

BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH

Treuzkas galloudoù hag arc'hant da Vreizh



Lakaomp hor sevenadur da vleuniañ er vro

Deomp de'i a-unan !

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February, May, August and November. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows

us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above. Dues and contributions can also be sent electronically via the U.S. ICDBL web site.

Ideas expressed within this newsletter are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent ICDBL philosophy or policy.

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ON THE COVER ...

Reproduced on the cover is a poster calling for Bretons to rally at the June 3rd demonstration in Rennes. This is to show support for the transfer of more decision-making power to Brittany in order to better support the Breton language and culture. As you will read in the pages which follow the centralization of power in Paris continues to thwart the cultural development of Brittany – particularly in schools and the media where the Breton and Gallo languages have a very limited presence.



An Invitation to join the U.S. ICDBL at the Potomac Celtic Festival, June 17 & 18, 2006

As we do every year, the U.S. ICDBL will have an information tent to present Brittany to the many many visitors to this annual festival in Leesburg, Virginia. Volunteers are needed for the tent, so contact Lois if you will be available for part of the weekend to help out. For your contribution of time you will get a free ticket to the festival. And you will have the opportunity to learn a few Breton dances from U.S. ICDBL member Jan Zollars. For more details about the festival check out its website: www.pcfest.org

News from Brittany: Challenges and Successes for the Breton Language

Information gathered by Lois Kuter

Breton in the Schools of Brittany – Always more challenges

While the number of children in Breton language classes in Brittany continues to climb, the increase in classes is not meeting the demands of parents and students. There are many challenges to all three of the school systems which have built Breton language options. For Diwan, where immersion teaching of Breton is used and Breton is encouraged as the language for all recreational activities in the schools, financing has always been a challenge, especially to open new schools whose teachers' salaries are not covered by an associative contract with the National Education system. Finding building space has been the biggest challenge in recent years. Difficulty in finding adequate building space meant that two new classes for the 2005 school year could not open, and the need for improved facilities at the middle and high school levels is also a concern.

Bilingual programs in the public schools of Brittany were launched 1982 and the Catholic schools began bilingual programs in 1990. These schools are often referred to by the names of parents' associations which support them – Div Yezh for the public schools, and Dihun for the Catholic schools. The bilingual classes in these schools have grown rapidly but there is great concern that growth is being blocked by the French National Education System which has a say-so in opening new classes and assigning teachers. Parents and supporters of bilingual programs in public and Catholic schools are frustrated by the limited opportunities for students to continue using Breton in middle schools and high schools.

Progress in offering bilingual and immersion options of learning Breton in the schools of Brittany has been painfully slow. Too slow.

Bretons have been extremely frustrated by inaction on the part of those in the educational system who are responsible for insuring that new classes open to meet the demands of parents who painstakingly meet all rules and requirements needed to justify such a new class.

Yannig Baron's Hunger Strike

President of the association Dihun for many years, Yannig Baron has worked hard to build bilingual programs in the Catholic primary schools, middle schools and high schools of Brittany. Growth has been very good in the Catholic schools, but Yannig Baron could see some serious problems coming up for the 2006 school year – possible class closings, limited acceptances of students in some tracks, and difficulty for parents in finding transition in Breton language programs from grade school to middle school or high school. Efforts to address these issues with education directors in the Catholic school system were going nowhere.

It was time to take more serious action in the face of unwillingness and inaction on the part of education administrators who had the power to meet the demands of parents for more bilingual education in the Catholic schools. Undertaking a hunger strike (what Baron calls his "inaction") is not a decision made lightly. It was a last resort when all other efforts to communicate and get needed action failed.

Yannig Baron was supported by thousands of people who wrote in support of his "inaction." This included major cultural organizations of Brittany as well as individuals, and it also included us, the U.S. ICDBL when the Officers and Board of Consultants sent the following note to the Dihun organization. We stated the following:

The U.S.A. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language sends its words of support to Yannig Baron for his courageous action to bring attention to the pressing need for the expansion of bilingual schooling in Brittany. We strongly support the work of Bretons to develop the Diwan immersion schools as well as bilingual programs in both the public and Catholic schools. We are saddened that France, which boasts of its support for minority languages and cultures worldwide, has been so slow to act in support of the languages and cultures within its own borders. The small level of real support the French government gives to Breton language schooling is shameful. It is even more shameful that Yannig Baron feels he has no other recourse but to risk his life with a hunger strike as France continues to block resources that would give the children of Brittany a real opportunity to learn the Breton language.

Yannig Baron's hunger strike ended on May 11 after 22 days. It was not because of our little message of support, but certainly the strong show of support from Breton associations and individuals as well as voices from other parts of the world (including also the Celtic

League) made it clear that the future of bilingual education is not just of concern to one Breton militant willing to risk his health or even life, but to Bretons who do not have children in Catholic schools and to people in other countries who do not even speak Breton.

Here is the statement Yannig Baron issued on May 11, 2006 (my translation):

Keleier diwezhañ – dernières infos – latest news

After 22 days of the hunger strike, four of the five Diocesan Directors of Brittany, the President of Dihun Breizh [Yannig Baron], and Pierre Favé, President of Dihun Pen ar Bed [Finistère], met at the St. Ivy high school in Pontivy.

The following was decided:

- 1. For the 2006 school opening, 7 new bilingual sites would open – 2 in Finistère in the towns of Plouvorn and Plouarzel, 1 in the Trégor, 1 in Loire-Atlantique in Pornic, and 3 in Morbihan in Melrand, Surzur and Vannes.*
- 2. A letter will be sent to all the heads of school establishments (primary and secondary) asking them to accept everywhere the requests registered by parents for bilingual Breton/French teaching for their children.*
- 3. A true linguistic political plan will be put in place by the CAEC by means of a pluriannual charter of programming for Breton/French bilingualism, foreseeing the opening of new sites according to an established plan. This charter will be established and followed under the leadership of a partnership between the Dihun association, Catholic Education, and the Region of Brittany.*

This result was the fruit of the joining of my inaction with the action of thousands of people who wrote, faxed, sent e-mails, and manifested their emotion and their will to see the Catholic Education system give a future to the Breton language.

We did not have the time to cover the numerous problems at the secondary level which remain serious. They will be addressed in the weeks to come.

I thank the Catholic Education system of Brittany for having heard this call and for putting into place an action plan to respond to it, in a calm, positive, frank and friendly atmosphere.

Yannig Baron

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Website:

www.dihun.com/actualites/soutiengrevefaim06.htm

Brittany on the radio and television

Not only do parents have to fight for bilingual programs in the schools, but the Breton public must fight to keep the minimal amount of Breton language and Breton-oriented programming on stations that are supposed to be serving Brittany. The television channel France 3 made a decision earlier this year to eliminate local news at the 12:55 spot in its daily programming – 2 ½ hours per week of programming focused on Brittany that can no longer be heard by TV viewers who are given instead a game show. Now the people of Brittany are getting one-fourth less programming focused on Brittany and even more programming “made in Paris.”

As for radio, the Radio France Bleu Breizh Izel station has also been directed by its centralized leadership in Paris (Radio France) to cut back on Breton language and Breton music programming. When begun in 1982 the aim of this regional radio was to become 50-50 Breton/French. Today just 2 hours and 20 minutes each day are in Breton. More of Paris, less of Brittany, seems to be the plan for the radio – much to the anger of radio employees and certainly of listeners.

On the cold and rainy day of March 25, some 300 demonstrators gathered outside the Radio Bleu Breizh Izel offices in Quimper to express their outrage at the increasing centralization of media and its impact on the creation and use of programming relevant to the people of Brittany (Loire-Atlantique included).

