

Welcome to

AEMA IX

GROWTH & DECAY

*The Dynamics
of
Early Medieval Europe*

australian early medieval association

ninth conference

Monash University

Caulfield Campus

Monday 11 February 2012

The Australian Early Medieval Association Inc

Incorporated Association No A0045152M

www.aema.net.au

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Carol Williams

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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

9:00 – 9:30 **REGISTRATION & WELCOME**

9:30 –11:00 **SESSION 1**

Chair: Carol Williams

Stephen Joyce

Growth or decay? A Prophetic Reading of Gildas’
De Excidio Britanniae

Shane McLeod

Growing Pride: The Memorial Runestones Dedicated
to the Warriors who Helped Knútr Conquer England.

Roderick McDonald

Diabolical Marginalia, Outsiders and Context
Dependency: How Foreign were the ‘Foreign Irish’ (the
Gall-Gaidhil) in Viking Age Ireland and Scotland?

11:00 –11:30 **MORNING TEA**

11:30 – 1:00 **SESSION 2**

Chair: **Shane McLeod**

John D’Alton

Growth through Death in al-Muhasibi and Isaac

Janet Wade

Prosperity and Population Growth: The Signs of Decay
in Constantinople from the 4th to 7th Centuries.

Penelope Nash

“Detached from All Feminine Characteristics”:
Empress Adelheid and Noble Lay Piety in 9th and
10th-Century Europe

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

1:00 – 2:30

LUNCH

1:15– 2:00 AEMA annual general meeting

2:00– 2:30 AEMA committee meeting

2:30 –3:30

SESSION 3

Chair: John D’Alton

Sara AmosEvaluating Louis the Pious’ Reign:
A Time of Decay or a Time of Growth?**Richard Excell**The *Planctus Karoli*:
A Precursor of the *chanson de geste*?

3:30 –4:00

AFTERNOON TEA

4:00 –4:15

CONFERENCE WRAP

Carol Williams, Conference Convenor

4:15 –5:15

PLENARY SESSION

Chair: Katrina Burge

Stephen Knight (University of Melbourne)

Histories, Heroes and Early Britain

5:15 –5:45

CONFERENCE RECEPTION

6:30

DINNER

Rasa Malaysian Cafe
29 Waverley Road, East Malvern

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STEPHEN KNIGHT

University of Melbourne

Histories, Heroes and Early Britain

National and Christian histories from the early British and English period are not normally considered in the context of the secular heroic narratives also deriving from those cultures. Yet there are some interchanges of detail between the two genres, and the ultimate text from this period, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, can be seen as a condensation of the two genres into historicised heroic narrative – which may in itself be an explanation of the remarkably dynamic force of the story of Arthur in the subsequent period. This talk will study the nature of the historic and the heroic genres in early Britain, and in particular examine the process of their hybridisation and ultimate condensation.

SARA AMOS

Monash University

**Evaluating Louis the Pious' Reign:
A Time of Decay or a Time of Growth?**

For many historians the reign of Louis the Pious signifies the decay of the Carolingian empire, a Frankish empire whose growth under his father Charlemagne, reached such heights that its demise seemed inevitable. This predicted decay is often illustrated quantitatively by historians and can be seen in Louis by his strategic shift from expansion to consolidation as a response to his comparatively weaker hold on the kingdom than his father. Louis' reign was plagued by multitudes of both internal and external uprisings, leaving by the time of his death a fragmented kingdom. Although the political and military decay is evident, it should not be the defining point of Louis' reign. I wish to argue that the years 814-840 were in fact a period of growth for Carolingian identity, both in spite and because of the changes in military strategy. Through a comparative analysis of the *Annales Regni Francorum* and Ermoldus Nigellus' *In Honor of Louis*, I will show that although previously the term 'Frank' was used simply as an ethnic designation to the Frankish *gens*, by the time of Louis, the term 'Frank' was used to define the Frankish polity. By looking at how language was used to define political identity I will be evaluating Louis' reign qualitatively, this differs from the quantitative approach used by historians when examining Louis' reign. Overall, this paper thus explores the complex relationship between the choice of evaluating Louis' reign quantitatively or qualitatively and how this can influence the image of Carolingian growth or decay.

