



13th conference of
the Australian early medieval association

20–21 July 2018, Flinders University, Adelaide

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committee of
the Australian early medieval association
2017–2018

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Keynote Speakers

Daniel Anlezark, University of Sydney

Poetic Inter-Saxons: Literary Relations and Exchange between England and the Continent from the Eighth to the Tenth Centuries

The Anglo-Saxons played a major role in the conversion of the continental Germans to the Christian faith across the seventh and eighth centuries. In the course of his missionary work in the first half of the eighth century, the Englishman Boniface of Crediton described the Anglo-Saxons and the continental cousins as sharing “one blood and one bone”. The end of the missionary period did not signal an end to the close cultural relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Old Saxons, but rather the opposite. Exchanges of personnel, most famously Alcuin of York, included an ongoing shared literary culture in both the vernacular and Latin, beside an exchange of books and letters. This lecture will offer an overview of the evidence of literary exchange, and its impacts, between England and the continent (not focused on Alcuin) from the eighth century to the tenth.

Andrew Lynch, University of Western Australia and Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions.

Of Monks and Men: Charles Kingsley’s *Hereward the Wake* (1866) and the Evolution of Englishness

From the Reformation onwards, English historiography exhibited mixed ideas about the pre-Conquest era. There was respect for the ‘liberty’ and ‘independence’ in ancient English laws and institutions, but also contempt for the perceived weakness of later Anglo-Saxon rulers, often attributed to monkish influence. Charles Kingsley’s choice of an eleventh-century East Anglian of Danish descent as his avatar of true Englishness in *Hereward the Wake* (1866) is significant in this context. Kingsley, an early supporter of Darwin, shapes his account of English historical evolution around inter-related factors of race, gender and environment which make the medieval past indicative for him of later developments, and which outline an overarching providentialist pattern. The paper will discuss Kingsley’s use of sources for *Hereward*, situate his novel in the broader picture of Victorian attitudes to the period, and involve comparison with Paul Kingsnorth’s *The Wake* (2014).



List of Abstracts

Darius Baronas, Lithuanian Institute of History

The military confrontation between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania in the 13th–14th centuries as a vehicle of cultural transfer

The expansionist polities of the Teutonic Order and Lithuania were interlocked in a war of attrition from the late 13th century on. This war waged between Christian and pagan adversaries was not only an exercise in destruction and annihilation, but also served as a means opening up avenues for seemingly irreconcilable enemies to get to know each other better. How this state of affairs came to pass is the main issue of this report. This Teutonic-Lithuanian interface is going to be addressed by taking account of such topics as: 1. The military know-how (castles, siege engines, weaponry); 2. Diplomatic overtures and trappings of knightly culture in (nominally) pagan society; 3. The people (voluntary and forced migration, colonization of frontier wilderness, a phenomenon of defectors). A special case in point is presented by Žemaitija/Samogitia (western Lithuania), a landlocked tribal society sandwiched as it was between the dominions of the Teutonic knights and the Lithuanian grand dukes. Placed between the hammer and the anvil these tribesmen managed to survive for quite a long time largely independent in the face of their “more advanced” neighbours eager to lord over them. They achieved this by tiptoeing a delicate line between rival claims and by finding a *modus vivendi* with commanders of the Teutonic frontier castles. Such constellation accounts for a paradox: a society with early medieval characteristics managed not only to survive in the later middle ages, but also to expand and reach the Baltic shore thus carving out a bridgehead for Lithuania separating Prussia from Livonia.

Chiara Benati, Università degli Studi di Genova

Against the Dangers and the Fatigue of Travel: Journey Blessings and Amulets in the Medieval Germanic tradition

In the Middle Ages travelling was often connected with a great deal of fatigue and danger: whether on foot, on horseback or by sea, travellers had to face the challenge represented by uneven and muddy roads, storms and bad weather and were at constant risk of being attacked by robbers, wild animals or pirates. As highlighted by Norbert Ohler (2004: 13) in fact, travelling conditions in the Middle Ages strongly resembled the experience described by the Apostle Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (11: 25–27). Nevertheless, mobility belonged to medieval everyday life and many medieval people of different social classes and statuses traveled, whether they wished or not. Fear and scarce desire for travel gave rise to a specific genre of blessings (in German, *Ausfahrtsegen* or *Reisesegen*) and rituals aimed at obtaining protection while on the road and at ensuring for oneself or a beloved person a safe comeback.

In this paper I will focus on these rituals in the Germanic language area on the basis of both a wide corpus of English, German and Scandinavian primary sources (i.e. actual charms, blessings and amulets) and literary texts describing these practices or referring to the habit of wishing a



good and safe journey to those leaving. In this, particular attention will be paid to both the pre-medieval and pagan roots and the late and post-medieval survival of these blessings and amulets, which, in a way, contributed to ease travel anxiety and, consequently, to increase mobility in the Middle Ages.