Protests continue – Rally to be held in Rennes, June 3

In view of the continuing challenges to the Breton language and culture, the Cultural Council of Brittany (Kuzul Sevenadurel Breizh) and the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro) are organizing a massive rally to be held in the city of Rennes on June 3. This

includes the participation of people from 56 cultural federations who are members of the Cultural Council as well as groups such as Diwan, Dihun, Div Yezh and Unvaniezh ar Gellennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers). The participation of Bodadeg ar Sonerion will insure the presence of bagads, so music will certainly be evident in the street.

The rally is to call for the transfer of decision making power to Bretons to manage their own future. As long as Paris controls budgets and decision making, the ability of Bretons to develop schooling and public media to serve their needs (where Breton history and arts as well as the Breton and Gallo languages would have a real presence) will remain limited.

Themes of the rally include demands for more schooling in Breton and Gallo, a public radio and television service which includes more Breton programming, the power for Bretons to do their own cultural planning, the reunification of Brittany, and the establishment of a democracy based on local decision-making instead of dictatorial decisions from Paris.

For more information about the rally visit the following website: <http://tous-a-rennesle3juin.over-blog.org/>

On a More Positive Note

“Career Fair” for Breton-Speaking Youth

400 students from Diwan middle schools and the high school attended a career fair where professionals discussed the opportunities for Breton-speakers in a variety of jobs. Besides the obvious role of teaching Breton in schools, some 30 Breton-speaking professionals discussed work in the audiovisual market, sales, health and hospitals, and the building construction industry. It was also emphasized that translators are in demand to work with towns and cities to create bilingual documents, or to work with businesses to develop signage, etc.

If any teens in the Diwan schools thought their mastery of Breton was purely an academic exercise, this event clearly showed them that Breton is a living language offering employment opportunities in a number of fields.

Dictations in Breton

Contests for writers who transcribe a dictated text in Breton have gotten increasingly popular throughout Brittany. A single text is read aloud and writers at each

age level continue until the complete text is read. For example those in the 7-9 age group (the CE level in schools) drop out after the first paragraph, while the 10-11 year olds continue to write the second paragraph. Middle school students continue with a third paragraph and the high school students and adults write down all four paragraphs.

This May, dictations were hotly contested in seven different towns and cities: Brest (75 contestants), Guerlesquin (10), Lannester (52), St. Pol de Leon (30), Quimper (49), Nantes (97) and Rennes (58). [information from *Bremañ* 294, ebreil 2006].

www.geriadur.com – a new online dictionary for Breton

This is not the first dictionary available on the internet for Breton learners, but this is certainly the most ambitious and interactive. Right now this dictionary has over 12,500 words with a goal to get to 80,000 by the end of the year. So far it is French-Breton with Breton-French to be added, and there will be resources for English speakers as well. This dictionary has been the work of Tangi ar Menn and Katell Simon of the association called Stur (founded in 1995) which has been responsible for a number of innovative projects and products for Breton on the computer.

When you access the “geriadur” and ask for the translation of a French word you will find Breton words and their plural forms as well as lots of examples of use. This is particularly useful when checking how the first letter of a word might mutate in a plural form or after numbers, etc. The dictionary is particularly helpful in clarifying variations for a word – thus, for “cheval” you will find the Breton words for different kinds of horses and not just one single word. And for some expressions you will even find a little map showing where a particular variation of its use is found.

For some words you will find pictures and an oral pronunciation. Also included in the dictionary are the Breton names for every commune of Brittany as well as the written form for numbers and dates. This is a project that will be continuing for quite a while and which can take advantage of all the interactive advantages a computer can offer.

For more information contact: stur@bzh5.com

European Parliament Intergroup demands that France ratifies the ECRML, FCPNM and that the EU intervene to protect minoritised languages

This article by Davyth Hicks has been reprinted from the Eurolang website (www.eurolang.net) with the permission of the Eurolang website editor.

Bruxelles - Brussels, Friday, 19 May 2006

The European Parliament lesser-used language and national minority Intergroup met in Strasbourg yesterday with representatives from EBLUL France, comprising Bretons, Alsacians, and Occitans, and the Association of the French Regions. Following the meeting, Intergroup President and Hungarian Socialist Csaba Tabajdi (PES) issued a Declaration demanding that France ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM). Furthermore, Mr Tabajdi called for the EU to intervene to help the languages on French territory that are now facing endangerment because of State policies that have led to serious decline.

The Intergroup Declaration states:

"In France the cultures and languages known as "regional", which form an integral part of European culture and that of humanity, are excluded from the public space by legislation and are marginalized, they are in the process of disappearing quickly from social life in spite of the often exemplary resistance and the organization of their populations, and with the support of their elected officials within a framework of law and administration that is ideologically hostile. After decades of eradication, the teaching of these languages remains highly marginal and their place in the media, in particular the radio and television, is extremely reduced.

"Out of nearly all the states in Europe, France has neither signed nor ratified Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. It has still not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages. It has issued reservations on Article 27 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights, Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. By its Constitution, and in spite of the richness of the

various languages in the territory, only one language, French, profits from official recognition, and is defended, promoted, authorized."

Mr Tabajdi called on France to recover its "sense of values" and points to earlier criticism from the Council of Europe over its poor record on human rights generally.

The actions demanded by the Intergroup are that France "ratify the European Charter for the regional or minority languages, to sign and ratify the FCPNM, to ratify Protocol 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights", and to remove its reservations from the UN Conventions detailed above.

The Declaration continues that France "fully recognize the right to the existence of the citizens and peoples which make it up in their specificity, in particular through a system of education, media and a public space allowing the normal expression of their languages, the teaching of their cultures and their stories in accordance with the of UNESCO convention on cultural diversity and the Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

"The President of the Intergroup calls the European Union, in the field of its competences, to engage in specific actions for the promotion of linguistic diversity focusing on the most threatened languages in Europe, in association with the regions or local institutions concerned, and to create special ring-fenced funding from the Community through its programmes of promotion for these languages in the various regions of the European Union.

"The President of the Intergroup also challenges the Member States and the European Union over the urgency of the measures to be taken and on their duty to intervene, taking into account the weakness in which these languages are in France, and in particular of the fast disappearance of the older generation, who still largely speak these languages but who are not being replaced."

EBLUL France issued a communiqué outlining further European Parliament investigations in Alsace in June and in Brittany in the autumn. They noted "with incomprehension, as stated by Mr. Csaba Tabajdi, while referring to new EU accessions, in particular Romania, that France would not be allowed into the European Union today because of its non-ratification of conventions protecting cultural and linguistic diversity which these new states were obliged to ratify.

In their statement EBLUL France asked: "France, is on the point of ratifying the Convention of UNESCO on cultural diversity of which it was an initiator, for how long will it be able to refuse recognition of the diversity in its own territory?"

The Intergroup meeting will be followed by a demonstration in Rennes, Brittany on Saturday June 3rd for language rights.

The Breton language, for example, is facing severe endangerment. Of the estimated 270,000 speakers most are over 65 years old, while those learning Breton at school comprise only 2% of the school going population in Brittany. It means that the older speakers are not being replaced enough to prevent quite rapid decline.

Despite Breton civil society being highly organised, the centralist French state and its accompanying ideology makes it impossible to gain basic provision for the language. It is hoped that the European Parliament's Intergroup statement serves as a wake-up call. Language based discrimination, equivalent to racism, in a 21st century Europe that is meant to uphold linguistic diversity, is unacceptable. (Eurolang 2006)

Intergroup Declaration

EBLUL France Communiqué

Rennes demonstration
<http://tous-a-rennesle3juin.over-blog.org/>

Council of Europe ECRML
www.coe.int/T/E/Legal_Affairs/Local_and_regional_Democracy/Regional_or_Minority_languages/

Council of Europe FCPNM
www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/minorities/

International Celtic Congress in Brittany this Year

From July 31 to August 5, Carhaix will host a gathering of people of the six Celtic nations (Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man) for its annual conference. This is not just a look at the past but this congress aims to understand present issues and build for a future. This year's theme is "The Celtic influence on Visual Arts." Participants from North America are more than welcome to attend. For more information consult: www.celtcong.bzh.bz or www.bretagne.net.com/celtcong/bloaz/2006.htm



A Few Statistics about the Population of Brittany

The following information from the INSEE was printed in an article by Jacques Lescoat, "4 197 000 habitants: une terre qui vit!" *Armor Magazine* 434, mars 2006, page 15.