JOHN D'ALTON

Monash University

Growth through Death in al-Muhasibi and Isaac

Growth comes through death to the self and combatting the soul in both al-Muhasibi and Isaac of Nineveh. When al-Ghazali writes his works on purification of the soul he draws especially on the 3rd/9th century works of al-Muhasibi. Al-Muhasibi develops a rich terminology of inner spiritual battle and soul purification which he considers as 90% of jihad. Smith, Schoonover, Renard and Picken have described his works but not analysed the metaphors and concepts involved. This paper analyses key aspects of al-Muhasibi's approach to combatting the soul, and briefly compares this with Isaac of Nineveh's roughly contemporary writings, demonstrating significant similarities and differences between them. This analysis informs the current debate over the meaning and methods of jihad, and demonstrates the paradox of growth through death.

RICHARD EXCELL

University of Melbourne

The *Planctus Karol*:

A Precursor of the *chanson de geste*?

Nearly five centuries after the death of the historical Charlemagne, Johannes de Grocheio wrote in his *De Musica* that “cantum vero gestualem dicimus in quo gesta heroum ... recitantur, sicuti vita beati Stephani protomartyris et historia regis Karoli.” Of such *chansons de geste* we have many thousands of lines of text, but scant traces of the music, which was evidently too simple and repetitive to need notating. There is, however, one song about Charlemagne which does survive with musical notation, albeit tantalisingly imprecise, a lament on his death. It may have had music when it was first written (presumably in 814), but the one source with notation, an Aquitainian manuscript of the later 10th century, provides a restructured version of the text with at least one new melody. While the staffless neumes do not convey precise pitches, the pattern of repetitions is clear. It does not exactly match Grocheio’s description – unsurprisingly, since it predates even the earliest known *chansons de geste*, let alone Grocheio himself – but there are suggestive similarities. There are also resemblances to vernacular songs about the other figure named by Grocheio, St Stephen, and to other saints’ legends with music. Thus in the *Planctus Karoli* a song of death may have become part of the dark but fertile soil from which a new genre of heroic song was to grow.

STEPHEN JOYCE

Monash University

Growth or decay?

A Prophetic Reading of Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae*

Gildas' *De Excidio Britanniae* (DEB) is one of the few texts to survive 'Dark Age' Britain, and its context is significant in constructing a narrative for 5th- and 6th-century Britain. Shaped by biblical prophecy, Gildas used both the Old Testament and the Book of Jeremiah, and the New Testament and Paul's Letter to the Romans, to construct and legitimate a providential history of partitioned Britain based directly on the providential history of a partitioned Israel just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians. This paper will argue that Gildas' educational background and patristic influences, influences that directly link his prophecy to the restoration or destruction of *romanitas*, suggest a context for his prophecy not of the 6th century, as traditionally believed, but within the later 5th century. This new context places Gildas' prophecy and its anticipated providential outcomes of divinely ordained growth or decay not in a period of stagnation and decline but at a time when the audience addressed by the DEB, the secular authorities and church leaders of partitioned Britain, still had the political means to restore *romanitas* and reunite the partitioned province of *Brittannia*. It will be argued that a continued retrospective reading of Gildas' prophecy has placed it in a context of decay, and that this new context points to the possibility, albeit temporary, of the DEB influencing a period of growth.

SHANE MCLEOD

University of Tasmania

Growing Pride:

The Memorial Runestones Dedicated to the Warriors who Helped Knútr Conquer England

The 'England Runestones' mention the participation of warriors in the conquest of England by Knútr, or subsequently in Knútr's bodyguard, the Þingalið. Despite the brevity of the inscriptions and the lack of overtly emotive language, they are clear demonstrations of the emotion of pride. Those who commissioned the runestones were often the children or even grandchildren of the named warriors, suggesting a pride in the achievements of the family. This pride appears to have been widespread, with the England runestones constituting the largest thematic group of runestones along with the thirty 'Greece/Byzantine' runestones and twenty six Ingvar runestones. The survival of twenty eight of the thirty one England runestones intact to the present day, and in many instances in situ, suggests that their significance appears to have endured and spread beyond the family unit. This suggests that the association with Knútr and his success, including participation in the honourable Viking activities of warfare and tribute taking, became a source of pride throughout the local community and therefore prevented the runestones from being broken up. The public locations of many of these memorials, raised in such places as along roads, beside bridges, and in churchyards, strengthens the likelihood that the runestones were a source of communal pride.

