

Celtic Studies in Brazil

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Celts? In Brazil? These are always the first questions that anyone of our colleagues and students hears when mentioning that he or she works on Celtic Studies in Brazilian universities. This is firstly due to misinformation of the resources available for academic research today. Secondly, by a rather narrow view, which presumes that we may undertake here only local history or a European History that is limited to the old Brazilian perspective of ‘General History’. A perspective that is connected to an outdated view of ancient and medieval studies, dissociated from broad theoretical debates in the field of History and in the great areas of Humanities and Social Sciences. Among our colleagues in Brazil, there is still a deep-embedded view that the studies of Antiquity and the Middle Ages are essentially Eurocentric. Unfortunately, they confuse geographical region with approach. They do not know, or rather prefer to ignore, that European history (regardless of the period covered) no longer follows a perspective centered on the European territory and that we work today with much wider horizons, both from the geographic and conceptual points of view. They forget, above all, that the concept of Europe, as they usually employ, is a construction of the Modern period and that its meanings had various assumptions that changed along time (Cf. DUSSELL, 2000, pp. 41-45). These changes of meaning are precisely part of the investigations of the last 30 years by both European and Latin American colleagues, who have advocated understanding Antiquity and the Middle Ages in a global perspective - of migrations, of movement of people, ideas and artifacts, of interactions in the most diverse scales, and that a great cultural variability sprang out from such contacts. Today, the paradigm of connectivity prevails where the notion of Eurocentrism has no place anymore, and where the design of Europe, as well as the notions of East and West, are put in question.

In the case of Celtic Studies, this global perspective is crucial for the very form of the field, which is multidisciplinary (encompassing Anthropology, Archeology, Arts, Philosophy, History, Sociology, Modern Languages, and Theology) and encloses a long temporality (from Prehistory to the present-day). Contrary to the general belief, Celtic Studies are not confined to the study of regions of the so-called "Celtic fringe" as imagined by the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers, i.e. Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. In terms of geography, we deal with all regions of the European territory where we have vestiges of either Celtic languages or archaeological finds of populations traditionally classified as Celts, regions inhabited by populations that identify themselves ethnically as such, or even regions where there were migrations or descendants of those populations. In this sense, Celtic Studies encompass not only the constructions and migrations of prehistory and the Middle Ages, but also from Modern period to the present-day, so that migrations (forced or not) to Oceania and the Americas, for example, are prestigious themes in the area.

From this angle, the existence of Celtic Studies in Brazil would not be surprising; after all, they refer to the history of migrations to the region. However, we cannot reduce it to such phenomenon. In fact, most of the research that has been done in the country does not refer to the Modern period, as Eoin O'Neill points out in his essay in this issue. Nor are they exclusively done by authors that have migrated to Brazil from Celtic-speaking countries or from 'Celtic' heritage regions. On the contrary, those are works devoted to Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the uses of that past and the imaginary constructions about those societies. Such works largely focus on the studies of ethnogenesis, imaginary, agency, decolonial and subaltern groups. They provide a 'look from the south', as our colleagues in history theory would say, which brings up alternative histories of that past.

In the last two decades, since the creation of Brathair in 2001, we already have a series of publications, theses, dissertations and course monographs dedicated to themes of Celtic Studies in Brazilian universities. Much of that production has been in the fields of History and Archaeology, but we have also relied on the work of colleagues in the areas of literature, philosophy and science of religion. Many of us have created research groups (registered with CNPq - the Brazilian Council for Science and Technology), which have promoted debates and thematic conferences. Those brought together several colleagues from different European universities, and in some cases, as in the History

course of the Universidade Federal Fluminense (at the Gragoatá campus), we also managed to include specific courses on European prehistory and Iron Age in Central-Western Europe in the curriculum. Today, our students have a greater exchange with colleagues from foreign universities, participating in international conferences, and doing research internships at European institutions. These last (almost) two decades allowed us to train and qualify our staff, but the creation of the field itself in the country is still, as we say, *work in progress*. Most of such development has been due to individual actions, often isolated, as O'Neill well highlights in his appraisal of the field. For the most part, we do not yet have the recognition of institutions. Funding is largely limited to the training of future researchers, but again with little room for inclusion of these new cadres within the curricula, which follow more traditional patterns and divisions.