Chris Bishop, Australian National University

“Gold fades in the gloom”: the reception of Galla Placidia in the Cantos of Ezra Pound

The Roman empress Galla Placidia haunts the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound:

And there was grass on the floor of the temple,
Or where the floor of it might have been;
Gold fades in the gloom,
Under the blue-black roof, Placidia’s,
Of the exarchate; and we sit here
By the arena, *les gradins* ... (Canto XXI)

The numerous drafts of Canto XXI now housed in the Beinecke Library, Yale, demonstrate the significance of the empress and her centrality (in the mind of the poet) to a meeting in Verona, at a café near the Roman arena, where Pound met T.S. Eliot in the summer of 1922. That year, Pound was in Verona with both his wife, Dorothy, and his lover, Bride Scratton, and the latter had a strong recollection of Eliot placing a manuscript of *The Waste Land* on the table before Pound. Pound had just finished his revisions of that poem and found himself both in awe of Eliot’s genius, and dismayed by what he saw as his own inability to achieve the same level of brilliance. Eliot, on leave from his position at Lloyds Bank, was becoming increasingly critical of Pound’s *Bel Esprit* venture, and feared that the public-funding promised by it would see him lose his job. And so, they met, Pound and Eliot (and, apparently, Galla Placidia) in a café beside the Veronese arena.

This paper will explore some of the complex receptions of Galla Placidia during the early twentieth century, focusing primarily on the poetry of Pound, but also contextualising that reception within the memories of Aleksandr Blok and Carl Gustav Jung, both of whom also fell in love with the long-dead empress.

Adrian Boas, University of Haifa, Israel

Transmission of Technology and Design between Europe and the Latin East

One of the principal consequences of the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century and the establishment of the crusader states in the Levant, was the opening of vast new markets on either side of the Mediterranean and the exchange of knowledge and knowhow. This affected many human endeavours including the sciences, medicine, warfare, communications, construction methods, the fine arts, agriculture and the types of commodities available in Europe and in the Middle East. The two-way transmission had far-reaching consequences in the



development of both regions. It raised the quality of sciences and medicine in the West and introduced to Europe new and forgotten practises, such as the use of a gold currency. It made available to either side new, raw materials and manufactured goods. The West was introduced to unknown foods, fine textiles, new weapons, spices and to many types of manufactured goods from the Levant such as refined sugar, high quality glass, ceramics, soap, as well as to porcelain, silks and spices from the Far East and Indian subcontinent. Islamic building technology and design influenced the development of Gothic architecture and played a prominent role in the evolution of Western fortifications. In the reverse direction, European design and settlement planning made its appearance in the Levant, Western fine arts, notably sculpture and wall-painting reached the East, as did Western textiles and raw materials, such as timber and iron. In this paper I will discuss some examples of this transmission.

Mark Byron, University of Sydney

Byzantium in Modern Literature: Invasion, Plunder, Artistic Patrimony

Byzantium appears most famously in modern literature in W. B. Yeats's two poems 'Sailing to Byzantium' (1928) and 'Byzantium' (1930). The city functions an ideal icon in counterpoint to the diurnal world of physical decay and blunted intellect, and locates the artist, in Yeats's phrase, as 'a golden bird in a golden cage.' Yet the extent and variety of early medieval Byzantium's influence upon modern literature in English travels far beyond Yeats's empire of artifice. Ezra Pound took a lifelong interest in Byzantium, ranging across a number of historic and aesthetic themes: the legislative and architectural accomplishments of Justinian I and Leo the Wise; the difficulties Justinian II experienced with the encroaching Islamic forces of Abd-l Malik; gifts of diplomacy between Byzantium and the Carolingian court; and enduring threats from the Bulgars in the northwest and the nomadic steppe peoples from the east. Pound locates the significance of this history in specific buildings in Constantinople and Ravenna, in coins, bibles, and other objects. Byzantium functions for Pound as an historical benchmark by which to measure other imperial and legislative formations, including China, Renaissance Italy, the United States and the rise of Fascist Italy. This paper will evaluate how the thematic and historical treatment of early medieval Byzantium takes on various registers in modern literature in addition to Pound's wide-ranging response – including such middlebrow novels as Robert Graves's *Count Belisarius* (1938) and Evelyn Waugh's *Helena* (1950). Byzantium becomes a fertile trope of invasion and migration, cultural mobility and trade: a source of plunder and inspiration for poets and novelists dealing with large scale geopolitical shifts in their own times.

Daniel Claggett, Flinders University

The Anchor and the Isles: An iron anchor found at Camuscross, Isle of Skye and the history of anchor usage in Northern Europe

In 2009, an iron anchor was found in Camuscross, Isle of Skye, Scotland after machinery digging a drainage channel exposed the object. Due to the damaged condition of the anchor and its non-



systematic, opportunistic excavation, determining the age and geographic origin of the anchor has been challenging. One interpretation, based on the depth of the peat in which the anchor was found, led to speculation that the anchor was dated to the high (8th – 11th century CE) or late medieval (12th – 15th century CE) period, and that it was Viking in cultural origin. To establish a date range and likely geographic/cultural origin, a number of relative and absolute dating methods were applied to help interpret the date and origins of the anchor. The application of these dating methods revealed both the unique nature of this artefact find, as well as revealing just how little archaeological understanding there is about medieval anchors, their design, and their development throughout the period. This lack of understanding helped emphasize the need to use absolute dating methods, as well as all other possible data points that could determine the nature of an artefact found with little contextual information. The study of the Camuscross anchor has also highlighted the lack of archaeological and literary source evidence for the anchor, and the lack of understanding about the development of an object that is an essential part of maritime activity. In addition, the suspected cultural origins of the Camuscross anchor reflects the high level of settlement and exchange occurring through maritime activity in medieval northern Europe, and how this changes the way an artefact like the Camuscross anchor is interpreted.

