

Session Abstract

Medieval Academy of America Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 2019

Session title: Continental connections in the historiography of the Irish Sea region

(Sponsored by the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages Research Network)

Session chair: Dr. Charles Insley, Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, University of Manchester

Paper #1: Dr. Marios Costambeys, "The Feast of All Saints on 1st November and the communication of ideas between the Irish Sea world and the continent in the eighth and ninth centuries."

Paper #2: Dr. Lindy Brady, "Imagining the continent in origin narratives of the Irish Sea region."

Paper #3: Dr. Patrick Wadden, "*Ostmanni* and *Normanni*: the use of the past among Scandinavian settlers on the Continent and in the Irish Sea."

Session Abstract:

We propose the session "Continental connections in the historiography of the Irish Sea region" for the MAA 2019's "Approaches to Historiography" thread. Our session explores the concept of the global Middle Ages by examining connections between the Irish Sea region and continental Europe in light of the MAA 2019's "big question" number two: what are the alternatives to national models? This session is a product of a long-running collaborative research network focused on the Irish Sea region (the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages Research Network). In approaching the cultures of the Irish Sea zone as a dynamic network, our research group has sought to dismantle constricting national models of study which have impeded full understanding of the complex and interrelated history and culture of this region. Building on work begun over the last five years of collaborative, interdisciplinary research, our session proposal for MAA 2019 seeks to expand understanding of the Irish Sea cultural zone as a network through explicating its place in the broader global early medieval world.

To that end, the three papers proposed in this session each approach the historiography of the Irish Sea zone with an eye towards understanding its continental connections. Dr. Costambeys's paper focuses on the historiography of the Feast of All Saints to underscore the extent to which the Irish Sea region was a part of broader intellectual and liturgical conversations across medieval Europe in the Carolingian Age. Dr. Brady's paper discusses the key narrative role played by the broader medieval world in origin narratives of the Irish Sea region, highlighting the connections that the peoples of the early medieval Irish Sea region saw between themselves and the rest of the known world. Dr. Wadden's paper explores the historiography of the Viking Age to explicate the ways in which historians of the Irish Sea region and the continent actively shaped both narratives of the past and identities of peoples. The Irish Sea region has often been treated as a singularly isolated one by both continental and insular scholars. This session seeks to reclaim the Irish Sea region as part of the global Middle Ages and demonstrate the important connections that the people who lived there saw between themselves and the rest of the medieval world.

Cover Sheet

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Paper title: The Feast of All Saints on 1st November and the communication of ideas between the Irish Sea world and the continent in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Name: Marios Costambeys

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Title: The Feast of All Saints on 1st November and the communication of ideas between the Irish Sea world and the continent in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Abstract: Celebrating the feast of 'All Saints' on 1st November was an innovation of the eighth century in the West. But the questions of precisely when and where the change was made from the earlier feast date on the Sunday after Pentecost, why it was made, and how it came to be taken up enthusiastically throughout Carolingian Europe remain open. They are important not only for the history of liturgy, but also because the textual and manuscript witnesses to this liturgical innovation have geographically very widespread provenances in Ireland, England, Francia and Rome, pointing to a communication of ideas between these places that was at once routine and sophisticated. This paper will re-examine some of those witnesses in order both to address unresolved problems of detail in the historiography and to highlight the influence of intellectual conversations around the Irish Sea on cultural developments across western Christendom in the Carolingian age.

Audio-visual equipment: I will use Powerpoint slides, so will need a projector.

Cover Sheet

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Paper title: Imagining the continent in origin narratives of the Irish Sea region

Name: Lindy Brady

Session: Continental connections in the historiography of the Irish Sea region
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Title: Imagining the continent in origin narratives of the Irish Sea region

Abstract: Origin narratives which sought to explain when, where, and how a given culture had come into existence were a common genre across medieval Europe. In the Irish Sea region, origin narratives were connected by a shared thematic thread of movement, as the authors of these texts sought to explain how their ancestors and their neighbors had come to live in the British Isles. The origin legends of the Irish Sea region have often been studied as products of four discrete national traditions — the Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Welsh, and Picts — but have not been examined as the historiography of the Irish Sea region as a whole. Embracing the MAA 2019 call to consider networks as a means of understanding the global Middle Ages, this paper considers origin narratives from the Irish Sea region as a network of interrelated texts that help us to understand how the historiography of the British Isles as a whole developed. In doing so, I seek to problematize the idea of ‘national’ historiographical traditions in the Irish Sea region. In particular, this paper calls attention to the fact that the origin narratives of the British Isles were defined by connections to and movements through multiple places. I will focus on the crucial role of the continent as imagined in origin narratives of the Irish Sea region, underscoring the extent to which the peoples of the early medieval Irish Sea zone understood themselves as connected to the broader global medieval world as a whole.

Audio-visual equipment: I will use a Powerpoint slide show, so will need a projector.

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Paper title: *Ostmanni* and *Normanni*: the use of the past among Scandinavian settlers on the
Continent and in the Irish Sea.

Name: Patrick Wadden

Session: Continental connections in the historiography of the Irish Sea region
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Title: *Ostmanni and Normanni*: the use of the past among Scandinavian settlers on the Continent and in the Irish Sea

Abstract: The forging of the so-called “Norman myth” began with Dudo of St Quentin’s history of the Norman dukes written in the early decades of the eleventh century. This work later became a key source for historians of the Norman conquest of England, including William of Jumièges and Orderic Vitalis. Dudo established the image of the Normans as an especially militant people, distinct from their French neighbors and inspired to conquest because of their Scandinavian ancestry. Links between Normandy and the Hiberno-Scandinavian settlements of the Irish Sea world during this period are well attested and might have allowed for the transmission of ideas about the past between the two regions. Though no text comparable to Dudo’s survives from those regions in the Irish Sea world that were inhabited by the descendants of Scandinavian raiders and settlers – Dublin or the Isles, for example – a group of twelfth-century historical works from Ireland, Britain and Scandinavia appears to preserve historical traditions that originated among them. This paper will examine these accounts of the origins and history of the Hiberno-Scandinavians – or “Ostmen” – in comparison with Dudo’s work in order to shed light on the ways in which the past was used to respond to the challenges of the present in both regions, not least in the process of developing distinct identities.

Audio-visual equipment: I will use a Powerpoint slide show, so will need a projector.