

PAGAN DIGEST



THE IRISH PAGAN SCHOOL
VOL. 01 - WEEK 04 (MAY 2020)



RESOURCE REVIEW - JON O'SULLIVAN

Book Title: Myth Legend & Romance. An Encyclopedia of the Irish Folk Tradition

Author: Dr. Dáithí Ó hÓgain. Publisher: Prentice Hall Press

See this Book on Amazon.com - <https://amzn.to/2XbRTUQ> (an affiliate link, fyi!)

Today I would like to share with you a review of a book which I have come to rely on more than I expected, and been surprised by on more than one occasion. In this book Dr. Dáithí Ó hÓgain sets out to record and organise the rich tapestry that is Ireland's folk traditions. The scope of the undertaking is quite broad as some of Ireland's living traditions of today could be traced back to earliest records we have, known as the age of Myth. That being said, despite the scope of the undertaking, the author has produced a detailed and fascinating record.

Summarizing The Book

The book combines an extensive bibliography into a clearly structured system of records on a vast variety of topics, ranging from Gods and heroes from the age of myth, through to records of the rulers during the age of Kings and on into the 16th and 17th century histories of Ireland's persons and places.

The Book's Strengths

The vast scope of the topic is alphabetised for referencing, meaning a person can readily open the book and pursue their answers. Each record contains clear indication of any mentioned person or place which has its own record within the book by highlighting the terms in bold, which the end of each record points the reading to an extensive bibliography where each source is cited should a person wish to pursue further reading.

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The records are presented with minimal personal commentary, which when it does exist sticks mainly to clarifying sources, or commenting on probable misinformation from translations or other sources. There appears to be no bias among the records as their content covers both Pagan and Christian figures as they appear within the folk traditions and histories of Ireland.

The Book's Weaknesses

There are few weaknesses which I personally find with the book, but trying to take a more objective perspective I would say that, though the content is presented without bias, it can be a challenge to chase down a thread or topic based on a certain segment or time frame of the Irish lore. Some records go straight from Cessair, the matriarchal leader of the earliest occupation of Ireland, to Christ, Jesus, then to Cian Mac Maolmhuaidhe son of a Munster king (c 960 - 1015). The efficient use of the book does require some foreknowledge of the character or place you're looking to reference, as one would expect with an encyclopedia, and, though I prefer the use of the Irish spelling of the words, this too, could be a barrier to some looking to use this resource.

Personal Commentary

All in all I would gladly recommend this book to any looking to enhance their exploration of Irish folklore and traditions. The author does a great job presenting the very large and culturally sensitive topic of Ireland's lore and history, with great attention to detail. For me, I feel his affection for the content almost every time I have cause to open the cover of this wonderful book.