In fact, it is because of such outdated format that many people still think that there is no place for Celtic Studies in Brazil. But the question that they should ask us is not whether it is possible to work with Celtic Studies in Brazil, but rather what we have to say, and how we are contributing to that area in Brazil. In other words, how this 'southern-way of view' has explained that part of European History, and to what extent it dialogues with the established interpretive trends in the international academy. Moreover: how do we explain the growing interest in such area in Brazil? After all, with each new course offered, with each new publication, we notice a greater interest outside academia. Of course, such an interest is guided by Celtomania¹, which is widely diffused in the common sense; and this is not Brazil's prerogative. Neo-pagan religious movements have increased around the world (as Wicca, the Druidic Order, and various other forms of contemporary shamanism), but also is the growing fascination with the Iron Age populations in Central-Western Europe and the medieval myths and phantastic stories - mainly those in the Welsh and Irish vernacular literatures. These are phenomena that have fostered the spread of stereotypes and fanciful visions of the past, as the essays of Lupi and O'Neill clearly point out. And much of the research done in Brazil has sought to respond, or rather to combat, precisely that sort of vision.

The papers published in this dossier on *Celtic Studies in Brazil* prove how the field has grown in the last years and show the diversity of approaches explored. In spite of the institutional and financial challenges faced by humanities researchers inside and outside Brazil, each year more Brazilian researchers choose to investigate Celtic

societies or Celtic languages. Motivations are difficult to assess. No mapping and identification of Brazilian researchers dedicated to Celtic studies will provide us with an explanation for such interest apart from the fact that fortunately Brazilian scholars are, like any other academics, curious, interested in the Humanity's past, and interested in the *Other*. To foreigners, that statement may sound strange after the sad fact that the National Museum of Brazil (the most important museum in the country, with valuable archaeological, historical, biological, and ethnological artifacts) had succumbed to the flames in 09.02.2018. However, this happened due to disregard of a political group that governs for its own interests, and does not pertain to social scientist or humanities' researchers, who actually fight daily to make Brazilian society aware of the importance and the right to know the History of Humanity.

Thus, the present dossier provides a small sample of the variety of research projects developed in Brazil into the field of so-called *Celtic Studies*. It encompasses the following periods and locations: Iron Age (Trombetta, Tacla, and Peixoto), Roman Provinces (Vital), Relations between the Insular world and the Continent in Late Antiquity (Santos and Belmaia)², Medieval France (Sinval), Ireland in the Early Modern Age (O'Neill) and Ireland in the Late Modern period (Abrantes).

Here, one can find a range of contemporary conceptual debates (Santos, Tacla, Abrantes, O'Neill, Pedreira, Lupi, Trombetta) which presents multiple approaches and different research methods. Lupi draws a reflexion about the field, and the trajectory and proposal of *Brathair*. Initially a research group, today it is more a space of debates that has the publication of this journal and the organization of a biannual conferences as its main focus of action. Other research groups have equally contributed to the expansion of research in the field, such as LARP³ (Laboratory of Roman Provincial Archeology), from the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo, where researchers have been dedicated to the study of the Roman provinces of Britannia, Gallia and Hispania. Such is the case of Silvana Trombetta, who contributes to the present dossier with the discussion on Celtic ethnogenesis and the contribution of Iberian archaeology. Discussing the new interpretations of the Atlantic paradigm⁴, she exposes the limits of current research and interpretation.

