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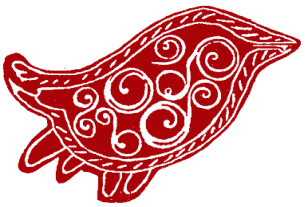

Title: Review: "Catalogue of Irish MSS in the University of Wisconsin-Madison", by Cornelius G. Buttimer (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1989)

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Claire O'Kelly was required to join scraps of information or update areas in light of more recent evidence, constantly lures one away from assessing the book itself. Surely the author of the sepulchral procession through one Early Bronze Age cemetery after another was not the same as the surveyor of the linguistic and 'ethnic' aspects of the Iron Age. Moreover, it is almost impossible to mention this volume without comparing it with Peter Harbison's *Prehistoric Ireland* which was intended for a slightly more popular market, or the recently reprinted (but not revised!) edition of Michael Herity and George Eogan's *Ireland in Prehistory*. Finally, this reviewer, who is currently using Prof. O'Kelly's book as the textbook for two classes in Irish archaeology, had the opportunity to make a 'hands-on' assessment which incorporates not only his own views but that of his students.

The virtues of the book are its relatively detailed descriptions of many sites, its particularly student-friendly accounts of bronze and iron technology, its wealth of illustration, radiocarbon date list, and its completeness in tackling all periods of Irish prehistory. From a lecturer's standpoint this is an ideal situation since it absolves anyone teaching Irish prehistory from dragging students through pages of fairly mundane description and leaves more time for other discussion. The arrangement of the material, on the other hand, is at times a bit strange. I have a certain amount of sympathy with presenting stone circles in several different time periods since they adamantly refuse to be confined to one of the 'Three Ages' but why introduce an entire chapter on the Beaker settlement around the Boyne tombs before the tombs themselves have been discussed? And the paucity of Bronze Age settlements could surely have been mitigated by moving them out of the Iron Age chapter and discussing them where most of the evidence would place them. Some minor errors, as one might expect, always creep through, e.g. Peter Woodman's four seasons' excavation at Mount Sandel apparently began the same year it ended, and I would hardly regard a roe deer as a large mammal (compared to 'small mammals' such as wild pigs!), but in general the description pursues a cautious and reliable course.

The main irony of the book is that while it in no way threatens to steal the lecturer's thunder, it provides such minimal interpretation of the data that the purely lay reader may well get lost in what unfortunately passes in some archaeological circles as 'the facts'. The sites are there but the classic battlefields of Irish prehistory go unmentioned or are barely addressed, e.g. western entry, passage tomb origins, invasion hypotheses, social structure, etc. And when one finds one of the author's adversaries reduced to a virtual non-person (check the bibliography for *whose* works are not cited), one has the feeling that parts of the book may have been written by Orwell's O'Brien rather than Cork's O'Kelly.

In a bumper market of surveys of Irish prehistory, how does O'Kelly's volume fare? There is, I think, no contest between O'Kelly's account and the reprinting of Herity and Eogan's 1977 outdated survey which O'Kelly's book has surely replaced. Except for some greater amount of discussion of artifact types (not always particularly strong in O'Kelly), Herity and Eogan's work hardly stands comparison with the book under review. Harbison's account, on the other hand, while written for a more popular audience, does actually discuss many of the issues skirted over in O'Kelly's survey. Even topics such as megalithic tombs where one might have expected O'Kelly to excel are, from this reviewer's viewpoint, more interestingly handled in the more popular work. One can only regret that Professor O'Kelly did not survive to see his work completely through and leave us with more of his own thoughts.

Is the work 'user-friendly'? Here I base my comments on a poll of my own classes who have had almost a term to work through it. The presentation, order and illustrations were all regarded as reasonably satisfactory and the great majority regarded the work as a good textbook for a university course. On the other hand, quite a few indicated that meaningful discussion of the material had been sacrificed for straight description and somewhat more than half presume that the book would prove a bit boring for the general public. Of those who had read Harbison's book as well, the majority preferred it to O'Kelly's.

In short then, *Early Ireland* may be regarded as a sound though hardly exciting textbook on Irish prehistory and I can well imagine it becoming the work-horse of university and extramural classes. But in fighting shy of many of those issues that have either exercised discussion in the past, or are debated today, it still leaves room for yet another attempt to trace the evolution of prehistoric Ireland that is not only reliable but also stimulating.

J.P. Mallory (*Dept of Archaeology, QUB*)

Catalogue of Irish MSS in the University of Wisconsin-Madison. By Cornelius G. Buttimer. Dublin Inst. for Adv. Studies, 1989. Pp vii + 52. £5.

Dr Buttimer's penchant for bringing to light forgotten Irish verse from a Cork urban setting is already

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well known to readers of this *Journal*. So it comes as no surprise to find him cataloguing Irish MSS in such unlikely surroundings as the Boston Athenaeum (*Folia Gadelica,* 1983) and now Madison, Wisconsin.

This small but interesting collection of nine MSS was acquired for the University library by Prof. Myles Dillon (who taught there from 1937 to 1946) from a lady in New York, a daughter of one Mícheál Ó Broin. Dr Buttimer, in the course of a carefully-structured and informative introduction, shows that the volumes were mainly of Munster provenance — Waterford, Limerick and Cork. MS 180 is a poetry compilation by Tadhg Mac Aogáin, whose love of literature must have been inherited from his learned forbears who were brehons in Muskerry. MS 183, a volume of prose and verse bequeathed to O Donovan Rossa by John Long of Curriglas, was compiled by Donnchadh Ó Cochláin for whom Finghín Ó Hallúráin of Garrán an Chúnlaigh (Mossgrove) carried out scribal work.