Department	Estimated Population (Jan. 1, 2004)	% of growth per year (1999-2004)
Côtes d'Armor	559,000	0.61%
Finistère	871,000	0.45%
Ille-et-Vilaine	905,000	0.91%
Loire-Atlantique	1,187,000	0.95%
Morbihan	675,000	1.0%
<hr/>		
Brittany	4,197,000	0.79%
France	60,144,000	0.58%



New Books – From and About Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

The Turn of the Ermine – An Anthology of Breton Literature. Selected and translated by Jacqueline Gibson and Gwyn Griffiths. Francis Boutle Publishers. 2006. 506 pages. ISBN 1 903427 28 2. (www.francisboutle.co.uk / e-mail: info@francisboutle.co.uk)

It is rare indeed to find translations of Breton literature in the English language – whether it be originally published in the French or the Breton language. This is a very welcome book – a “treasure chest” – as it claims to be – of Breton language writings (poems, stories, ballads, folktales, and essays) with translations in English as well as English language work (especially travelers’ and historians’ observations) that bring a different perspective to Breton society, history and culture.

In a fiery Preface Bernard Le Nail describes the struggle in Brittany to survive and culturally thrive despite French oppression and a centralization that forces French citizens to look to Paris for inspiration. He declares “Brittany has mostly prospered and been able to make a significant contribution to humanity when it looked outwards.” Le Nail, who is certainly familiar with the full breadth and depth of Breton literature, notes that the authors have succeeded in preparing a collection of very diverse texts which take an intimate look at Breton society, but also show that Brittany has a place in a wider world that does not orbit around Paris.

Jacqueline Gibson and Gwyn Griffiths begin their foreword with a brief overview of the history of Breton language literature and publishing. They insist that while the aim of the book is to give an “overall picture of the literary texts published in Breton,” it is not a definitive anthology of Breton literature. Much has been left out, despite the size of the book and its inclusion of some 80 Breton language writers of various styles and from various centuries.

This is an ambitious project and this book includes a mixture of literature and writings by Breton language authors as well as observations by outsiders to Brittany. The organization of topics starts out in a chronological way but then shifts to a focus on different themes. By including such a breadth of materials, from Caesar’s *The Conquest of Gaul* to works of the present day, the book succeeds in introducing the reader to a huge expanse of

literature over time and in themes. While introductions to chapters and some of the individual works give a bit of context, this is not an in-depth analysis of Breton literature and culture. It is a sampling that whets the appetite and demonstrates that there is much more to be discovered. Short excerpts from novels or longer short stories are sometimes unsatisfying, but they serve to give a flavor of an author’s style. This book does not serve to substitute for the experience one would get reading the text of a novel, story, play, or poetry in their original Breton. Nor is it intended to serve as a history of Breton language literature or Brittany.

Certainly the selection of texts – as incomplete as the author’s admit they may be – are a very tantalizing selection for English language readers who might otherwise never learn of the existence of Breton language literature. The translators/compilers have succeeded in their main aim “to give a voice to those who are not normally heard [by English speakers] because of the language in which they write. It is in no way complete, and yet it gives a picture of the liveliness of contemporary Breton creative writing which continues to thrive against all odds.”

The first seven chapters of the book (pages 18-195) are chronological in nature and focus on particular time periods. While there is too little information to give the reader a full understanding of any historical period, the poetry and excerpts from short stories or letters bring an emotional charge and feeling for the people of those times – particularly the chapters treating more contemporary periods. This is a very different perspective than that of non-fiction history books.

The first chapter, “Traces of a lost literature,” discusses the lack of medieval Breton literature and the reflection of Brittany and Celtic countries in other European writers, such as the *lais* of Marie de France or Chaucer’s *The Franklin’s Tales* which is set in Brittany. It is interesting to see the juxtaposition of Marie de France’s “Laüstic” and “Ann Eostick” from the 1893 edition of the *Barzaz Breiz* by Kervarker (Hersart de la Villemarqué). The chapter “The Pagan Past” looks at druids in early documentation such as Julius Caesar’s *The Conquest of Gaul* and later historical studies such as Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher’s *Lives of the British Saints*. Also included is the well known song “Ar Rannou” from the *Barzaz Breiz* whose origin and meaning remain obscure. The chapter “Invasion from Britain” focuses on the settlement of Brittany by Brythonic Celts of the British Isles in the 4th century BC – an earlier date than most French (and Breton) historians of the past have

recognized. A variety of short texts on this topic are drawn from the 11th century to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. “The Arrival and Worship of Breton Saints” is a logical follow-up and includes excerpts from a variety of works about the early saints of Brittany which have figured strongly in early Breton language literature and in many more contemporary cantiques and lore celebrating the many saints still important to Bretons today.

With the chapter “Brittany and the Revolution” the authors include more writings by Breton authors versus observations by non-Bretons about Brittany. Poetry and stories from the period and later times evoke the counter-revolution and the conflict within Brittany during the period of the Revolution. War is again the focus in the following chapter “The Two World Wars” which evokes death and the horror of war on the battlefield and home front. Excerpts from short stories are particularly effective in portraying the impact of German occupation during World War II and the emotional toll of retribution after the war for presumed collaboration.

The chapter “The Breton movement” reflects a mix of defiance, bitterness and love in the fight for Breton freedom. Some writings reflect the romantic flavor of the Breton quest for identity in the late 19th and early 20th century. Other writings help one to understand the complex nature of pro-Breton action during World War II and the persecution of Breton militants in the immediate post-war period. And other more recent poems and stories express a sense of hope for Brittany’s future.

This is a good springboard for the following chapters which are all topical in nature, but not entirely disconnected from Breton history. “Tales and Legends from Brittany” includes a nice series of variations on the story of Tristan and Izold and on the sunken city of Ys and its main characters, King Grallon and Dahud, his daughter. In the final humorous story on this theme by Marianna Abgrall written in 1920, the stone statue of Grallon atop the cathedral in Quimper clammers down to the street to consult (in Breton) about a cough with the statue of Dr. Laennec, the Breton inventor of the stethoscope, born in 1781.

The chapter on “Love” includes poems and excerpts from short stories by some of the better known writers of the early 20th century (Youenn Drezen, Fañch Elies Abeozan, Xavier Langleiz and Yann-Bêr Kalloc’h) as well as some authors of more recent years (Ronan Huon, Philip Oiloo, Alan Botrel). While distinctly set in Brittany, these writings are about universal themes of love and longing. The chapter which follows on “Death” features the Ankou

– Brittany’s grim reaper who visits in his squeaking cart to announce death, but also a variety of writings from the 15th century to the present about murder, suicide, death from alcoholism, the death of a young woman in childbirth, the death of a child, and the transfer of a prize recipe from an old woman to her favored niece. To show that there can be a humorous side to this topic there is also the tale written in 1949 by Jakez Konan about a one-eyed general who rises from his coffin on the way to the church to angrily chase the townsfolk who had gathered for his premature burial.

“Snapshots of Brittany” begins with Julius Caesar’s view of the Veneti and his defeat of those skilled sailors of early Brittany. In the rare excerpt from a theater piece (from 1931), Tangi Malmanche presents the people of the Bro Bagan and the poverty which drove them to prey on ship wrecks on their coast of far northwestern Brittany. Other snap shots present countryside and villages, the sea, and its islands in poems and stories – sometimes a loving look at Brittany and sometimes a less complimentary view.