John D'Alton, Monash University

Syria and cultural translation: Homer and the Bible with Islam on the Silk Road

Syria in Late Antiquity was a site of rich cultural contact which is evidenced in the extensive textual and intertextual impacts that Greek and Syriac had on Arabic texts. One of the most interesting examples is the Arabic translation of the Syriac New Testament completed in Damascus in 867 CE. The translator Bishr ibn al-Sirri uses many Islamic phrases such as “Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim”, that is, “In the Name of God the Merciful and Compassionate”, the standard Islamic phrase before starting a chapter. Bishr also at times translates “struggle” from the Syriac *agona*, itself a translation of the Greek *agon*, with the Arabic *malhamah*, which can be translated as “odyssey”, since *malhamah* is used in Arabic to describe the Homeric quest. Such a translation choice reveals awareness of a Hellenistic trope being rediscovered through the contemporary translation of the Greek classics. However, this cultural translation was not one way, as for example in a footnote to 1 Tim 4:13 about “strive in reading,” Bishr mentions the “correct reciting of the accepted books,” a very Islamic phraseology.

Bishr’s near contemporary Yuhanna Ibn as-Salt also translated parts of the Syriac Bible along with his translation of Isaac the Syrian’s ascetic treatises. Ibn as-Salt appears to be writing for an educated Muslim, and explains Syriac and Greek concepts. Both Bishr and Ibn as-Salt translate the Syriac of 1 Tim 4:8 concerning “bodily discipline” or “gymnastic exercise” (from the Greek *somatike gymnasia*) using appropriate Islamic terms. These texts shows evidence that the Islamic invasion was not a one-way event, but that Greek and Syriac culture also migrated into the Islamic elite. Syria stood halfway between Europe and Asia and reveals evidence of



influences from Western Europe to China, and this raises interesting questions about even the concept of a “Middle Ages”.

Robert DiNapoli, Independent Scholar

Between the Lines. The Psychology of Translation

In my work with *Beowulf* and with Old English wisdom poetry, I find myself drawn to the difficult question of what can be discerned of a poet’s inward mental landscape. In my translations, in particular, I have often seen that finding modern English equivalents for Old English words and phrases involves a great deal more than issues of mere lexis.

Like a beautiful shell you might find washed up on a beach, an ancient text represents the residue of living energies no longer present. Translating an Old English text, I regularly ask not only ‘what *is* this author saying?’ but also ‘what *was* this author thinking?’ Note the shift of tense in those two questions. The author’s words remain. They speak, even now, to those who can read them. But the thought and imagination that shaped them is fled.

Using brief representative selections from Old English poems I have worked with, I wish in this discussion to examine how responsible translation demands not only an accurate knowledge of source and target languages, but a more tentative and intuitive feel for the author’s mental landscape. Not just his or her cultural *milieu*, but the inward psychological reflexes of that *milieu* that we cannot see directly, but which shaped and conditioned the words of their texts.

Geoffrey D. Dunn, University of Pretoria

“...went to Rome, and when all had assembled there...”: Galla Placidia and the Theodosian Retaking of the West in 425

Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius I, half-sister of Arcadius and Honorius, wife of Constantius III, and mother of Valentinian III, spent much of her life on the move, living across the Roman empire of late antiquity from Barcelona to Istanbul. In nearly every instance her moves were the results of political circumstances she did not instigate but which she soon had under control. In the climax of Olympiodorus of Thebes’ history we are told that Theodosius II, her nephew, sent Galla Placidia and the toddler Valentinian back to the West, from which they had been exiled, together with an army to defeat the usurper John, who had taken control of the western empire. While Olympiodorus attributes the initiative for this action to Theodosius, this paper argues that Galla Placidia’s agency in taking advantage of John’s usurpation to orchestrate her return to Italy should not be underestimated.



Katrina Edwards, Independent Scholar

Watchers, soldiers and labourers: early monastic offices as Scriptural interpretation

The first half of the sixth century saw a concerted attempt to systemize and define the monastic tradition, with common elements of practice increasingly reflected in sources such as monastic rules, the hagiographic literature of the period, and Justinian's legislation. All of the Rules and associated documents of the time drew on a common fund of images of the monk or nun, such as watchers for the Second Coming of Christ, soldiers of Christ and labourers in the vineyard. Yet in one defining area of monastic life, the daily regimen of prayer, the Divine Office, diversity remained the rule.

Differences in liturgies are often dismissed as reflecting either local isolation and/or resistance to imported trends, or as having been dictated by purely pragmatic considerations (such as accommodating the needs of agricultural fieldwork). This paper uses the distinctive liturgies employed by the influential monasteries of Arles (nuns following the Rule of Caesarius, c510), Agaune (c515) and Subiaco/Monte Cassino (St Benedict) as case studies to explore the way in which these monasteries drew on, adapted and rejected competing influences such as those of the (imagined) desert tradition of Lerins, the 'sleepless monks' of Constantinople, the works of Cassian, and Augustinian theology. By employing techniques to 'read the liturgy', this paper explores the proposition that these liturgies were in fact very deliberately engineered works of Scriptural interpretation which played important catechetical, intercessory and community building functions, and reflected different conceptions of the role of the monasteries in wider society.