RODERICK MCDONALD

Swansea University

Diabolical Marginalia, Outsiders and Context Dependency: How Foreign were the ‘Foreign Irish’ (the *Gall-Gaidhil*) in Viking Age Ireland and Scotland?

From the ninth to the eleventh century the Irish Annals speak of an uncertain, seemingly mixed group of ‘foreign Gaels’, variously in Ireland, Scotland and the Hebrides; a group that appears to have caused as many problems to the modern historian as they are reported to have caused to the native Irish. This paper discusses ways in which these people, and related categories marked as socially or culturally different, have been treated, interpreted, and understood. Their identities are heavily context-dependent, as much about positioning and politics as they are about uncertainties and difference.

PENELOPE NASH

University of Sydney

“Detached from All Feminine Characteristics”: Empress Adelheid and Noble Lay Piety in 9th and 10th-Century Europe

“Adelheid’s *sanctitas* rests neither on the behaviour appropriate to a queen nor on that of a wife nor a mother. She does not conform to the principles of the feminine hagiography of the high Middle Ages: *militia spiritualis*, asceticism, virginity. She appears in fact detached from all feminine characteristics and one cannot avoid the impression that, if she were a man, the work would retain its cohesion and integrity with only a few minor modifications ... Thus we may end by saying that the *Epitaphium Adelheidae* can scarcely be included among those texts which relate to female sanctity.”

This paper examines the validity of Patrick Corbet’s statement about Empress Adelheid, wife of Emperor Otto the Great, by examining the dynamics of the milieu in which the empress operated and the mores of other pious noble lay people who lived in Britain and on the Continent in the late ninth and tenth centuries. As well as Adelheid, the lives of Count Gerald of Aurillac, William the Pious of Aquitaine, King Alfred the Great and Dhuoda of Septimania are examined for their conformity to contemporary modes of piety.

JANET WADE

Macquarie University

**Prosperity and Population Growth:
The Signs of Decay in Constantinople from the 4th to
7th Centuries**

In the early sixth century, Zosimus described Constantinople as a city that had grown so great that no other surpassed it in prosperity or size. Indeed, from the time that Constantine founded Constantinople until the late sixth century, it became an ever larger imperial metropolis. The archaeological record has left a lasting impression of affluence in Constantinople during the Late Antique/Early Medieval period, with magnificent structures like Hagia Sophia and other impressive monuments. The remains of numerous ports and fora also act as testimony to the city's flourishing trade during this period. Many of the surviving literary sources confirm this picture, highlighting the success of Constantinople as the cosmopolitan imperial capital overseen by the Christian God. Yet with this prosperity came an influx of migrants into the capital - men and women looking for work, itinerant sailors and traders, soldiers, officials, and travellers. The city became overcrowded, poverty increased, the streets were less safe, and general living conditions deteriorated. With the maritime crowd also came an increase in lower class leisure establishments and services, including prostitution. This paper will look at the archaeological and written evidence of the lives of the lower classes and maritime sub-community in this overcrowded port city through to the seventh century. It will demonstrate that there was an underlying decay in the city in this period of substantial growth, a decay which was a byproduct of the economic prosperity of the new Eastern capital.

Journal of the
australian
early medieval association



This peer-reviewed journal of scholarly articles and book reviews, established in 2005, showcases both Australian and international research on all aspects of the early medieval period from late antiquity and the end of the Roman empire to about the end of the eleventh century.

The journal welcomes papers on historical, literary, archaeological, cultural and artistic themes, particularly interdisciplinary papers and those that make an innovative and significant contribution to the understanding of the early medieval world and stimulate further discussion. For submission details, see the AEMA website.

Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association

Edited by Geoffrey D. Dunn

journal@aema.net.au

www.aema.net.au | ISSN 1449-9320