

places Columbanus' proclivity for confrontation in the context of the Insular practice of 'shunning', that is, of breaking off social relations with those thought to have committed serious sins, an action that had no parallel on the Continent, and thus explains in part the difficulties Columbanus experienced in his relationships with powerful people. Finally, Albrecht Diem (Chapter 15) argues that the *Regula cuiusdam patris*, a monastic rule associated with the Columbanian milieu, can be read as a direct challenge to Jonas of Bobbio's claim to Columbanus' legacy as put forth in the *Vita Columbani*; Diem provocatively suggests the possibility of its association with Agrestius, the Luxeuil monk who incited Jonas' wrath as the subverter of Columbanian monasticism.

Common themes that run throughout each of these volumes are the importance of Columbanus' Irish background for understanding his achievements and failures on the Continent, and the saint's propensity for controversy, both during his lifetime and after.

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Conquest and Christianization: Saxony and the Carolingian World, 772–888. By Ingrid Rembold. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2018. xvii + 277 pp. £ 75. ISBN 978 1 107 19621 6.

Early medieval Saxony has recently benefited from long overdue English-language scholarly attention. Robert Flierman's *Saxon Identities, AD 150–900* (Bloomsbury) appeared in 2017, and 2018 saw the publication of the study by Ingrid Rembold reviewed here. These monographs fill lacunas in knowledge about a region that had been dealt with in stepmotherly fashion, not only when compared with the much better-known Frankish world, but perhaps even with the Saxons' Frisian neighbours to the west. Their authors also manage to come up with new interpretations of the available written evidence.

Ingrid Rembold deals with four intertwined themes: the Saxon wars waged by Charlemagne, which led to the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity; the role of the *Stellinga*, convincingly presented as a confederation of mainly, but not necessarily exclusively, sub-elite Saxons, in mid-ninth-century politics; the post-conversion Christianization of Saxony as it is reflected in evidence about the development of Christian structures and institutions; and the way Christianity, both a local and universal religion, was given form in Saxony.

The study opens with an Introduction giving a short outline of Saxony before the Carolingian conquests. This is followed by a review of the available sources, with attention given to problems of historical criticism. The Introduction finishes with a short review of the ways German politics have impinged on the understanding of Carolingian Saxon history: from Wilhelm I being proclaimed German emperor at Versailles in 1871; via the misuses of the Saxons made by the Nazis and the misunderstandings by East German communists; to the renewed interest in early medieval Saxony in the wake of scholarly work done for the 1999 exhibition catalogue of *799: Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn*.

The author deals with very much in relatively few pages, and has occasion to revise many conclusions of earlier scholarship. The Saxon wars (772–85 and 792–804) are to be understood in the context of the other conflicts in the early medieval world. After the conquest and conversion of the politically less organized Saxons, a period followed in which Saxon society became more hierarchical and the Saxon elites became integrated in the Carolingian world. All narratives agree that the Saxons converted in this period, and became part of the Christian church.

The ‘revolt’ of the *Stellinga*, who enter the stage in 841, turns out to be anything but a revolt. They may have originated as a guild, coming together in the practice of customary judgement. During the civil war waged by the sons of Louis the Pious, in 841 they sided with Lothar. In 842, they violated the truce between Lothar and his brothers: ‘the *Stellinga* had transgressed the acceptable limits of Carolingian social norms’ (p. 129). This led to Louis the German’s violent reaction, from which the memory of the *Stellinga* never recovered. They never renounced Christianity; theirs was no resurgence of ‘paganism’. They did, however, gratefully go back, with Lothar’s blessing, to the old ways of settling juridical matters. They were not a ‘popular’ movement aimed at indigenous elites either; ‘rather, they afforded Saxons from all levels of society the possibility of bettering their situation, if to varying degrees’ (p. 97).

As for the coming of Christian institutions, and the development of a Christian geography, this cannot be attributed simply to Frankish or Carolingian initiative. The monasteries (with a surprisingly large number of female houses) and bishoprics received some support by being granted monastic cells in the Frankish hinterlands, but the Carolingian rulers were quite simply in no position to give much assistance to the developing Saxon church. There were some donations of fiscal domains and tithes, but with the exception of Corvey, Werden and Fulda, local residents (and not only those from the newly developing elites) were much more important in supporting Saxon religious institutions.

The church that developed after the forcible conversions of the Saxon wars did not show any pagan relicts of note. There may have been variation in Christian practices when comparing the Saxon church with other churches in the Carolingian empire, but the same could be said about the observable differences between those other churches. Conversion was sufficient to become Christian; baptism was the outward sign of having accepted Christianity. '[O]ne was either in or out, a Christian or an unbeliever. After the conquest, the Saxons were, by and large, in, and were treated as such' (p. 204). Something about how these new-fangled Christians were educated can be gleaned from the Old Saxon adaptations of Genesis and the story of Jesus Christ as told in the Gospels.

The book provides references to all relevant written texts, and also to a selection of the scholarly literature, both in English and in other languages (mainly in German). Unfortunately, it was impossible to deal in detail with the historical criticism of all texts adduced. This is understandable. Sometimes it would have been useful, however, to know which arguments led to the dating and localizing of particular texts. It would also have been useful to have better maps: the four maps exclusively deal with ecclesiastical matters. A map of the various groups that were subsumed under the name 'Saxons', even if their exact place on the map would be difficult to pinpoint, would have been a bonus. These are minor quibbles. More important is the fact that archaeology is used almost exclusively to identify 'pagans' (which it is not able to . . .). Sometimes, though, there are also statements about the relative poverty of Saxony, or the growth of the economy. Archaeology's arguments might have been invoked there as well, if only in the footnotes. But, of course, this was not meant to be a general history of Carolingian Saxony. The book is convincing in what it sets out to do, and English-language scholarship has been given an important window onto an all but unknown early medieval continental region.

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The Gregorian Mission to Kent in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*: Methodology and Sources. By Richard Shaw. London and New York: Routledge. 2018. xii + 276 pp. £115. ISBN 978 1 138 06081 4.

Richard Shaw's *The Gregorian Mission to Kent in Bede's Ecclesiastical History* opens with an astonishing boast: Bede's account of the early seventh-century Gregorian mission to Kent in his *History*, completed in