Matthew Firth, University of New England

Æthelstan Revisited: The Inter-Cultural Representations of a Reputation

Few late Anglo-Saxon kings are as poorly-served in the chronicles of England, either before and after the arrival of the Normans, as Æthelstan (r. 924 – 939). Though charters, law-codes, and the famous Old English poem *The Battle of Brunanburh* speak to a vigorous king, personally active in the government of his realm, there is little by way of contemporary historical narrative of his reign to contextualise these glimpses of activity. It is curious then that no pre-eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon king is so well represented in the varied non-English histories of North-Western Europe as Æthelstan. Accounts of his reign, however brief they may be, may be found in chronicles originating from Ulster, Nantes, Rheims, and St. Bertin, among others. He is similarly well represented in Scandinavian histories. Across these sources, whether British, continental, or Scandinavian, there is a notable thematic consistency in the characterisation of Æthelstan as a paradigm of right kingship. However, where English sources are largely silent on Æthelstan's connections to the continent and his capacity to deal with his continental contemporaries as an equal, the accounts of European histories allow for a more nuanced analysis of this reputation. Focusing upon two thirteenth-century Scandinavian sources, specifically *Haralds saga ins Hárfagra* from the *Heimskringla* of Snorri Sturluson, and Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum*, this paper



proposes to explore the transmission and evolution of Æthelstan's reputation beyond the borders of his own realm.

Jennifer Hekmeijer, Flinders University

Are the Peasants Revolting? The Use of the Lord-Retainer Relationship Metaphor in the Exeter Book Riddles

The metaphor of the lord-retainer relationship is one of particular cultural significance in Anglo-Saxon England. It is integral to the heroic ethos and the warrior ideal so its appearance in the riddles, which are mostly concerned with everyday objects usually used by *ceorls*, seems to be somewhat incongruous. This paper will offer a close reading of a series of riddles which employ various manifestations of this metaphor and suggest that, contrary to what we might expect, it is not always used to uphold or re-enforce the traditional social hierarchy. Interestingly, the expectation that the retainer will serve the lord is sometimes disrupted, or even reversed; a circumstance which does not occur in the poetry. In addition, a comparison between these riddles and riddle collections known to have been written by monks shows that the Exeter riddles contain quite specific details, particularly relating to agricultural tasks, not evident in those of the monks. Given that the riddles also show clear links with oral traditions, it seems reasonable to suppose there may be connections between the riddles and the *ceorls*. These observations raise questions about whether ordinary people had a role in composing the riddles and, furthermore, whether the use of the lord-retainer relationship metaphor, particularly in its disrupted form, provided an avenue for social commentary for the working classes, about their place in society.

Stephen Joyce, Monash University

Samuel & Saul or Galla Placidia & Valentinian? Recontextualising the textual sources for the British Isles in the fifth century

The lack of sources that describe the significant transition from the Roman and Christian province of *Britannia* (and the satellite political entities of the pagan Picts and Scots) to the beginnings of medieval 'kingdoms' contributes to contested narratives for Britain and Ireland in the early medieval period. Of the surviving sources that describe events in the fifth century, for instance, there are only three texts originating from the British Isles, namely Patrick's *Confessio* and *Epistola ad Coroticum*, assigned different dates in fifth-century Ireland, and Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae*, dated variously to a late fifth- or mid sixth-century Britain. From a continental perspective, only one text narrates events in the British Isles in this period: Constantius of Lyon's *Vita Germani*, dated to late fifth-century Gaul, with Germanus active against the influence of Pelagius in Britain in the second quarter of the fifth century. However, the lack of connection between these rare witnesses to this profound transition, hinging on differing visions of the present and the past, continues to contribute to uncertainty.



This paper re-examines the interrelationship between Gildas's *De excidio*, Patrick's *Confessio* and *Epistola*, and Constantius's *Vita Germani*. It will offer a fresh interpretation of the context of these texts on the basis of an argument over the structuring and wielding of authority. Whilst Gildas emphasises a political and ecclesiastical model based on the Old Testament kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Constantius connects the British Isles to a 'golden-age' in Christian imperial governance, as represented by the Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III (425-455) and his devoutly Christian mother, Empress Galla Placidia (d. 450). The outcome of this re-examination is to place these 'insular' texts within wider debates over authority in the second half of the fifth century.

Matthew Larnach, Charles Sturt University

Basil II's disastrous invasion of Bulgaria, 986: An investigation of the late tenth century Balkans

The Medieval Balkan hinterland has long been considered a cultural wasteland, ravaged by the endemic warfare which accompanied the Slavic incursions of the sixth and seventh centuries. This turmoil, it is argued, ultimately destroyed all major urban settlements, aside from a few isolated coastal enclaves which relied exclusively on naval linkages for protection. This is a perception that only recently has begun to be challenged, albeit relatively slowly owing to the paucity of available literary and archaeological material.

This paper re-examines the condition of the Medieval Balkans by exploring Basil II's campaign against the Bulgarian Empire in 986. This campaign is largely remembered for its calamitous outcome, when Basil's retreating army was ambushed and annihilated at the Battle of the Gates of Trajan. This abject humiliation is argued to have played a signal role in the development of Basil's personality, and the subsequent course of his long and ultimately successful reign.

