

The Celtic Roots of English. Ed. by MARKKU FILPPULA; JUHANI KLEMOLA; HELI PITKÄNEN. Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, 2002. xi + 330 pp., Pb. ISBN 9-524-58164-7; ISSN 1456-5528. [Studies in Languages, 37]

In much the same vein as Hildegard L. C. Tristram of Potsdam University's four volumes entitled *The Celtic Englishes* (1997, 2000, 2003, 2006) this book is a collection of essays, which revolves around the theme of the contribution of Celtic languages to the formation of the English language. And like its Potsdam models, the Joensuu volume is based on the papers given at a colloquium (held at Mekrijärvi research station of Joensuu University on the 24th–26th of August 2001).

In contrast to Ireland where substratal influences of Irish are universally accepted in the formation of Irish-English, the amount and indeed the existence of substratal influences of Brittonic on the English spoken in England is the subject of intense controversy. As can be seen from the introduction written by the editors, 'Early contacts between English and the Celtic languages' (1–26), this book continues in the Potsdam tradition of asserting that there was a 'substantial' Brittonic input into the formation of English, yet, even after reading it and the Potsdam volumes, this hypothesis seems to me to be far from proven.

Before tackling the central controversy, which forms the mainstay of this book, I would like to mention those articles which do not directly address that controversy but restrict themselves to discussing features of medieval Irish. Patricia Ronan 'Subordinating *ocus* 'and' in Old Irish' (213–36), Erich Poppe 'The 'expanded form' in Insular Celtic and English' (237–70) and Anders Ahlqvist 'Cleft sentences in Irish and other languages' (271–281). They prudently eschew concluding that the features discussed necessarily constituted substratal influences on English. The papers by Kalevi Wiik 'On the origins of the Celts' (285–94) and Theo Vennemann 'Semitic > Celtic > English: the transivity of language contact' (295–330) treat the even more difficult subject of prehistoric substratal influences on the Celtic languages. Vennemann is known for his controversial ideas concerning Basque and Semitic originals underlying present-day European place-names. Larry Trask and Joseba A. Lakarra have criticised his reconstruction of Basque and Hayim H. Sheynin, of Gratz College, Philadelphia, his reconstruction of Semitic (see the latter's internet review dated 09/06/2004 <www.linguistlist.org/issues/15/15-1878.html> of a collection of Vennemann's essays in Patrizia Noel Aziz Hanna (ed.) 2003 *Europa Vasconica – Europa Semitica*, Berlin / New York: Mouton de Gruyter). In his contribution to the present volume Vennemann proves the sloppiness of his scholarship by extending the already highly debatable existence of matriliney amongst the Picts – against all evidence – to assert the existence of matriliney amongst the Celts (301). It is further revealing of Vennemann's methods that, concerning this question, he contents himself with writing "My rereading of Zimmer [that is, articles dating from 1894 and 1911] ... has convinced me ...", whilst neglecting to quote, let alone mention,

A. P. Smyth's 1984 *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD80–1000*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, which has telling arguments against the view that matriliney ever existed amongst the Picts.

The remaining articles are more closely related to the central theme of possible substratal Brittonic influences on English. Nicholas Higham 'The Anglo-Saxon/British interface: history and ideology' (29–46) gives us a useful and concise historical interpretation of the relations between the early English and the Britons, though without recourse to any linguistic argumentation. Richard Coates 'The significance of Celtic place-names in England' (47–86) discusses the survival of Brittonic place-names in England and strikes the only sceptic note in the whole book as to the substantial survival of Britons following the English conquest (73–75). Andrew Breeze 'Seven types of Celtic loanword' (175–82) gives examples of both Brittonic and Irish loanwords dating from various periods, though without coming to any firmer conclusion than to suggest that Celtic loanwords – from all periods – are more "numerous" in English than was hitherto believed. The editors describe the discovery of a "host of new words" (21) and comment, "It is quite evident that Breeze's findings mark only the beginning of new discoveries." (21), but Breeze's collaborator, Coates, (72) describes the latter's establishment of an increased number of Celtic loanwords in English in terms of "some words" and "may expand the list somewhat", followed by a sanguine comment: "even taking all these into account the total impact of Celtic [loanwords] on OE in the era of colonization, expansion and consolidation is extremely small." I feel that the *parti pris* of the editors is again discernible in the way they suggest (18) that cleft sentences in Celtic have "possibly provided the model ... for the English clefts", but refrain from informing the reader that the conclusion of Ahlqvist's article, dealing with this question, says nothing of the sort.