The chapter “Travelling Though Brittany” seems out of place since it does not include Breton writers nor literature in the Breton language translated from Breton to English. Most are travel accounts – many from Welsh travelers – who comment on Bretons and Brittany. These are more “snap shots” and they are always interesting. Two are fictional works – an excerpt from H.G. Wells’ novel *A Propos of Dolores* set in the town of Roskoff, and an excerpt from H. A. Vachell’s *The Face of Clay*, set in Pontaven during the early 20th century when artists such as Gauguin gathered there to paint.

The chapter “Childhood Memories” starts with a “snap shot” from Anne Douglas Sedgwick’s *A Childhood in Brittany*, a book in English published in 1919 which describes life among the upper class in the mid 19th-century. Poetry and stories of Breton language writers in this chapter beautifully evoke the joys and challenges of being a child in rural Brittany – playing hooky from school, fishing, exploring the countryside, “courting” girls, and the burden of going to church.

Some of the texts in the chapter “Bretons and Their Language” refer also to childhood - and the pain of being punished for speaking Breton in school. Other writings evoke the anger of an old woman when a new priest – who could speak Breton – switches to French for church services, outrage at the dominance of French and sadness to see its incursion at the expense of Breton, and impatience with Bretons who are complacent and let this

happen. As is the case for all of the topics explored in this book you find a mixture of emotions and complexity to Breton life.

The final topical chapter is “Women Writing About Women.” This includes many works about women’s relationships with men (and in one case another women), but also portraits of women – from housekeepers to militants. Eleven of the eighty Breton language authors in this book are women, reflecting the domination of men in the literary field. As social expectations change and new roles open up for women this will change and a future anthology is certain to include a higher percentage of women writers.

Short biographical notes are often included in introductions to selections in the book, but an alphabetical listing at the back of the book is a very welcome addition. Eighty Breton authors in the book are given a short paragraph with dates of birth (and death) and pen names, in addition to some basic information about their life and work. Also included is a bibliography of some of the works of these authors – those from which excerpts have been drawn. A list of “Further Reading” is also a nice addition and is broken down by works in English, Breton and French. This provides a nice start for those who want more information, but it could be a bit more extensive – particularly for the English language section. I was surprised not to see listed *Writing the Wind – A Celtic Resurgence*, edited by Thomas Rain Crowe (New Native Press, 1997). This collects poetry of the six Celtic nations, including 55 poems by 11 Breton language poets. While only some of the Breton poems include the original Breton version, this is nevertheless a rare collection of poetry from Brittany for English language readers. Another book that should be noted is Lenora A. Timm’s translations of Anjela Duval’s poetry, *A Modern Breton Political Poet, Anjela Duval* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

But, the work of Jacqueline Gibson and Gwyn Griffiths can only be applauded in its success in bringing such a wealth of literature and writing to English language readers. Those studying Breton will find this a great resource to practice reading skills with both the original text and translation available. This is a very rich sampling of wiring and literature of all styles both by Breton language authors and outside observers of Brittany over the course of some 2,000 years. It is unique in presenting a wide range of perspectives and in evoking many different emotions to better understand the complex and changing culture and society of Brittany.

Roparz Hemon, translation by Michel Treguer. *Un Breton redécouvrante la Bretagne*. Yoram Embanner. 2005. 158 pages. ISBN 2-9521446-3-X.

This is a French translation of Roparz Hemon’s book *Ur Breizhad oc’h adkavout Breizh* published in 1931 and then again in 1972. It includes articles first published in the magazines *Breiz Atao* (1923-1927) and *Gwalarn* (1925-1929). *Gwalarn* was the literary supplement to *Breiz Atao* which became independent in 1926. These articles reflect Hemon’s thinking as a young man (22 to 28 years old). In his forward to both the 1931 and 1972 publication of the Breton language original, Hemon notes that while his ideas have changed in many ways from those expressed in 1923-29, reprinting the articles as originally written are important in showing the route he has taken in “rediscovering” Brittany.

Michel Treguer, felt that it was time for a translation of this work to present Hemon’s ideas to those who cannot read Breton. This is timely especially in view of the vilification of Hemon by those who would like to paint him – and pretty much anyone else working for the Breton language in the World War II period – as a Nazi collaborator. (See *Bro Nevez* 74, May 2000, for an article about this).

Roparz Hemon (1900-1978) was a high school teacher of English in Brest (under his given name of Louis Nemo). He learned Breton as an adult and became a master of it and prolific author of many texts – theatrical works, short stories, novels, poetry, linguistic studies, grammar books for learners, and dictionaries (Breton-French and French-Breton) still widely used today. As a noted scholar of Breton he was named head of the Celtic Institute from 1940-1944 and was also in charge of radio broadcasts in Breton during German occupation of Brittany. Advances for Breton allowed during German occupation (such as radio programming) disappeared after the war. And those involved in such activity were considered collaborators. Hemon was arrested at Liberation but rejudged and acquitted of prison time. He was however forbidden to teach or live in Brittany for years. Eamon DeValera offered him a research post at the Dublin Advanced Studies Institute where Hemon continued his scholarship for the rest of his life. He chose never to return to Brittany, although his body was brought back to be buried there.

The history of World War II in Brittany and the association of pro-Breton action on the political and cultural fronts with German collaboration is a complex one. The lines were often blurred after the war and to this day those who wish to discredit Bretons fighting for the

Breton language and culture do their best to dig up evidence that cultural militants have been and continue to be disloyal to France. This book of essays by Roparz Hemon shows that his fight was purely on the cultural front. He believed fervently that for Brittany to survive and maintain its identity, Bretons had to reclaim the Breton language and create a unique Breton way of life. In one of the few essays focused in any way on politics Hemon discusses the confusion of “nation” and “state” and looks at how states in Europe have imposed the idea of nationalism (and also a state religion) on nationalities within their borders. He notes that Bretons must protect their identity and if that requires more political autonomy, then so be it. (“La nationalité et l’État,” 1924).

But Hemon felt that cultural freedom must be achieved before political freedom is possible. Brittany will not be saved by converting people to a political view but by creating a Breton way of life. Brittany will be free when people learn to write in Breton, learn their own history – with all its warts and bumps – create their own schools, and train their own teachers and pay for their own books. And this uniquely Breton Brittany must express itself as a modern society open to the wealth of world knowledge and literature. (“Gwalarn en Bretagne,” 1927).

Hemon looked at the world for inspiration. He admired Gandhi and his efforts to rid India of western thinking and ways. He was inspired by a book by Rabindranath Tagore (Nationalism) which decried the colonization by England and France of other civilizations which, like the Celts, had an ancient and rich culture of their own. Hemon stated clearly in his essay “La Bretagne et le monde” (1923) that to be a true country (pays) and not just a region of France where one was taught to think in French and know only of French history and arts, it was necessary to explore the entire world. Brittany was too confining, as was France. This meant translating the world’s literature into Breton rather than learning about the world through a French perspective.

The bulk of Hemon’s essays focus on literature and the need to build a new vibrant literature in the Breton language which expresses modern life. He admired writers like Bleimor and Malmanche who spoke from the heart and were true to their own experiences. He was horrified of literature that was based on popular poetry or folktales that was written for tourists and French readers in search of the quaint and exotic. Hemon aimed for a new literature that would be of the highest quality, of interest to sophisticated urban readers, but also accessible to all those learning to read Breton. He dreamed of a Brittany where rural Breton speakers would learn to read their language

and in the process create new literature. Or, at least their children might be part of the creation of a new and beautiful – and uniquely Breton – literary tradition.

While recognizing that everyone had their stone to add to the pile, Hemon was not timid in criticizing others who were promoting Breton culture. He was highly critical of his contemporaries who propagated a “folkloric” image of Brittany – Bretons with a French way of thinking who wrote books about Breton traditions for French readers (“Connnaissance du peuple” 1925). He also decried the state of Breton language theater with its bad actors, poorly designed sets, and boring texts (“Sur le theater” 1925 and “L’art du theater” 1926). He was no less critical of the state of music and the poor quality of popular songs written in Breton. He was absolutely embarrassed by Brittany’s national anthem, the “Bro Gozh ma Zadoù” – hardly a sentiment one would expect of an ardent Breton nationalist. But the music and theater scene in the 1920s certainly did not resemble the rich expression you find today in Brittany. And I have heard many a rendition of the “Bro Gozh” that sounded more like a funeral dirge than an expression of love for one’s country.