This emphasis on its legacy, however, has left the campaign itself relatively unstudied. This paper proposes that detailed investigation of the campaign, and Basil's failed siege of Serdica (modern Sofia), can divulge important information on the Medieval Balkans. In particular it demonstrates significant evidence of continuity from the Late Roman period, including functioning road networks capable of accommodating wagons and the retention of sophisticated defensive fortifications.

These factors suggest a level of urban continuity in the region on a scale far greater than hitherto accepted by many historians. It also argues the Balkan hinterland benefitted from a relatively high level of interconnectivity with Byzantine Constantinople, potentially facilitating the exchange of people, ideas and expertise throughout the region.



Roderick McDonald, Independent Scholar

The Problem of Manx Survival: Linguistic Evidence and Manx Gaelic Under Scandinavian Rule

The Scandinavians are acknowledged as having had significant impacts in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man, and linguistic evidence gives an idea of the extent of their influence. In particular, loanwords from Old Norse in the Gaelic languages are useful indicators of who the Scandinavian settlers were, what they brought with them and what they were doing. They are also good indicators of shared activities. Indeed, surviving loanwords can be thought of as providing a kind of genealogy of influence and interests.

However, while the circumstances surrounding Irish and Scottish Gaelic are comparatively straightforward, the situation for Manx and the Isle of Man is less certain, and there has been much debate over the last century as to whether Manx Gaelic survived or was reintroduced following decline in Norse fortunes on the island. The issue has not been resolved, but this paper suggests there are good reasons to argue in favour of linguistic survival, on what may have been an ostensibly bilingual island.

This paper considers the small corpus of Norse loanwords in Manx, as a window onto the Manx Viking Age, and discusses what can be learnt from both the phonology and semantics of these words, to make a case for linguistic survival.

Penny Nash, University of Sydney

Movement Means Power: Ottonian ruling women and the travelling court

From about AD 500, the leading men in Europe began to call themselves kings and ruled via a travelling court, in contrast with the earlier Roman Empire, whose rule derived from a centralized Rome. Those with most power tended to be men, but kings, if they were to consolidate their patrimony, need to produce heirs who could inherit the kingdom. Consequently they required queens.

By the mid-tenth century in Germany primogeniture had been reasonably satisfactorily achieved. The single male heir to Empress Adelheid and Emperor Otto I, and later the single male heir to their son, Emperor Otto II, and his wife the Byzantine princess, Theophanu, provided on the whole a stable base on which the court could focus. Travelling was not a matter of paying idle and unplanned visits to their subjects for the royal/imperial court. Travel was an essential feature of rulership: to bring the royal presence to the subjects, to set down the laws, to resolve disputes and to demonstrate the Godly power of the rulers. Ruling women participated with their ruling men to enable the peripatetic government to function.

This paper uses examples from the late tenth century to illustrate the multiple ways those queens exercised power. The *puella*, Theophanu, brought a baggage train of goods from Constantinople to Tarento to her wedding to King Otto II in 972. Later as empress she made a pilgrimage to



Rome in 990 on the anniversary of her husband's death and issued commands from Rome and later from Ravenna to distribute largesse to monasteries in Italy. In 994 Empress Adelheid ordered Gozpert, the abbot of Tegernsee in Bavaria, to expect a visit and to accommodate her and her entourage of people and animals.

Each example shows how the women effectively arranged or re-ordered the affairs of the state as a direct result of their travels.

Pamela O'Neill, University of Sydney and University of New South Wales

Mobility without mod-cons: reconstructing travel in early medieval Scotland

This paper draws on a fieldwork exercise conducted in August-September 2017 wherein a small group walked from Dunkeld to Iona, testing postulated early medieval routeways and transport modes. A first commentary on that fieldwork was published later in 2017 (P O'Neill, 'A possible early medieval route across Scotland' in Ahlqvist and O'Neill (ed), *Germano-Celtica: a festschrift for Brian Taylor*). This paper builds from that commentary to consider wider questions of the prerequisites for convenient travel between far-flung parts of the British Isles:

- what would be a reasonable distance to cover in a day's travel?
- how would a choice be made between overland travel (on foot) and waterborne transport?
- what facilities would need to exist en route?
- how would routes be re-mapped in response to local political conditions?
- what restrictions would weather conditions impose on travel?

The paper considers the kinds of evidence for those matters that can be found in the surviving toponymic, material and textual records. Finally, the paper explores methodological questions of how best to approach the reconstruction of possible routes from the available evidence.

Stavros Panayiotou, Neapolis University, Cyprus

A Re-contextualization of Primary Source Material concerning the Arabo-Byzantine Trade in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean

This presentation aims at re-examining Christian-hagiographical sources which need further consideration as regards the role of the Muslim settlement and its heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in the 9th-10th centuries AD, where the two prominent empires (Byzantium and Islam) reached their peak for sovereignty in the Mediterranean Sea-trade. Christian historiography such as Saints' biographies and several prejudiced narratives, influenced by religious, political and ideological fanaticisms, increased the tendency of misrepresenting



