

# ArkeoGazte

Revista de Arqueología - Arkeologia aldizkaria



*Monográfico:  
Arqueología y medio ambiente,  
una historia de una ida y una vuelta*

*Monografikoa:  
Arkeologia eta igurumena,  
ida eta etorri baten istorioa*

## REVISTA ARKEOGAZTE/ARKEOGAZTE ALDIZKARIA

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Monografikoa: Arkeologia eta igurumena, joan eta etorri baten istorioa

Monographic: Archaeology and environment, there and back again

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REVISTA ARKEOGAZTE es una revista científica de ARQUEOLOGÍA, editada por ARKEOGAZTE: ASOCIACIÓN DE JÓVENES INVESTIGADORES EN ARQUEOLOGÍA PREHISTÓRICA E HISTÓRICA con periodicidad anual y en la que los originales recibidos son evaluados por revisores externos mediante el sistema conocido como el de doble ciego. Se compone de las siguientes secciones: MONOGRÁFICO, VARIA, ENTREVISTA, RECENSIONES y publica trabajos originales de investigación en torno a una temática definida, trabajos originales de temática arqueológica libre, notas críticas de trabajos arqueológicos actuales o entrevistas a personalidades científicas de la Arqueología. Los originales se publican en castellano, euskera e inglés. El Consejo de Redacción puede admitir originales remitidos en italiano, portugués, francés, gallego y catalán.

ARKEOGAZTE ALDIZKARIA, ARKEOLOGIA aldizkari zientifikoa da, ARKEOGAZTE: HISTORIAURREKO ETA GARAI HISTORIKOKO ARKEOLOGIA IKERTZAILE GAZTEEN ELKARTEAK argitaratua eta urtean behin kaleratzen dena. Jasotako originalak kanpoko zuzentzaileen bidez ebaluatzen dira bikun itsua deritzon sistemari jarraituz. Aldizkaria hurrengo atalek osatzen dute: MONOGRAFIKOA, VARIA, ELKARRIZKETA, AIPAMENAK, hau da, zehaztutako gai baten inguruko ikerketa lan originalak, edozein gai arkeologikoari buruzko lan originalak, egungo lan arkeologikoen nota kritikoak edo Arkeologiaren munduko pertsona zientifikoei egindako elkarrizketak argitaratuko dira. Originalak gazteleraz, euskaraz eta ingelesez argitaratuko dira. Erredakzio Batzordeak italieraz, portugaldarrez, frantsesez, galizieraz eta katalunieraz idatzitako originalak onar ditzake.

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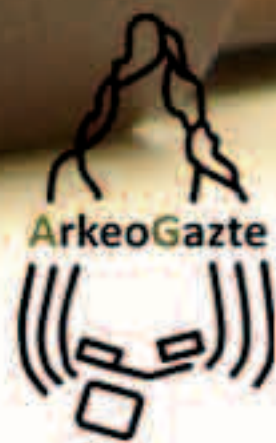
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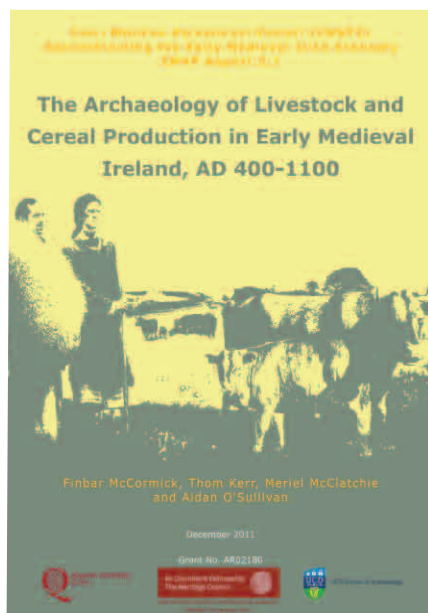


Recensiones

Aipamenak



MCCORMICK, F.; KERR, T.; MCCLATCHIE, M. y O'SULLIVAN, A. (2011). *The Archaeology of Livestock and Cereal Production in Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400-1100*. Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research.



Building a detailed narrative of agricultural production is essential to understanding the organisation of society in Early Medieval Ireland. Primarily, of course, evidence of cereal and livestock production elucidate subsistence practices, but they can also have implications for the way that human relationships were manifested. The establishment and maintenance of social hierarchy, the functioning of the legal system, kinship systems and gender roles were all tied into, and influenced by, livestock and cereal production. As a result, the authors of *The Archaeology of Livestock and Cereal Production in Early Medieval Ireland* had a monumental task: to synthesise the archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological evidence for 700 years of Irish agricultural practice, and set it in its historical context.