While much of Hemon’s ideas from the 1920s do not sound particular dated or strange, his ideas on bilingual education are likely to be jarring to those today who view bilingual education as an important part of creating a place for Breton in the future. In his essay “Contre l’enseignement bilingue” (1925) Hemon opposes the idea of bilingualism in the schools. He feels strongly that true bilingualism is impossible and that French, as a written language, would dominate Breton, an oral language, which would be relegated to limited special uses only. Hemon clearly favors Breton-only schooling in Lower Brittany (and admits that those of Upper Brittany would need to learn Breton, or retain a Breton spirit by having things in the Breton language translated into French). Hemon states “Breton is our freedom; French is our slavery” (p. 77) and he further states “kill French, or French will kill us” (p. 81). Creating a society where Breton is the only language used certainly sounds extreme today, but if you look at the history of schools in France it is clear that the French language was used quite purposely to make Bretons into Frenchmen. Hemon recognized this. He was not against Bretons learning French - as one of many foreign languages - but felt Bretons should learn as many languages as possible in order to escape the stifling role of French as the language through which they learned to think about the world.

Roparz Hemon was an idealist who hoped that the Breton language would flourish once again through the creation

of a unified language that could be used creatively to express anything Bretons wanted to say. He wanted Breton to be a tool available for historians, artists, musicians, economists and writers, as well as farmers or workers, and not just something saved for special occasions (“Le Breton et le français dans l’Emsav” 1926). He admitted that the idea was a bit simplistic, but he felt it was worth building a new literature that was not based on antiquated models of the past or on a French ways of thinking, but on the best the entire world had to offer. He believed that if you created a Breton literature that was beautiful and spoke truly of one’s experience as a Breton, this would not be restricted to scholars in an ivory tower, but sought by all.

Hemon had a profound knowledge of ancient Celtic literature and of the history of the Breton language and culture. He respected the spiritual roots of Breton culture that had been carried from one generation of Bretons to the next through oral traditions of a rural society. But he dreamed of a future Brittany that would have the freedom to create new literature, drama, music, and art that was truly Breton and not filtered through the French language. His study of Breton history underlined for him the fact that Bretons had not been good at protecting their identity and all too often caved in to conquerors without much of a fight. Hemon did not look at history as the means to glorify ancestors but as a way to judge people’s actions – good or bad (“Sur notre histoire” 1926). Based on these essays it is clear that Hemon hoped that Bretons would succeed in protecting and building their Breton identity.

I thank Michel Treguer for this translation that allows me – whose French is not perfect, but certainly far more advanced than my knowledge of Breton – to get a first hand look at Hemon’s ideas as a young man.



Lionel Henry and Annick Lagadec. ***FLB – ARB, L’histoire 1966-2005***. Yoran Embanner (71 hent Mespiolet, 29170 Fouesnant). 2006. 396 pages. ISBN 2-9521446-5-6.

If Americans know anything of the FLB-ARB of Brittany, they identify this as the group that blows up things – French government buildings, police garages, tax offices ... and even a part of the Versailles Palace in 1978. Who are these crazy people and why do they bomb things? Why can’t they just be good citizens and change things through the democratic process by voting?

This book provides a history of the secret group called FLB (Front de Liberation de la Bretagne) – ARB (Armée Républicaine, or Révolutionnaire, Bretonne) spanning from 1966 to 2005. Written by a historian and a journalist who have studied the Breton movement, this history is based on thousands of press clippings about FLB bombings and trials, tracts and statements by the FLB-ARB, police and court reports and interviews (although most archived materials are not available from that source), and interviews with people who had been active at one time with the FLB-ARB. The authors themselves admit that it may be premature to write such a history since many records are not available and many of those who participated are still alive and might not want this part of their life highlighted. Authors take care to list only first names and initials when permission has not been given to use a full name (although anyone really interested could find full names, ages, residence and occupation listed in old newspaper clippings – whether that person proved to be guilty or not of association with the FLB-ARB.)

Premature or not, this book is welcome right now, since bombs have been exploding in Brittany for the past 40 years. The authors are careful to note that this book is not about terrorism. The FLB-ARB never had the intent to make the Breton population fearful about their safety. And there is no indication that Breton people –whether in sympathy or not with the goals of the FLB-ARB – were ever in fear for their lives or property. Humans were never a target – although two FLB-ARB activists were killed while placing explosives. And a young woman lost her life in the 2000 bombing of a McDonald’s restaurant in Quévert. This bombing was not claimed by the FLB-ARB and no link to this attack was proven in court, but this did mark the end of FLB-ARB action.

The goal of FLB-ARB activists was to give a bigger voice to Breton demands for the protection of the Breton language and culture, reunification of Brittany (return of Loire-Atlantique), economic and social development, and true regional power for Brittany to determine its own future. Action was taken in view of the ineffectiveness of any other legal political action. The bombs were viewed as a wake-up call for the Breton population who seemed complacent about the inability of Brittany to move forward. 1996 marks the beginning of the FLB-ARB which followed closely on the action of three young men from the area of St. Nazaire who burnt French flags – for which they received two months of jail time. This 1966 statement published in the July 14, 1966 issue of *L’Avenir de la Bretagne* gives a good idea of the motivation of the FLB-ARB (my translation):

Three Bretons were recently arrested in St. Nazer for having the desire to draw public attention to the need to decolonize Brittany (...) Weary of the French power's evasiveness, of its promises never kept for Brittany, witness to its disdain for our economic interests, of our social development, of our language and culture, convinced that this power will never budge except before the threat and force of our arms, we have decided to take a first series of actions against administrative buildings with symbolize the occupying powers in Brittany. We will take up again the progressive and revolutionary combat that each generation of Bretons has taken for the liberty of Brittany and the right of Bretons to reject their colonial status and freely govern themselves. We will strike on days and at places that we will choose. Our fight will not end except with victory.

The authors of this book put the origins of the FLB-ARB in the context of the 1960s (and the political climate of the period leading to those years). This was the period when Algeria won its independence from France in a bloody war (1962), when African-Americans in the U.S. were marching for their freedom, and when Quebec was the scene of radical action to gain independence from Canada – encouraged by a visit by General De Gaulle in 1967 who delighted crowds with his shouts of “Vive le Quebec libre” (long live free Quebec). What a slap in the face that was for Bretons yearning for just a little more freedom in France. There were other models – the IRA (Irish Republican Army) in Ireland, and the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) in the Basque country. For Bretons, the armed rebellion of the FLB-ARB had nothing to do with killing enemy people, but everything to do with the desire for freedom.

The history is a complex one and it is not a neat and tidy story. The book chronologically describes the many bombings, the police sweeps to bring in suspects, and the court trials and sentencing of Bretons. Each time the police claim to have dismantled the FLB it seems to rise from the ashes with new participants. Although the press and politicians tried to stigmatize FLB-ARB participants as a throw-back to pro-Nazi Breton separatists of World War II, they were people of many political persuasions – much more to the left than right with their socialist aspirations for Brittany. And FLB-ARB activists came from all walks of life: farmers, students, factory workers, architects, teachers, and priests ... Neither the label of Nazi or terrorist used to discredit the actions of FLB-ARB members have stuck, but these actions have been taken very seriously by France as attacks on the “integrity of the

French state” – a crime that has brought harsh jail sentences.

While there has been widespread disapproval in Brittany of the methods of “vandalism” used by the FLB-ARB, the long sentences given to those convicted of bombings, the long pretrial detentions of suspects (up to four years), and poor treatment of detainees who have serious illness, have caused outrage and have mobilized demonstrations and solidarity on a wide level in Brittany. Trials of FLB-ARB political prisoners have been used effectively as a forum to bring press and public attention to the wider issues such as the protection of Breton language and culture, economic development, environmental protection, and the reunification of Brittany.