We finally come to the rump of authors in the volume – Peter Schrijver 'The rise and fall of British Latin: evidence from English and Brittonic' (87–110), Hildegard L. C. Tristram 'Attrition of inflections in English and in Welsh' (111–149), David L. White 'Explaining the innovations of Middle English: what, where, and why' (153–74), Stephen Laker 'An explanation for the changes kw-, hw- > χw- in English dialects' (183–198) and Juhani Klemola 'Periphrastic DO: dialectal distribution and origins' (199–210), not forgetting the editors' introduction mentioned above – who hold that English displays many Celtic features due to it being, in essence, a Germanic language spoken by Celtic Britons. I have no quibbles with the argument that English and Welsh display some similar linguistic features: such would be the expectation of areal linguistics (the *Sprachbund* phenomenon) for two languages which were in use adjacent the one to the other over a period spanning 1,500 years. But the assumption, or rather the belief, that pervades many of the arguments of our authors that the similarities are due to the fact that English is in origin a Germanic language spoken by Brittonic Celts – the 'residual population' hypothesis – make me uncomfortable. According to our authors the 'interference' in English is due to the fact that the continental Germanic interlopers were a minority

elite which succeeded in imposing their language on a stable and vastly superior population of peasant Brittonic speakers (6–7, 113, 117–18, 135, 155, 166, 192). For our authors, the “so-called AS conquest” (112) were merely processes of “negotiation and acculturation” (6, 42) and a “stimulus to change” (30) worked on a majoritarian native population largely indifferent to the claims of Brittonic or Germanic elites (34, 40). There are differences of emphasis: for Tristram (135) “the whole of England” experienced the shift from Brittonic to English, whilst White (126, 153–55, 166–68) distinguishes between southern and eastern areas, more thoroughly colonised by Germanic speakers, against more western and northern areas (Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria) where the mass of the peasantry were Britons with “the occasional AS colony”. In contrast to White, Schrijver postulates a substantial Brittonic substratum in Mercia and Northumberland against a Latin substratum in Wessex (103, 108). Schrijver’s distinction is based on the linguistic differences between Saxon English and Anglian English (108) but are we really expected to give credence to the survival of a substantial Brittonic population in East Anglia?

The editors pride themselves in questioning the “mainstream” Anglicist view (12) and the authors display confidence that they have a “new and improved understanding of the AS conquest” (166) and that adherents of a massive population replacement scenario are “simply quite uninformed” (118) about recent linguistic, archaeological and historical work. However, with the exception of Higham, they are, for the most part, primarily linguists and, furthermore, specialists of another historical period. Their understanding of the English conquest is conditioned, and perhaps limited, by what they know of Middle English after 1200. Thus White concludes (169) that the geographic patterns of some innovations in Middle English can only be explained by the survival of substantial Brittonic populations. But the time-gap between the survival of the native language and the surfacing of its presumed substratal influences is at least of the order of five hundred years. Worse, Old English based as it was mainly in Wessex – surely a prime candidate for significant survivals of British populations according to the scenario favoured by our authors – hardly shows features attributable to Brittonic. Faced by the failure of this variety of English to confirm the continuity of Brittonic interference our authors resort to an unsubstantiated explanation that OE did not represent the speech of the bulk of the population, but only of the Germanic elite (153, 165–66, 168, 192). And this despite of the fact that the Wessex dynasty has in */Cerdic/* one of the most securely attested Brittonic names of any Old English dynasty.

Without wishing to rush to anticipate a more secure conclusion on a subject on which archaeology, palaeogenetics and comparative historical research have much more to say, I would like to present an alternative scenario of the Anglo-Saxon conquest (to which the size of this review cannot do justice). My preferred scenario is as follows: Germanic warriors were settled in some numbers in Britain before the end of the Roman Empire and through military might, gained political bridgeheads in many parts of lowland Britain during the mid-fifth century. The effect of continuous warring

