence for the mythical and historical context of their landscape.

The main body of the essays in the first half reflect professor Charles-Edwards's work as a historian, whose expertise covers both the ecclesiastical and political history of the British Isles. Clare Stancliffe addresses the main sources of inspiration for Columbanus' monastic ideals. Columbanus's familiarity with the writings of Cassian, Basil, Jerome, Faustus, and Caesarius has been noted also before, but Stancliffe centers on the question of how and when they influenced his teaching on monastic life, arguing that Columbanus had already read these authors

as a young man in Ireland. She concludes that while in many ways Columbanus's monasticism stemmed from Irish ideals and practices, his teaching on obedience owed to his time in Gaul. Catherine Swift examines the role of priests within their communities as evidenced in the early Irish penitentials and canon law, arguing that apart from performing the sacraments they also had an important role as judges. In a scrutiny of annalistic and chronicle evidence David N. Dumville argues against Richard Sharpe's centralizing view of confining the regnal succession of Dál Riata in the late sixth to late seventh century to the dynasty of Cenél Gabráin only. Oliver Padel discusses Asser's *parochia* of Exeter, especially the area and the nature of jurisdiction gained by King Alfred's gift. Thomas Owen Clancy reassesses the relative importance of the monasteries of Iona and Kells within the Columban *familia* in the later tenth century. On a consideration of a wider context of monastic and political alliances, including Dublin, Brega and the Isle of Man, Clancy strives to argue that in the end of the tenth century Iona, not Kells, held the *comarbus* and continued as head of the monastic federation. Maria Therese Flanagan discusses the contacts Irish and English churchmen on the 12th century through tracing the identity of an Irish bishop who granted an indulgence at Bath Priory. Huw Pryce explores Gerald of Wales's *Descriptio Cambriae* as a piece of historical writing, showing how Gerald's own situation and agenda in writing the piece influences his presentation of Wales and the Welsh and

how Gerald refers to Gildas *De Excidio* as a rhetorical model to imply that their Trojan and British origins destined the Welsh to ruin. Roy Flechner's insightful reading of Patrick's own writings concerning his family background against the social and political developments of fifth century Britain suggests not only an earlier date for Patrick's leaving Britain, but also a revision of his reason's to do so.

The latter half of the book pays tribute to the fundamental legacy which professor Charles-Edward's work has left on the study of medieval Irish and Welsh law. In a reconsideration of the testimony of *Berrad Airechta* on early Irish legal education, Robin Chapman Stacey argues that its compiler—far from just passively passing on textual legal tradition, or producing verbatim memorizations of oral tradition—reworked the textual materials available to him into new compositions, perhaps together with his students, commenting, analyzing and also reconceptualising subjects chosen for discussion. Wendy Davies compares the early medieval Breton, Welsh and Iberian evidence on judicial presidency concentrating on the difference between presiding and judging, the capacity to punish and constrain and the shift from public to private jurisdiction. Sara Elin Roberts analyses triads in Welsh legal tradition focusing on the Iorwerth redaction of manuscripts, which unlike the other two redactions does not have a large triad collection. She draws attention to the composition of the triad collections and the place of the triads in different manuscripts as presenting possible evidence for the

development of the triad tractate in Welsh law. In an examination of the procedure of recovering stolen property, Fergus Kelly considers an interesting parallel in the legal terminology of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man, suggesting that a chief enforcer of law originated as a religious office.

The last set of contributions present combinations of literary and legal/historical studies acknowledging professor Charles-Edward's perceptive readings of Irish and Welsh tales, many of which also touch upon the position of women in early Irish society. Bronagh Ni Chonaill looks into legal impediments to kin-affiliation and ways of establishing kinship as discussed by early Irish jurists and illustrated by early Irish narratives. By examining the options of proof available to a mother attempting to affiliate her child, much determined by her social status, she demonstrates how these practices correlate with the position of women in early Irish society. Charlene Eska revisits professor Charles-Edward's reading of *Tochmarc Étaíne* as evidence for marriage by bride-purchase in early Ireland, arguing—after an inventory of the extant medieval Irish sources, examination of relevant legal terminology and marriage practices, also in comparison with Germanic law codes—that 'purchase' refer "not to the actual purchase of a wife abut to the legal act involved" i.e. to the formal legal procedure comparable to other types of purchase. Elva Johnston relates the representations of female and male protagonists in early Irish tale *Loinges*

MacNuislenn to legal and political realities of medieval Irish society, especially the legal obligations and responsibilities of the king as set out in *Crith Gablach* and analysed by professor Charles-Edwards. In the last essay of the collection Máire Ni Mhaonaigh discusses the romantic-cum-comic themes in a later *Mongán* tale and the *festschrift* is completed by a bibliography of professor Charles-Edwards's publications, compiled by Maredudd ap Huw.

As is made clear by the contributors and confirmed by the bibliography, many of the contributions build on previous work or comments and suggestions made by professor Charles-Edwards. As such the collection is a thoughtful homage to his work in the areas of Celtic history and law, although not covering all areas of professor Charles-Edwards's wide-ranging and prolific scholarship for obvious limitations of space.

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