Sixty-five pages of appendices include a chronology of the hundreds of bombings attributed to the FLB-ARB – some claimed, some not. Also included are FLB-ARB texts outlining their aims and actions (from 1968, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1999; a dozen songs and poems about the FLB by Glenmor, Youenn Gwernig, Bernez Tangi and Anjela Duval; some 30 photographs of people and posters; a very confusing chart showing the evolution of various political parties and the FLB-ARB, and a bibliography. A listing of abbreviations for political parties and groups at the front of the book is also a nice resource.

This book does not read like a novel, and can be tedious in its listing of events, names, dates and places. But, for those who have an interest in the history of the Breton movement, this is an important book. And it is a stimulating book for those who want to understand why so many different Bretons during so many years took up arms and planted explosives to destroy symbols of French domination.



SHORT NOTES ON SOME NEW BOOKS IN AND ABOUT THE BRETON LANGUAGE

Notes for the following are based on information found in the following Breton publications: *Al Liamm* 354 (c’hwevriar 2006), *Bremañ* 293 (meurzh 2006), 294 (ebrel 2006) 295 (mae 2006)

Chantreau, Katell. *Caminante – danvelloù eus an Andoù / Caminante – Chroniques andines*. L’Oeil électrique editions. 2006. 272 pp.

This is a travel journal in French and Breton of a trip through the Andes mountains in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

Favereau, Frañsez & Herve Bihan, Editors.
Littératures de Bretagne – Mélanges offerts à Yann-Bêr Piriou. Pesses Universitaires de Rennes. 2005.

This work is in honor of Yann-Bêr Piriou, a professor and scholar of the Breton language and its literature. It collects writings by fellow writers and scholars of Brittany, including Annaig Renault, Daniel Carré, Daniel Doujet, Daniel Giraudon, Gwendal Denez, Fañch Peru, Mikael Treger, Mikael Nikolaz, Yann-Cheun Veillard, and Ronan ar C'hoadig.

Faragher, Edward. Translation by Padrig ar Besko. *Ma buhez en Enez Vanao.* Emgleo Breiz.
This is a collection of writings by Manxman Edward Faragher (1831-1907) about his life on the Isle of Man and in Scotland, translated into Breton.

Geluck, Philippe. Translated by Divi Kervella.
Ar c'hazh e Breizh. Casterman.
This is a humorous collection of tales of a cat told through the “bande dessinée” (comic book) medium by Belgian author Philippe Geluck, translated into a Breton style of humor by Divi Kervella.

Skragn, Jañ-Mari. *Bremañ ‘zo bremañ! Neuze ‘oa neuze.* Emgleo Breiz. 126 pp.
These are tales and saying collected by the author during his lifetime in central western Brittany.

Paskal Tabuteau. *Beaj Sant Brendan.* Emglo Breiz. 38 pp.
This is an account of the 6th century sea voyage of Saint Brendan of Ireland.



MAGAZINES IN THE BRETON LANGUAGE

The following is a list of magazines that publish in Breton. I have only briefly described these, and in many cases I have not seen a copy. Contact information is included for those interested in more information. For Breton learners magazines are a great way to practice reading short texts of both fiction and non-fiction.

Al Lanv

Over 100 issues of this quarterly have been published so far. It covers all topics concerning Brittany and the Celtic countries – politics, history, music, literature, book reviews. Contact: 59 hent Kerdronioù Vihan, 29000 Kemper)

Al Laimm

Over 300 issues of this quarterly have been published. Each issue is some 100 pages and includes poetry, short stories, book and magazine reviews, and other short notes on events in Brittany. Check the website: www.alliamm.com or contact: tudual.huon@wanadoo.fr

Breizh-Llydaw

This is published three times a year in Breton and Welsh and includes short notes, stories and poetry linking Brittany and Wales. Contact: sekretour@kembre-breizh.org.uk

Bremañ

This monthly magazine is closing in on 400 issues and includes short articles notes on all topics – international news as well as Breton events, interviews, book and music notes, etc. There's also a short version on the internet: www.bremaik.free.fr. For more information about the magazine consult the website: www.breman.org or e-mail breman@wanadoo.fr

Brud Nevez

This is published six times a year and over 200 issues have come out so far. This magazine focuses on Breton language and literature. Check out the website: www.emgleobreiz.com or contact: Emgleo Breiz, 10 ru Kemper, 29200 Brest

En Doere

This magazine focuses on the culture of Bro Gwened. For more information contact: andoere@libertysurf.fr

Hor Yezh

Over 200 issues of this quarterly have been published. It focuses on studies of Breton and Breton language literature. Contact: horyezh@brezhoneg.org or 12 straed Louzaouenn-an-hañv, 22300 Lannuon

Ya!

This is the newest Breton language publication and it is a weekly 8-page newspaper in Breton. It is packed with interviews, news, cultural events, etc. Now closing in on 1,000 subscribers, this is a great success story. Contact: Keit Vimp Beo, 22 Grand Rue, 29520 Laz

For children and youth

Keit Vimp Beo publishes three colorful magazines for children and young people: **Rouzig** (3 years and up), **Louarnig** (8 and up) and **Meuriad** (young teens). Contact: Keit Vimp Beo, 22 Grand Rue, 29520 Laz

DASTUM - Making Brittany's rich oral and musical heritage available to everyone

Editor's Note: The following information is from a brochure produced by Dastum (in English, Breton, Gallo and French versions). While it is not possible to reproduce the graphics of the brochure, the following text describes very well the role this organization plays in Brittany. The order may not be quite what you would read as a brochure-reader, and some captions to photos have not been included.

Dastum - A place where memories come alive

Dastum – in Breton “collect, bring together” – was founded in 1972 with the aim of collecting and promoting Brittany's musical and oral heritage.

Today, Dastum provides people with access to songs, music, stories and tales, personal and historical accounts, proverbs and sayings – in Breton, Gallo, or French. Everyone – from folk art specialists to musicians – can have access to a variety of collected material – people telling stories around the fireplace 30 years ago, music festivals or Breton traditional dances (fest-noz).

Dastum's 3 Main Aims

Gathering and binging together collections

Enthusiasts travel throughout the five regions of Brittany to meet “bearers of culture.” With their microphones they wander through pubs and kitchens, go to evening music and storytelling sessions and “fest-noz,” musical competitions and family reunions. They collect both written and visual material: song-books, postcards, music scores, pictures ...

Preserving

Collected material donated to Dastum is sorted and catalogued, after which it can be consulted by all: musicians, researchers, students or those who are just curious. We have an open-door policy and access is free.

Passing on and developing a duty of restoration

- Through online databases (digitized catalogues and internet),
- Through live cultural events, festoù-noz, evening storytelling sessions, competitions and exhibitions,
- Through sound, written and multimedia publishing,
- Through education: weekly classes and other courses,
- Through easy access and consultation from a network of sister sites and associations.

Today Dastum provides:

- Sound archives of 75,000 recordings
- A library of 30,000 songs and stories and 2,000 books
- Music archives of 3,000 records and CDs
- Photographic archives of 27,000 pictures (postcards, family photographs, local festivals, architectural heritage)
- An online database of individuals and organizations active in Brittany's cultural life, which is updated on an ongoing basis: over 4,000 artists, instrument-makers, festivals and music schools ...
- A panoramic view of Brittany's oral and musical traditions for everyone via the internet: www.musiques-bretagne.com

Re-collections ! *[why not also here in the U.S. and Canada]*

Find out what remnants of the past lie waiting to be discovered in your attic or closets! If you find sound recordings or written material we would like to hear from you – songs, people giving personal or historical accounts, nursery rhymes, letters or other written material. Even if you find modern-day recordings or documents – we'd still like to hear about them.