Another group that largely works on Celtic Studies is NEREIDA⁵ (Nucleus of Studies of Representations and Images of Antiquity) of the Universidade Federal Fluminense. It has developed researches in European Prehistory (mainly Iron Age) and

Romanization of Britain, Gaul and Hispania, as well as the perception and uses of the past in the Modern Period. In this dossier, we have three contributions from researchers of this group. Based in the field of Digital Humanities, Adriene Tacla proposes the use of 3D technologies for numismatic analysis. Drawing on the technique of Reflectance Transformation Imaging and supported by the application of the theories on agency and biography of the artifacts, she demonstrates how we can bring new light to the traditional study of Iron Age coinage. The study of these monetary images has much to gain from new visualization techniques, which contribute to their understanding as much as to the monetary artifact itself. Similarly, within the studies of agency of artifacts, Érika Vital Pedreira proposes a new approach to the concept of triplism based on the epigraphic record. Originally coined in the 1920s and 1930s, triplism, was understood as a uniform phenomenon. Nonetheless, as she points out, it is inadequate to define the myriad of cultural practices and the complexity of the titles and epithets dedicated to the feminine deities in votive epigraphs in Hispania, Gaul and Britannia between the second and third centuries BC. Thus, she argues in favour of triplisms (in plural) in order to embrace the multiplicity of cultural practices evidenced in the material culture in those provinces. Equally related to NEREIDA, the work of Pedro Peixoto calls into question the widespread view of the configuration of Iron Age societies. In effect, he challenges a view deeply rooted in Celtic Studies - and the common sense - about the role of women in Iron Age communities, as well as the prevailing androcentrism in the academic discourse on Iron Age societies.

In contrast, Dominique Santos, also based on epigraphic studies, informs the Brazilian public about his current work on ogham stones through the example of an important ogham found in Wales that has inscriptions in the Roman and Ogham languages. His research focuses on the period of the development of writing in the insular world, and the cultural exchanges that took place around the Irish Sea during Late Antiquity. Similarly, Nathany Belmaia addresses the relations between the insular world and the Continent. Her paper deals with the interactions between insular and Roman forms of monasticism, and the seventh-century dispute about the dating of the Easter. Both the works of Santos and Belmaia represent a group of young researchers working in the field of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. There are a considerable number of researchers who have developed masters and doctoral theses circumscribed in these historical periods by investigating societies and regions of the so-called Celts,

such as Ireland and Scotland primarily. However, Santos is one of the few researchers working on these subjects that have been successful in securing a lectureship in a higher education institution in Brazil. His work in Blumenau led to the creation of LABEAM⁶ (Laboratory Blumenauense of Ancient and Medieval Studies).

A field that often arouses the interest of Brazilian scholars is the study of French medieval literature. Obviously, this vast literature opens the way to different approaches. Sinval Gonçalvez, for example, emphasizes how the Grail Tale of Chrétien de Troyes informs us about the process of internalization of the concept of guilt and sin by lay people in the twelfth century. While Pedro Fonseca, in the session of free articles, investigates how misogynistic ideas were spread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. By analyzing aspects of Marbodo de Rennes's work, Fonseca evidences how the author draws on both classical pagan literature and the patristic to produced his literary constructions. Fonseca argues that even though works such as Marbodo's had primarily a literary purpose, i.e., they represented a 'mere set of rhetorical formulas for the demonstration of literary skills and gifts', they illustrate what in fact were recurrent thoughts at the time.

Eoin O'Neill makes an important sociological, historical and political analysis of the concept of Celts and Gaelic, highlighting how the former were incorrectly employed and appropriated by different groups and how the latter is being studied (or understudied) and appreciated. His essay also provides a very lucid overview of the Brazilian academic landscape. He correctly identified the institutional challenges for the growth of the field of Celtic Studies in Brazil.

The field of Celtic Studies is extremely stimulating for the process of transformation of our academy, precisely because it invites us to overcome the traditional disciplinary barriers and to break with the traditional periodizations adopted in Brazil. We need to confront Iron Age societies with the medieval accounts and records, as well as with their appropriations and idealizations in modern times. Moreover, even within these traditional time-frames, we must observe the existence of different chronologies and unfoldings. For instance, if we take Gaelic Ireland as an example, we have a time-frame that ranges from Late Middle Ages to Early Modern Age. So, it is physical, temporal and disciplinary frontiers that we must advance. For they will certainly present us new questions.