The volume is report 5.1 of the Early Medieval Ireland Project (EMAP), a series of open access publications with the explicit aim of giving researchers greater accessibility to the large quantity

of grey literature that has been produced on the subject of Early Medieval Irish archaeology. Separated into three large chapters, the volume comprises an overview that discusses archaeological and historical evidence of agricultural practice, a detailed account of the archaeobotanical record with a focus on utilising grey literature, and a review of the most significant zooarchaeological evidence for the period.

Chapter 1 provides an important overview of agricultural practices in the study area. It is a valuable synthesis of the subject under discussion, and gives a coherent account of the agricultural landscape, evidence from surviving material culture, archaeological features and field systems, as well as touching on the evidence from plant and faunal remains that are covered in more detail in the subsequent chapters. It also includes a great deal of information from historical and linguistic sources, but despite the great diversity of information it uses, the chapter never fails to tie together the distinct strands. For instance, a particularly informative section describes the transhumance pattern known as 'boolying' as it can be reconstructed from written records, and then compares the descriptions to the archaeological record of the period. Throughout, the evidence from textual, linguistic and archaeological sources are equally well presented and seamlessly synthesised. The result is a chapter that provides a level of information necessary to contextualise the more specialised data contained within the subsequent sections, but that can stand alone as a well-executed overview.

Section 2 (*The plant remains from Early Medieval Ireland*, McClatchie) deals with the archaeobotanical evidence for arable production during the study period, bringing together the results of published and unpublished reports. This review of the evidence from some 60 archaeological sites is one of the largest and most detailed accounts of the archaeobotanical evidence ever published for the Early Medieval period. Using the newly established dataset McClatchie identified both temporal and spatial variation in practice during the Early Medieval period. A conscious decision was made by the author to exclude some of the

most well published reports of archaeobotanical data from the study in favour of making grey literature more accessible. Arguably, this was an unnecessary exclusion of important and easily accessible data that could have added to the research findings. Despite this, the author succeeds in applying a new phase by phase (rather than site by site) approach to an under-utilised data set and drawing well-reasoned conclusions, such that the exclusion does not ultimately detract from the impact of the findings.

The third section (*The Animal Remains from Early Medieval Ireland*, Kerr) has more explicitly stated research aims than the previous chapters, and this is reflected in the author's decision to exclude or include faunal assemblages based on their statistically significant sample sizes. The five research objectives focus on attempting to identify regional and temporal variations in practice, along with linking changing kill-off and biometrical patterns with variations in husbandry. Despite their differing objectives the zooarchaeological section is equal to the archaeobotanical chapter in terms of its ambitious scale, and includes data from 115 archaeological sites. The large corpus of data is well presented, addressing the research objectives with clarity and precision. As a result, the conclusions drawn are both well supported by data, and of importance to our understandings of the husbandry of the period. The account reaches a number of conclusions, highlighting regional variability in practice and a tendency towards greater emphasis on milk and wool production through time. Perhaps of greater importance is the attempt made by the author to update the narrative of husbandry practices in Early Medieval Ireland by taking into account the vast amount of data produced by motorway construction in Co. Meath and Co. Galway, to an extent balancing out the bias towards the East of the island that had become *status quo* in recent decades.

In addition to these three excellent overviews, the two gazetteers provide an invaluable resource to any student or researcher interested in the archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological record of Early Medieval Ireland. Both gazetteers contain a massive amount of information; details are in-

cluded of the archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological evidence, as well as site descriptions, site plans and C14 dates when available.

Arguably, the absence of a final conclusion incorporating the results of the archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological sections leaves the reader feeling like the report has ended rather abruptly. However, the first chapter does a good job of providing the kind of synthesis of information needed in a volume that incorporates multiple strands of evidence. The greatest value of the report lies in its success at bringing together large amounts of previously inaccessible information, and while a conclusion would have been useful, the synthesis early in the book succeeds in giving the whole report a sense of cohesion. This is undoubtedly an important contribution in terms of increasing accessibility to grey literature, and contained within it is a huge amount of useful data. In addition, the conclusions drawn by the specialist authors constitute an important contribution to original research in their own right.

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