historical facts by insulting the Muslim authorities and its naval warfare characterizing them merely as bloodthirsty pirates. However, according to the Islamic maritime law, several interesting materials have been emerged which shed some additional light concerning the transcultural heritage between Byzantium and Islam in the Eastern Mediterranean especially in Crete, Cyprus and Cyclades. My aim is to strengthen the view of naval warfare with supplementary material so as to omit exaggerated aspects and biased misconceptions by reconciling a better equilibrium between the Byzantine and Arabic intercultural relations in the Eastern Mediterranean. After ca 825 AD, when the Andalusian Muslim refugees sailing from Andalusia and via Alexandria disembarked on Crete formatted the Emirate of Crete, from which several naval expeditions had been undertaken across the Aegean. Two interpretations have sprung out of this practice mainly based on whether these practices were mostly actual unlawful practices of a form of maritime violence or activities authorized by the state (caliphate). Arguing against the first and favoring the latter, I contend that, taking into account Muslim and Syrian sources, the Byzantines and the Arabs, despite their struggle for thalassocracy, have undoubtedly passed through a peaceful period of consent by sharing commercial trade and respecting each other's military and naval intelligence. Besides, several archaeological findings such as the Serce Liman shipwreck found in the Sea of Marmara in Constantinople, empower our conclusion that the two powers negotiated and got involved in the Mediterranean on equal footing. Diverse sources thus provide us invaluable information that trade between Byzantium and Islam was more interconnected than previously thought.

Georgina Pitt, University of Western Australia

Identity politics in seventh-century East Anglia: the Sutton Hoo ship-burial as ethnic signifier in the context of succession

In c AD 630, the East Anglian community buried their king in a huge longship with a sumptuous array of grave goods. The Sutton Hoo ship-burial is the richest early medieval grave to come down to us intact. It is one of only three known Anglo-Saxon ship-burials.

There was a distinctive Scandinavian character to late sixth and early-seventh century East Anglia, affiliations based on immigration and trade, evidenced by widely diffused material culture. Recent fieldwork at modern Rendlesham, near Sutton Hoo, has revealed a complex high-status settlement. The site's material record, thus far, is sufficiently sophisticated to suggest patterns of consumption and patronage which typically supported elite political and social relationships in the early medieval period.

The years following the death of the great King Rædwald in c 625-627 were turbulent for East Anglia; there were sharp dynastic changes and a loss of pre-eminence. Power in the early medieval period was exercised personally; elites had to persuade as well as coerce. Elite burials can be interpreted as part of the topography of power, loci of contestation and negotiation. It was at such burials that the living established and re-affirmed relationships, obligations and privileges.



I argue that this ship-burial was a deliberate strategy to cohere a community and transmit political power across the hazardous liminal space between death and succession in troubled times. Using assemblage theory, I argue that the ship-burial was a practice of affiliation with Scandinavia, a performance which referenced old gods and old ways, evoking a sense of community through participatory action, and creating a cultural memory made manifest in the landscape. The burial's organisers thereby promoted their ethnic credentials, legitimating their claim to succeed and to lead their community.

Lara Romsdal, University of Auckland

Readdressing the Viking Terror: Norse exploration, initiative and interactions- a native perspective on the movements of Norse peoples

With the onset of migration being one of today's most pressing intersections, we can no doubt see this in the Norse Medieval world, specifically its earliest forms in the 11th Century, and further pre- dating this Medieval Age we can see the stirrings of this in the preceding Viking Age. The real question is, how did these people identify in their movements? Was it purely spatial change or cultural? And furthermore, can we lay claim to an identity known as "Vikings" across all of these society interactive contexts.

Vikings do exist, clearly, yet perhaps it is more of a question in how we classify and attribute a cultural identity to this movement of the Norse. Several exploratory movements were initiated from the 9th Century, on the back of the earlier Migration Period, could we simply see the Viking Age then as a continuation? I will argue that the dichotomy of a "Viking Age" is a misnomer in the understanding of a Scandinavian wider cultural milieu, that as state formation was occurring later in time, we can see a continuing in this sense of adventure. Not necessarily it could be stated, that this culture reflects the terror of the Viking Raids, as we are generally led to believe by the monks at Lindisfarne, but a political transformation of these incoming Scandinavians.

This presentation addresses these issues through the use of methodologies which signify: identity politics, the process of being "Othered" by other accounts and the impact this has on relations within differing communities. The ideas and journeying of migration will be considered, as well as the identity nexus between Norse adventurers and the pre-existing peoples in many of their wider locales, in how they may have been viewed as a cohesive group by other external forces i.e. the Britons and Anglo-Saxons in their earlier raids.

Finally, then, we shall explore the summation of the argument of ethnicity, and the simple question "what's in a name? Are they Viking or Norse?"



Cassandra Schilling, Flinders University

Peace-weaving Paradigms: Socio-cultural attitudes and peace-weaving queens in Beowulf

The role of *freoðuwebbe*, peace-weaver, is one of the most important and visible roles for aristocratic women, and especially queens, in the Anglo-Saxon period. Although the practice of peace-weaving has received increased attention in recent scholarship, historiography has tended to consider the topic in terms of either its demonstration of gender roles, or its influence on contemporary political and religious affairs. Instead, this paper employs an interdisciplinary approach to understanding peace-weaving by using the literary examples found in the *Beowulf* poem. Since literary accounts, especially those which include significant legendary material, are not influenced as dramatically by contemporary politics, such an approach facilitates the exploration of Anglo-Saxon cultural attitudes towards the historical practice of peace-weaving. Through a critical analysis of the representations of queens in *Beowulf*, a variety of complex and often conflicting socio-cultural beliefs pertaining to peace-weaving are revealed. The centrality of Wealhtheow, an exemplar of good queenship and constructive peace-weaving, suggests a fundamentally positive attitude to the role. However, the anxieties regarding the potential repercussions of an unfit peace-weaver such as Modthryth, who obstructs rather than facilitates peace are also present, as well as the concerns harboured by both the genealogical kinship groups of peace-weavers such as Freawaru and Hildeburh, and the clans they marry into, concerning the risks associated with their potential failure to fulfil their role.