And there remains a lot of material that needs to be brought to light. Get out and meet people, bring your tape-recorder and become a collector yourself!

Then contact Dastum and you will be part of those helping to weave the rich tapestry of Breton culture.

Dastum – the network

Dastum is active throughout historic Brittany – complementing its collecting and cataloging activities with research, publishing and live event organization. The media library in Rennes co-ordinates the network's documenting and archiving work, from receiving collected material to making it available to the public. All archives can be consulted in Rennes, in regional offices or at sister organizations.

Dastum
16 rue de la Santé
35000 Rennes
Tel: 02 99 30 91 00
Fax: 02 99 30 91 11
Dastum@wanadoo.fr
www.dastum.net

Dastum 44
69 rue de Bel-Air
44000 Nantes
Tel: +33 (0)2 40 35 31 05
Dastum44@dastum.net

Dastum Bro-Dreger
9 rue des Haras
22300 Lannion
Tel: +33 (0)2 96 46 59 11
Bro-dreger@wanadoo.fr

Dastum Bro-Ereg
6 quai du Plessis
56300 Pontivy
Tel: +33 (0)2 97 25 70 90
Bro-ereg@wanadoo.fr

Dastum Bro-Gerne
Ti-ar-Vro Kemper
18 rue Ste-Catherine
29000 Quimper
Tel: +33 (0)2 98 52 06 37

Dastum Bro-Leon
12 rue de la Marne
29260 Lesneven
Tel: +33 (0)2 98 21 16 41
Dastum.broleon@wanadoo.fr

Dastum Kreiz-Breizh
1 place de la Marie
29246 Poullaouen

Associated Organizations:

Groupeement Culturel Breton des Pays de Vilaine
6 rue des Écoles
35600 Redon
Tel: +33 (0)2 99 71 45 40

Centre de ressources Marc-Le-Bris
22600 Saint-Caradec
Tel: +33 (0)2 96 25 10 75
Centre.marc.lebris@tiscali.fr

La Bouèze
Ferme des Gallets
26 av. Pierre Donzelot
BP 10218
35702 Rennes cedex 7
Tel: +33 (0)2 23 20 59 14
contact@laboueze.com

Dastum was established in all its activities, in convention with the regulations of the Ministry of Culture and Communication as a traditional music center. It also complies with the regulations of convention of Rennes-Métropole. Dastum is also an associate member of the National Library of France via FAMDT (Federation of Traditional Music and Dance Association) and is also a member of other organizations such as the Association of

Breton Dance and Music and the Cultural Council of Brittany.



A New Recording from Dastum Breizh and Dastum Bro-Léon

Bro Bagan / Pays Pagan – Un allig c’hoazh, Chants et dañs round. No. 1 in the series Breizh ar broioù / La Bretagne des pays / La Bertaèyn dez paeyiz. DAS 149. 2006. 75'44 minutes.

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Some of Dastum's very first publications were a series of Lps (records) with 70 to 80 page booklets (8/12 x 11 ½ inches) which focused on a particular "pays" ("bro" in Breton), or culturally defined region. Number 3 – *Ar Vro Bagan* – was published in 1975 and included 20 songs collected primarily in the 1970s by members of Oaled Sevenadurel Bro Bagan, who also produced the Lp and put together the booklet with its wealth of information on the songs and the culture of Bro Bagan.

As the introductory notes to Dastum's new CD featuring Bro Bagan point out, there are varying definitions for the borders of this region of the far northwestern coast of Brittany which stretches from Aber-Wrac'h to the bay of Goulven. One can define some borders by a unique dress once found there, or by the way of speaking the Breton language, and by the musical traditions of the area. The *dañs round* is a particularly strong defining feature. ("Round" in Breton is pronounced "roond" and not like the English word "round.") This is a circle dance in three steps on four beats. Couples interlock with each other and other couples with their little fingers and take off to the left, pausing on the 4th beat to head back to the right, and then to the left again. There is a very regular and unified movement and the singer is in the circle of dancers rather than far away on a stage with a microphone. Songs are always unaccompanied (no instruments) and a chorus of all the dancers heartily repeats the phrases sung by the leader.

The dance starts slowly but swings into a more energetic tempo as the dancers and lead singer move forward through the song together. There are arm movements to help sustain the beat and to propel men and women to turn towards and away from each other playfully. Once the song gets to its end, the singer will sing a shorter tune in which the chorus "*un allig, un allig, un allig c’hoazh*" ("another, another, another still") will encourage another dancer in the circle to take up the lead for a song for a new *dañs round*. It all sounds pretty simple on paper and the steps are not highly complicated, but like all traditional dances of Brittany, there are layers of subtlety that bring the dance truly alive.

The CD celebrates the *dañs round* which is still primarily danced in the Bro Bagan. You will not find it very often in the repertoire of bands who play for festoù noz throughout Brittany, although this dance is certainly well known. Nine selections are performed as the singers dance the *dañs round* and you hear the distinctive “ready, set, go” call of the lead singer: “*unan, dao, tri, a-gleiz*” (“one, two, three, to the left”) or “*unan, dao, tri, round*.” And you can hear the beat of feet as the singer leads – and is led by the dancers – through the song. The CD includes two “suites” of dances where a singer hands off the dancing to another singer via the intermediary short song in which the chorus “*un allig, un allig c’hozh*” is repeated before a new singer takes up a song to continue the *dañs round*.

The *dañs round* has survived discouragement by the Catholic clergy of Léon due to its role as a dance done at gatherings of family and friends rather than at a public dance where strangers meet and have the potential to get into trouble. It’s persistence and that of other songs and stories of Bro Bagan have been insured not only by a familial transmission but also by the work of cultural organizations who have promoted a positive Pagan identity – in contrast to the stereotype of the Pagan people as “ship wreckers” who lured boats to crash on their rocky shores to loot the wreckage. The Breton language troupe Strollad Ar Vro Bagan has certainly been responsible for bringing a positive sense of pride to this area, and the organization Tremenac’h Beo has also worked to inspire young people to carry forward a unique and rich heritage. In 1986 these two organizations invited Patrick Malrieu of Dastum to record singers of the region, and 8 of the 20 selections on this CD are from those sessions. Most others are more recent – recorded in the late 1990s or 2004 and 2005.

Besides the *dañs round*, there are a number of ballads on the CD which show that the Pagan repertoire is rich with songs about young girls, eager to marry, who argue about this with their mothers. There are also several wedding songs which show a more romantic (and less tragic) side in praising the newlyweds or the bride. And you hear two stories. “*Ar Pagan hag ar silienn*” (“The Pagan and the Conger eel”) is about a titan battle between a fisherman and a huge eel. This eel talks – first to a lobster who flees both the summer incursion of tourists and the fisherman – and then to the fisherman himself who eventually wins the battle. The faint echo of a microphone in this performance is distracting, but this is a tale well told. The second tale is set in rhyme and is a humorous account of the escape of a farm horse.

There is a mix of young and older voices on the CD – and an equal mix of men and women performers. While some voices are clearly more “senior,” they are still strong and melodious. The 45 pages of CD notes give all of the song texts and translations in French, as well as a brief

summary of the song theme and an introduction to the singer, supplemented by a photo. Besides an introduction to the Bro Bagan, there is a short but effective description of the *dañs round*.

This CD is typical of the high quality of work Dastum has done in presenting the traditions of Brittany through an interesting, representative, and well documented sampling of music (and lore) collected, performed, and presented by the people of the area who know it best.

Coming Next: A Double CD focused on singers and bombarde-biniou players of the Bigouden region

Pays bigouden – Sonneurs et chanteurs traditionnels. No. 2 in the series Breizh ar broioù / La Bretagne des pays / La Bertaèyn dez paeyiz.