Part of these challenges lies in the analysis of the concepts of the field, such as the ‘Celticity’, which is here explored by Elisa Abrantes. She points out that since the nineteenth century the concept of ‘Celt’ has become important to contemporary Ireland, and that the idea of being Celtic contributes to the definition of Irish identity. However, she shows that this is a construction and therefore must be questioned, even though it is a useful socio-historical construction. Additionally, she concludes that 21st century Ireland faces challenges to reinvent the concept of Irishness in order to include the large number of immigrants that it has embraced. Abrantes’ work is an example of what we should perhaps label more appropriately as ‘Irish Studies’, and is associated with two important institutions that foster this field in Brazil. These are the ABEI - Brazilian Association of Irish Studies - and the Chair of Irish Studies W.B. Yeats of the University of São Paulo. These institutions represent today the main centers of dissemination of Irish Studies in Brazil. Most of the researchers associated with these institutions work with modern literatures and languages (primarily in English); however, they also integrate the works of historians working with Late Antiquity and Medieval Irish History, such as Dominique Santos and Elaine Pereira Farrell.

Closing this issue of *Brathair*, we have the translation session, with the work of Susani França and Rafael Afonso Gonçalves on the *Book of the State of the Great Khan*, while in the reviews we have the presentation of the works of Barbara Rosenwein ‘*Generations of Feelings*’, on the construction of ‘emotional communities’ in the Middle Ages, and ‘*Impressions of the Middle Ages*’ by Ricardo da Costa, which brings a collection of essays. Both explore interdisciplinary and long-term approaches to the study of the Middle Ages. While Costa expounds different glances on the Middle Ages, Rosenwein opens a new perspective on the study of imagery and mentalities, exploring the senses and perception as crucial to the apprehension of those societies.

Finally, given the myriad perspectives, disciplines, time and spatial frameworks that we present in this dossier, there remains the question of what we understand as Celtic Studies in Brazil. What unites us? How can we expand our research and research frontiers? How can we contribute to its advancement and dissemination? As a starting point and as proposed above, there is the discussion and definition of concepts, chronologies and frameworks. For that, it is essential that we advance in research problems common to the different disciplines and time-frames. If we look at the frequency and topics of the presentations at the *International Congress of Celtic*

*Studies*⁷ and the publications and courses within the field, we will see the predominance of researches on the Middle Ages and in Modern Languages (whether in literatures or in linguistics). As Hale and Payton (2000: 1-2) have pointed out, researchers in Celtic Studies are still reluctant to deal with contemporary phenomena, and in our view there are still few modernists who adhere to this area. Among the researchers of the Iron Age communities, the number that has been dedicated to such debates have reduced along the years and smaller still is the number of those that attend conferences in Celtic Studies and that adhere to the publications within this field. That is mainly due to what we call *Celtcepticism*. However, as one of the organizers of this dossier advocates (TACLA and JOHNSTON, 2018 - in press), we need to broaden the definition of this concept and not restrict it to a single time frame in order to widen our research frontiers and the transdisciplinary dialogue. It is therefore paramount to understand that the ‘Celt is as diverse as its own history’ (TACLA and JOHNSTON, 2018 - in press).

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¹ For an introduction on the topic, see Décimo (1998), Rieckhoff (2001), and Sims-Williams (1998).

² We understand as 'Insular world' primarily the various localities around the Irish Sea (currently: Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales, England and Scotland) as defined by Santos in his contribution to this edition. The usage of the term 'Insular world' is preferred by scholars to avoid other terms that contains conflicting political meanings. An example is the network 'Converting the Isles' (<https://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/conversion/about.html>, accessed 31/10/2018); however, this network includes also the Scandinavia.

³ <http://www.larp.mae.usp.br>

⁴ Sobre essa questão, ver Cunliffe (2010).

⁵ <http://www.historia.uff.br/nereida/> ; <http://dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/1860859683759986>

⁶ www.furb.br/labeam

⁷ The 16th edition of this congress will take place between 22-26 July 2019 at Bangor University:
<http://celticcongress.bangor.ac.uk>