Finally, the paper considers historical parallels to these literary examples in queens such as: Cynthryth of Mercia; her daughter Eadburh, the exiled queen of Wessex; and the unnamed sister of King Penda, discarded wife of Cenwalh, who demonstrate the historical reality of such beliefs and how they may have become grounded within the Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural way of thinking.

Erica Steiner, University of Sydney

Britons, Picts and Scots: Tattooing and Rites of Passage in the First Millennium CE

Tattooed people were arguably a relatively common sight in the classical world; it was a feature of the Greek and Roman judicial and penal systems, with slaves and criminals being tattooed by their owners and/or the state. Nor was early Christianity incompatible with the practice of tattooing, with references to tattooing found in the Old and New Testaments. However, slaves and criminals were not the only people to have been tattooed in the ancient world; various 'barbarian' tribes such as the Thracians, Scythians, and certain African and Middle Eastern people tattooed. This paper will look at such people within the British Isles – Britons in the earliest sources, and usually Picts and/or Scots in the later sources – who practised body decoration. Since the nineteenth century, there has been a scholarly debate about whether or not these people either painted or tattooed their bodies – even as such doubts have not permeated into modern popular culture where the stereotype of either the 'woad-painted' or tattooed Celt



remains strong. But such a debate about the nature of the appearance of different people in the British Isles did not seem to exist in the classical and early medieval sources; for as long as physical appearances were an important concern for the author, the primary sources seem to be remarkably consistent in their descriptions of these people as either painted or tattooed.

The first part of this paper will explore some of the accounts of body decoration from the classical and early medieval periods in the northern British Isles, and attempt to answer the question of whether the form of body decoration practised by the people of the British Isles was painting or tattooing. The second part will, with the aid of more recent comparative ethnology, attempt to identify certain early medieval accounts of body decoration as rites of passage, and discuss how their marks shaped the identity of these people.

Michael Edward Stewart, University of Queensland

Contested Conquests: Dissident Reactions to Justinian's Reconquest in Procopius's Wars

The mid-sixth century Byzantine historian Procopius's account of the emperor Justinian's (ruled 527-565) campaigns to retake the lost Western Provinces in North Africa from the Vandals and in Italy from the Ostrogoths is one of the most famous pieces of literature to survive from Late Antiquity. Yet recent scholarship has highlighted the fact that Procopius had his own agenda and therefore presents a skewed vision of the return to 'Roman' rule in what some modern scholars describe as a post-imperial West. It is clear in the recent surge of scholarship on Vandal North Africa and Ostrogothic Italy, that Procopius composed his history at a time when control of Rome and Carthage from Constantinople was contested. Procopius— at least outwardly—offers a very East Roman version and justification of Justinian's military campaigns in the West. Nevertheless, he also makes it clear that not everyone saw the imperial armies as Roman saviours. Procopius indeed goes to great lengths to explain the diverse justifications found in Justinianic propaganda for the dual invasions and is certainly upfront about the fact that some 'Libyans' and 'Italo-Romans' did not perceive the East Romans to be liberators but could label them as foreign Greeks and/or barbarians. This paper examines this 'dissident' rhetoric in the *Wars* more closely. Two main aims are sought. First, I will suggest that while it is difficult to recapture these dissident views in an East Roman source, we may recover shards of the contemporary debates swirling around the Mediterranean at a time when Justinian sought to restore a single homogeneous 'Roman' culture determined from Constantinople. Second, while it is wrong to see Procopius as merely a propagandist for Justinian's regime, we should also not assume he was against the East Roman campaigns in the West. Moreover, though we may feel we get to know Procopius from his writings, much of what we encounter is a carefully constructed persona. So, while some have seen Procopius's highlighting of alternative views of Justinianic propaganda as a sign of Procopius's animosity towards Justinian and his wars of reconquest, we should not underestimate the role of genre and rhetoric in the *Wars*. Since providing your opponents' viewpoint represented a basic tenet of ancient rhetoric and historiography, it is indeed something to consider when we look for subversion or subtext in the *Wars*.



Ryan W. Strickler, Macquarie University

Melchizedek Reborn: The Priestly Ambitions of Seventh-Century Byzantine Emperors

Throughout the history of the Byzantine Empire, emperors sought in varying ways to inject themselves into doctrinal affairs. Safeguarding orthodoxy quickly became a matter of strategic concern and imperial prerogative. Over time, emperors sought to endow their office with its own priesthood. As Gilbert Dagron has noted, such ideas had been present, if not voiced in Byzantine society since Constantine the Great (d. 337 C.E.) claimed to be a “bishop of outsiders” and found its clearest expression in Leo III’s declaration, “I am Emperor and Priest”. Little direct evidence survives between Constantine and Leo III (d. 741 C.E.) attesting to the development of an imperial priesthood.