and concomitant atrocities (which need not have been particularly numerous) resulted in the native population fleeing westwards and also to Gaul. By the mid-sixth century, the largely evacuated territories south and east of a line connecting Whitby to Bournemouth were being opened up to colonisation by ordinary continental Germanic peoples, themselves, doubtlessly, pressurised by other barbarian peoples in Europe. That there initially would have been a relatively small military spearhead does not preclude a subsequent mass-colonisation. Conversely, an initially large native population following the loss of territory may deplete due to economic hardship (not forgetting the effects of attested large-scale emigration). Obsessed by the current and fashionable trend of explaining in a monocausal-like way that the motors of ethnic change are driven by acculturation, the all-too-real possibility that disruptive large-scale population movements might also have occurred is simply discounted without recourse to justification. A bias favouring acculturation amongst archaeologists is understandable since, due to the nature of their subject, they can only study restricted aspects of human material culture over the long-term (*la longue durée*) which, of musts, tends to emphasise continuity rather than rupture. However, the bias favouring acculturation also seems to be driven by contemporary considerations: many English people display, almost subconsciously, a chauvinistically-inspired wish for a continuity of residence of English people in Britain, uncomfortable with the picture of themselves as unwanted 'interlopers' in contrast to the 'truly native' Celts. The allure of 'continuity' seems to be a factor that has influenced the writings of many contemporary English (and by default British) archaeologists and historians, scholars such as Colin Renfrew, Simon T. James as well as Nicholas Higham to name but a few.

However, there is one body of evidence that argues firmly against continuity of population over most of England and that is the utter dearth of Brittonic place-names in England. At the beginning of the book (6–7), the editors compare the Celticity of the English of England to that of the English of Ireland after 1600. Now, where a population has simply changed language, one would expect the preservation of the place-names (which in most languages are treated as geographical labels rather than meaningful phrases). The Germanic Franks took over northern Gaul at about the same time as the Germanic Anglo-Saxons took over lowland Britain, yet the contrast in both takeovers is telling: except in territories adjacent to the Rhine, the pre-existing Latin speech of the natives was not superseded and it is the language of the military elite which succumbed to that of the majority native population. Why the difference between Britain and Gaul in this respect if the native population had remained in place? (and I would tend to agree with Schrijver that it is probable that a substantial portion – indeed perhaps a majority – of the lowland population of Britain was Latin-speaking). Closer in time, the Norman French conquerors of England undoubtedly consisted of a military elite which spoke a prestigious language, but within little more than a century their language was giving way to the English of the conquered. What our authors fail to realise is that when we are

with the descriptive content of many of the articles whereas I find that when it comes to explaining the occurrence of features many of the authors throw caution to the wind and fail to give due consideration to alternative explanations in their enthusiasm to connect such-and-such a feature of Middle or later English to a very hypothetical survival of entire native Brittonic populations. Lack of space has restrained me from detailing the features of English under investigation, but they are certainly interesting enough from the point of view of English. To reiterate: there probably are medieval Celtic influences on English (whether substratal or adstratal) but a more comprehensive and critical assessment is needed. At the very least this volume contributes to this desideratum.

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RICHARD COATES & ANDREW BREEZE with a contribution by DAVID HOROVITZ, *Celtic Voices English Places. Studies of the Celtic impact on Place-Names in England*. Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 2000, xiv + 433 pp., maps, hb. £ 30.00. ISBN 1-900-28941-5.

The idea that Place-Names cannot be older than 'places' may not seem to have come by a stroke of genius, but is indeed a very sensible commonplace to keep in mind when trying to understand Place-Names in terms of etymology and linguistics in general. It is this simple but bright idea which underlies the studies brought together in this volume, all but one of them written by Richard Coates and Andrew Breeze. Coates and Horovitz co-authored a longer article about 'Gnosall and the Middle English word *genow*' (pp. 184–192). The basic assumption underlying most of this book is this: Fixed settlements came in existence in England no earlier than at best the Late Bronze Age, but more certainly since the Iron Age. The language spoken in England at the time of the arrival of the Romans was a Celtic language, and as we know of no other languages spoken at or before this time, and as archaeologists do not detect any great change of population in Bronze Age or Iron Age Britain, we may assume that the people organising (and naming) the first settlements in England must have been speakers of a Celtic language. Thus, pre-Germanic and pre-Roman Place-Names in England are likely to be Celtic.

Probably most of these assumptions can be contested, at least on details, but the general idea seems sound enough to bring Celtic studies more deeply into the study of early Place-Names in England than has hitherto been done. Initially Coates and Breeze worked along these lines independent of one another, but after having learned of each others work they started to co-operate, with this volume as one of the results. It contains nearly seventy articles, most of which have previously appeared in various