While the contents of the MSS do not differ greatly from the norm of 18th/19th-century compilations, there are always new sidelights to look out for — such place-names, for example, as *a bPortlăch an Úachtor Tíre a bPaoracha, a gContăe Phortlăirge.* The insertion of 'Paoracha' between barony (Upperthird) and county names, recalling the former sway of the Power clan, is unusual. It is a name not recorded in *Onomasticon Goedelicum*. Other uncommon name-forms are Lobhán/Labhán (Louvain) and Brúchlind Theas (NY).

A slim volume, it is nicely produced and printed, apart from some typographical glitch which leaves a slight gap before a medial italic 'p'. The red and black hard cover with its repetitive motif of *do leanmain lorcc na seanleabhar* is strikingly effective, a colourful setting for a most useful catalogue. One can only hope for many more such worthwhile publications from the scholarly pen of Dr Buttimer.

D. Ó Murchadha

Thaitin se le Peig: Iris na hOidhreachta I. (Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne, Baile an Fhirtéaraigh 1989)

Bunaíodh Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne sa bhliain 1980 agus é mar aidhm ag na bunaitheoirí go ndíreoifí aird ar a n-oidhreacht bhreá féin is go gcuirfí ar sábháil í chomh fada agus ab fhéidir sin. Tá obair mhaith déanta sa treo san acu (fé mar a deir Donnchadh Ó Conchúir sa réamhrá) ar sheandálaíocht, ar theanga is ar cheol an cheantair, agus chinneadar ó shin ar a n-iris féin a chur ar fáil chomh maith; ag seo imleabhar a haon na hirise sin agus fáiltímis roimhis — tá an iris ag geallúint go maith, go deimhin féin.

Imeachta éigse Mheán an Fhómhair 1988 i mBaile an Fhirtéaraigh is abhar don imleabhar. Jeremiah Curtin (1839-1906) agus mórán dár bhain is dá mbaineann leis ab abhar don éigse sin — laoch úd na dteangacha go léir a chuaigh ar fuaid an domhain ag bailiú béaloidis mar gur ró-mhaith a thuig sé a thábhacht; an béaloideasóir idirnáisiúnta gó raibh meon mór an antrapeolaí aige; an té gur thug Indiaigh Mheirice *Hiwesas* (seeker of knowledge) le hómós air; an té a duairt roimhis sin 'I will find out all that is possible for me to find out about the world and this vast universe of ours;' agus tar éis dó a sheal a thabhairt i Harvard (mar a mbíodh coidreamh ar James Russell Lowell, ar Longfellow is ar Ralph Waldo Emerson aige) a thug an domhan mór air féin, ag bailiú roimhis is ag foghlaim na dteangacha, gach aon teanga dhíobh mar eochair chun an stórais.

'Jeremiah Curtin: The Life' atá á phlé ag G.W. Dunleavy, agus 'The Man and The Work' ag J.E. Dunleavy, agus is breá mar a dheinid araon a ngnó. Tugann Uáitéar Mac Craith an-chúntas uaidh ar thurasanna Curtin ar Chiarraí, 1892-3 agus 1899. Tá athrá ar mhórán de seo i dteannta le heolas breise ar na scéaltóirí a thug eolas dó i 'Jeremiah Curtin i gCorca Dhuibhne' le Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill — beagán faidiréiseach b'fhéidir, is beagáinín liobarnach, leis, in áiteanna, i.e. go dtí go dtagann sí go dtí samplaí áirithe as an abhar féin; agus go dtí dán léi féin ina n-úsáideann sí cainteanna foirmiúla as na scéalta go han-ealaíonta; cuireann an dán so críoch ghlórmhar lena haiste — ach ná casfí aon chuid den *deus ex machina* léi mar gheall air!

'Scéalta Fiannaíochta a bhailigh Jeremiah Curtin' is teideal do aiste bhreá le Daithí Ó hÓgáin — laigí beaga an Churtánaigh á lua leis aige i dteannta lena bhuanna móra go léir. Pléann Bo Almqvist na buanna is na laigí céanna, agus mórán eile chomh maith, in aiste scolártha, 'Finscéalta (folk legends) Jeremiah Curtin;' agus tá 'Tomás Criomhthain, fear idir dhá thraidisiún' á phlé ag Seosamh Céitinn i dtéarmaíocht scoláirí an bhéaloidis.

Tá taighde breá déanta ag scoláire ón nDanmhairg, Ole Munch-Pedersen, ar sheanchaí amháin in Árainn go bhfuair Curtin scéalta uaidh — Máirtín Neile ó Inis Mór — agus ar na daoine mór le rá eile a chuaigh chun an tseanchaí chéanna, 1891-9, e.g. Holger Pedersen, fear gaoil an údair féin, *polyglot* mór go léir eile, údar an *Vergleichende Grammatik der Keltischen Sprachen,* agus an teangeolaí Gearmánach, F.N. Finch, údar *Die Araner Mundart;* agus théadh Yeats, Arthur Symons, Synge agus

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