An exception can be found in the seventh century with the ascent of the emperor Heraclius (d. 641 C.E.). In the opening his *Historiae*, Theophylact Simocatta praises an unnamed patron as “hierophant” and “great high priest of the inhabited world”, while simultaneously associating the patron Heracles and his labours, a reference frequently used to describe Heraclius.

By the reign of Heraclius’s grandson Constans II (d. 668 C.E.), the monk Maximus the Confessor was tried for treason in Constantinople. Among the charges was the confessor’s denial that the emperor was a priest. This accusation represents the first explicit claim of the priesthood of the emperor, suggesting that by the reign of Constans II, the imperial office carried priestly connotations based on the biblical Melchizedek.

This paper considers the priestly ambitions of the Heraclian dynasty and its supporters, and its opposition by opponents, to bring some clarity to the subject. Here, we consider the claims of imperial patrons such as Theophylact and George of Pisidia, the imperial edicts issued during the monenergist and monothelete controversies, as well as the arguments of opponents, such as Maximus the Confessor, against imperial priestly ambitions.

Janet Wade, Macquarie University and The British School at Rome

Circus Partisans and the Sea: Piracy, Dockyard Brawls and Empire-wide Networks of Communication

In the *Doctrina Jacobi*, the young merchant Jacob became involved in factional confrontations and skirmishes in various port cities that he visited. Able to assimilate seamlessly into the partisan groups he encountered at each port, Jacob rarely had to travel far from the docks to find trouble. To date, the study of the circus factions and their partisans in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods has largely been confined to the terrestrial environment and those who inhabited it; however, there is evidence to suggest that many sailors, itinerant merchants and dockyard workers were also allied to one or other of the factions. In addition, sources record that factional activity sometimes occurred offshore. Fifth to seventh-century historians note that



there were circus partisans who were engaged in combat, piracy and a variety of criminal acts at sea.

This paper will demonstrate that faction members were not only recalcitrant and unruly locals; they were also seafaring men with navigational skills, knowledge of ports and coastlines, and ready access to a range of maritime resources. This maritime expertise was often harnessed by political and factional leaders—such as in Heraclius’ amassing of Green faction supporters, many of whom provided him with ships and other necessary provisions, on his voyage to reclaim Constantinople in the early seventh century. Leaders like Heraclius exploited the extensive and effective maritime communication networks that existed throughout the Mediterranean. These long-distance networks helped to maintain factional cohesion over a vast region. Alongside their cargoes, sailors, merchants and travellers (many of whom were partisans themselves) carried the ideologies and protests of the factions with them, thus playing a crucial role in the empire-wide success of these groups.

Carol J. Williams, Monash University

Cultural Exchange in 11th century Europe: The teaching and learning of music

Music learning from ancient days through to at least the end of the 11th century was essentially rote learning based on an understanding of cultural exchange between the bearer of the cultural elements and the acolyte or student. The student gives the teacher attention and listens while the teacher sings the passage; the student sings back this passage while the teacher listens, and the exchange continues until the student can repeat the entire song perfectly. This system of cultural exchange was an organised practice in Biblical days when the Levites were the teachers and song bearers with the task of serving at the altar in worshipful song and of teaching the sacred song to the descendants of the family. In the European West with the growth of devotional song or plainchant forming the liturgy of the early Christian church, the process of oral transmission based on the cultural exchange of rote learning evidently flourished. The first records of the development of a specific organised system of rote learning for the chant appear around the time of Pope Silvester who in 314 founded the first Schola Cantorum (school of singers) at Rome. However, it was not until Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) that the Schola Cantorum became the means of establishing the authoritative delivery of the musical liturgy for all of Europe. Isidore of Seville (560-636) confirmed that the chant of the church was passed on orally and that there was no way of capturing sound in symbols or notation, and indeed it was not until the mid-11th century that pitch accurate notation was developed under the influence of Guido of Arezzo. I am interested in considering how the transmission of song changed when the group hearing and listening process of rote learning was replaced with the individual sight based reading system of music notation.



Amy Wood, Macquarie University

Changes in Imperial Modes of Communication and Regional Dislocation in the Northern Balkans in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries

It is well known that the Balkan Peninsula slipped from Roman control during the sixth and seventh centuries, although the processes involved are imperfectly understood. It is clear, however, that along with the sudden administrative and military abandonment of the Balkan provinces in the mid-620s under Emperor Heraclius, a longer process of gradual dislocation was occurring.

This paper will examine the ways in which both official and more organic modes of imperial communication changed or were abandoned in this period in the Northern Balkans, contributing to the dislocation of the region from the imperial core. Part of this process was the weakening of strong imperial ties with provincial elites in several important ways, which then had a flow on effect to the wider Balkan community particularly in the hinterland. This is a familiar paradigm in the study of the period in general, but it does not appear to have been holistically explored in relation to the Balkan situation. Other changes were the result of specific imperial decisions or localised historical events, such as the cancellation of part of the imperial postal service under Justinian I or the disruption by barbarian raiding and settlement to communication lines. Still other changes were more intangible, such as the long-term implications of the loss of the western provinces for previously important communication routes and those settlements that depended on them.

This paper will also suggest that these changing communication modalities had consequences for imperial economic interests such as tax collection and mining, and therefore, for the viability of the entire region in the imperial mindset. It will thus be argued that the paradigm of changing modes of communication is a fruitful way in which to approach the hitherto unanswered question of why the Roman Empire ultimately abandoned the Balkans at the end of Antiquity.