

be advised to come armed with a map and some amount of patience, but the rewards will merit the effort. The excavation of Dublin's extraordinary early medieval remains at Wood Quay, and the associated sites, was a landmark achievement of north European archaeology. The first-hand synthesis of these excavations in a book of impressive detail, keen observation and insightful discussion is another major accomplishment, the result of decades of scholarship and endeavour. The work of an astute copy-editor would have been a comparatively small additional investment and is greatly missed. It is rare these days even for key scholarly monographs to appear in revised editions; one hopes that the enduring interest in the archaeology of Dublin will make this book an exception.

References

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MARTIN CARVER, JUSTIN GARNER-LAHIRES & CECILY SPALL. *Portmahomack on Tarbet Ness: changing ideologies in north-east Scotland, sixth to sixteenth century AD*. 2016. 552 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Edinburgh: Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland; 978-1-190833-209-7 hardback £30.



Pictish archaeology is currently experiencing a resurgence thanks to a new generation of bold and ambitious excavations that are helping to demythologise this most enigmatic of early medieval peoples. Martin Carver's ten-year programme of excavations at Portmahomack—the first large-scale investigation of an early medieval monastery in the kingdom of the Picts—has been in the vanguard of this research, and the publication of the culminating monograph

represents a major landmark in Pictish studies. Parts of the narrative presented in this beautifully packaged and affordably priced volume will be familiar from previous interim statements, of which there has been a steady stream since the termination of the final excavation campaign in 2007. But this in no way diminishes the impact of the final publication, which presents several new and revised conclusions fuelled by a combination of critical reflection and the results of a comprehensive programme of post-excavation analysis undertaken by a large team of specialists.

While Portmahomack is best known for its Pictish archaeology, this period stands at the head of a long continuum of activity extending down into the sixteenth century. The passing of these subsequent centuries is embodied in the complex structural evolution of St Colman's chapel (now fully restored as an on-site museum), the unravelling of which formed the centrepiece of the original excavations. One of the hallmarks of the report is the fluency with which it turns the bones of this archaeological sequence into a colourful and compelling narrative of Portmahomack's evolution over the *longue durée*. This fluency is achieved by providing the reader with a clear sense of the overarching chronological framework for the site at an early stage (Chapter 3), before the archaeology of its constituent phases is presented in detail (Chapters 4–7), and by skilfully weaving insights drawn from the artefacts, environmental data and the human population into the main fabric of the narrative. This latter structural device generally works very effectively, save for a few instances (relating to the interpretation of stable isotope evidence for Pictish burials of Period 1) where there is an inconsistency between what is said in the main text and in the analytical reports situated at the end of the volume.

The authors describe Portmahomack as “a sequence of settlements of different character in the same place” (p. 10), portrayed successively as an early Pictish estate centre, a Pictish monastery, a Scotto-Norse trading farm and a medieval township. One of the great strengths of the volume, redolent of the growing self-confidence of medieval archaeologists to embrace interpretive possibilities lying beyond conventional historical narratives is its subtle extrapolation of changes in settlement character. This is particularly pertinent to the early medieval sequence, a period during which Portmahomack is entirely unattested in the documentary sources. While the settlement was manifestly a monastery for some of this period (i.e. Period 2: the ‘long eighth century’), the

authors rightly resist the temptation of simplistically extending this characterisation into earlier and later centuries; as argued for high-status Anglo-Saxon sites such as Flixborough, settlements might pass through monastic and secular phases depending upon the changing dictates of politics and ideology.

The coverage of the monastic phase itself in Chapter 5 is a masterclass in archaeological reconstruction that succeeds in maximising the interpretive potential of a rich array of evidence derived from the inner liturgical core of the settlement as well as outer zones associated with highly specialised craftworking. In some cases (e.g. the detailed appraisal of archaeological evidence pertaining to vellum production), the conclusions have implications that extend well beyond the confines of Portmahomack itself and indeed of Pictish archaeology. The results of scientific analysis of the human and other remains help to enrich the reconstruction while at the same time offering a critical perspective on the identification of 'monastic signatures'. For example, isotope analysis of contemporaneous human burials reveals that the religious community practised a typical terrestrial-based diet with no evidence for the consumption of marine fish at a significant level, underlining the impression that the dietary regimes of some pre-Viking monastic institutions could deviate significantly from medieval norms and expectations.

While the range of evidence for this phase is extensive, it is instructive to note that only 20 per cent of the enclosed area was sampled by the excavations, resulting in some significant ambiguities. Not least of these is the original location and form of the Pictish church, which, on the tantalising evidence of several carved architectural fragments recovered from secondary contexts, was likely to have been an elaborately decorated masonry structure of some pretensions. In light of this partial view, it is somewhat surprising that the report fails to pose more questions on what might be represented in the unexplored portions of the enclosure, perhaps the most obvious of all given their apparent absence from the various excavated sectors, being the domestic dwellings of the monastic brethren.

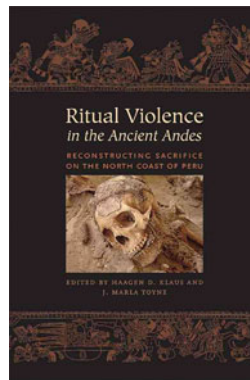
The concluding chapter of the report contextualises the results of the excavations by considering the changing connections that Portmahomack's inhabitants enjoyed with their immediate locality and the wider world. From this discussion the reader gains a clear sense of the degree to which enduring centres of power and social action such as

Portmahomack were shaped by interactions between external forces and persistent and highly localised cultural traditions; providing multiple perspectives on "indigenous responses to an exotic initiative" (p. 337), the monastic phase archaeology of the site is especially reflective of this theme.

Overall this is an expertly crafted volume that does full justice to the spectacular sequence of archaeology unearthed at Portmahomack. It will stand as an enduring legacy for the pioneering achievements of the underlying excavations, and serve as a vital guide for future studies of Pictish and medieval Scotland and the archaeology of Insular monasticism more generally.

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HAAGEN D. KLAUS & J. MARLA TOYNE (ed.). *Ritual violence in the ancient Andes: reconstructing sacrifice on the north coast of Peru*. 2016. xvi+468 pages, 130 b&w illustrations. Austin: University of Texas Press; 978-1-4773-0963-6 paperback \$34.95.



Amplified featured in the art of Moche Peru (first millennium AD), Moche ritual killing has only recently been documented by archaeologists as an activity performed in the real world and not in some mythological universe. Archaeological research has also

demonstrated that human sacrifice was practised in post-Moche cultures such as the Chimú and Inka, where ethnohistoric accounts complement the material record. Due to this proliferation of evidence, archaeologists of the Andes have become adept observers and interpreters of sacrificial behaviours, and this book presents an excellent overview of current approaches, thinking and results on this often sensitive subject. Of particular significance are the advances made in bioarchaeological methods and analyses, and it is these that take centre stage in the volume.

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