This double CD includes 24 songs and 16 tunes for biniou and bombarde collected in the Bigouden region of southwestern Brittany during the past 100 years. Some come from the Dastum archives, many come from collectors of the Bigouden area, and some come from the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires of Paris. Singers and instrumentalists are all well rooted in the Bigouden musical tradition. A 50-page booklet gives a history of the Bigouden region, an analysis of songs and their melodies, a study of the language used [Breton], information about dances, and a transcription and translation of all the song texts presented.



New Music from Brittany: Heard of, but not heard

Notes are based on information found in reviews and notes in the following Breton magazines: *Ar Men* 151 (mars-avril 2006); *Armor* 433 (février 2006), 434 (mars 2006), 435 (avril 2006); *Bremañ* 295 (mae 2006).

Dan ar Braz. *Frontières de sel*. Pathé DFRS 457154. 2 hour DVD & 47 minute CD

This DVD presents Dan ar Braz with the famous “Heritage des Celtes” performances in Paris and at the Festival de Cornouaille in Quimper, showing him working with musicians such as Ronan le Bars, Karen Matheson, Carlos Nuñez and Donal Lunny. Interviews are also included to give a more rounded view of this master of acoustic and electric guitar..

Autour de la mer. Créon Music CM 2049.

This is an anthology of music of all styles from rock to folk song on the theme of the sea. Performers include Armens, EV, Clarisse Lavanant, Michel Tonnerre and Claudia Davis. A 66-page booklet with song texts and illustrations is included.

Bagad! – une légende bretonne. Pathé DFRS 457155. 3 hour DVD & 42 minute CD.

This DVD shows the history of Brittany's unique bagpipe, bombarde and drum ensemble. It includes interviews with musicians and instrument makers who talk about this ensemble and its place in Brittany (including Alan Stivell, Dan ar Bras, Roland Becker ...). And of course you also see various bagadoù in performance and preparing for performances. A CD with nine selections include the Bagad Men ha Tan and the Kevrenn Alre, but also solo guitar by Roland Conq and piano by Didier Squiban.

La Bretagne fête la Saint-Patrick. Keltia Musique KMCD 172.

On this CD Bretons join other Celts (Cibeal, Dowlas Male Choir, Susana Seivaine ...) for a concert in Paris-Bercy in 2005. Breton performers include Gilles Servat, Nolwenn Korbell, Denez Prigent, Pat O'May, and the bagad Ronsed Mor, Kevrenn Alre, Sonerien an Oriant, and Kerlenn Pondi.

Yvon Etienne. Kig ha farz. Coop Breizh CD 974.

This is a two-CD set including a wide range of songs in French and Breton from the French and European popular music as well as more "Breton" sources. Accompaniment includes a wide variety of instruments and voices, and even a choir.

Sylvain Girault and Pierre Guillard. Chants de Haute-Bretagne. Coop Breizh 1/1.

This CD features songs collected in Loire-Atlantique with songs for the dances *ridée*, *ronds*, *bals* and *pilées*. Girault is a singer with the group Katé-Mé and Guillard is a co-fonder of the Loire-Atlantique branch of Dastum. Both are fine singers.

J. C. Normant, Pol Huellou and Michèle Kerhoas. Escale Dédale. Octopus-Tuchenn OCT 0501.

This trio interprets songs from around the world (as well as from Brittany), including several from the U.S. ("Black is the color" and "Across the Alley from the Alamo") where the vocalist captures the voices of a black American and cowboy respectively – according to the reviewer. There are surely a variety of styles to be found in performances by some strong musicians of Brittany: J. C. Normant (keyboard), Michèle Kerhoas (vocals) and Pol Huellou (vocals and various flutes). Guest artists include Gilles Le Bigot, David Hopkins and Gaby Kerdoncuff.

Ronan Pinc Quartet. Stéphane's Blues. Le Micro Bleu MD 006.

This is a CD of compositions by jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli performed by Ronan Pinc (violin), Pierre-Henry Aubry (guitar), Philippe Turbin (piano) and Ronan Le Mons.

Red Cardell. Naître. Keltia Musique KMCD 173.

This is a well known rock band of Brittany - with a twist, with music which includes a Ukrainian women's choir and traditional Breton singer Louise Ebrel.

Joseph-Guy Ropartz. Symphonies No. 1 & 4.

Orchestre symphonique et lyrique de Nancy. Sebastien Lang-Lessing, conductor. Timpani 1c1093.

Just one of six symphonies (No. 3) had been recorded of this Breton composer. Timpani plans to release all six and this CD features the first and fourth. The first symphony, "On a Breton chorale," dates from 1895 and shows the influence of his mentor César Franck. Symphony No. 4 was composed fifteen years later when Ropartz had developed more of his own style.

Alan Stivell. Explore. Keltia III K3104 / Harmonia Mundi. www.alan-stivell.com

This latest CD mixes lots of musical styles – rock, blues, reggae, electronic and Celtic rhythms and melodies – as Alan Stivell creatively continues to explore new directions.

Talar. Talar. CO – Le Label CO-0524.

This is the second CD by this fest noz band from the Nantes area. Dances include *ridées*, *hanter-dro*, *marâchine*, and waltzes.

Tribuil. Musique bretonne. TRIB 01.

This CD includes 15 airs and dances interpreted by various combinations of instruments in this group with Patrick Lancien on accordion, Claude Le Baron on bombarde and biniou, and Fabien Robbe with bugle and keyed cornet.

Veyaj. La misère des dames. Dogofpride DOP 02.

This is a trio composed of Jean Michel Le Ray, Alain Rault and Fabien Robbe who arrange songs from the area of Plougenast.

A New Record Label: Innacor (www.innacor.com)

This new record label was initiated by Erik Marchand, Jacky Molard, and Bertrand Dupont to promote innovative mixes of artists from various parts of the world. The first CD features Hasan Yarmdünia, a clarinet player and master of gypsy and Turkish music (INNA 652). A second CD with Erik Marchand, Jacky Molard, Costica Olan and Viorel Tajkuna is called "Unu, daou, tri, chtar." One can expect the same innovative and interesting interplay of traditions that is found in many recordings by Erik Marchand.

Deep Inside a Breton Skull 10

Celtic Pattern / Kelc'hiadoù (intertwining phrases instead of lines)

Jean-Pierre Le Mat

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Brav an amzer, Taranis, Doue an taran !

TARANIS - Brav an amzer, Jedonjour Dispar !

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Bennozh da chañs hon emgav, ma z'eus chañs e baradoz an doueoù keltiek.

TARANIS - Sklaer eo an oabl hiziv ; ha divizout dindan an amzer a raio vad deomp.

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Un dro el liorz-mañ a blijfe deoc'h ?

TARANIS - Ya, blijfe awalc'h. Deomp d'ober kelc'hdroioù e-touez ar gwez. Goude holl, gant mab-den eo bet roet din arouez ar rod, a zo a-ouenn din hervez an dud. Gallus eo, met dievezh e vefe krediñ eo gwir bater an holl zizkuliadennoù denel diwar-benn an doueoù.

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Plijout a ra din ho klevout. Dedennet on gant kudenn ar c'helc'h, ken er jedoniezh, er bevoniezh, pe en doueoniezh. Hag e vefec'h a-du da lavarout muioc'h diwar-se ?

TARANIS - oh, n'ouzon ket petra a lavarfen deoc'h, rak disteraet e c'hellfe bezañ dre ur merzadur-spered hepken. Amañ em eus ul levr a blijjo deoc'h, rak komz a ra e skeudennoù diwar-benn hor c'hudenn. Iskis awalc'h, skrivet eo evel un diviz etre un doue (lavaromp TARA, marteze TARANIS) hag un den (lavaromp JEDI, marteze JEDONIOUR DISPAR). Selaouit' ta, ma zo o vont da lenn deoc'h ur pennad...

(Serriñ a ra Taranis e zaoulagad ha digeriñ a ra al levr en arvar. Neuze e tigor e zaoulagad hag e krog da lenn a vouez uhel).

TARA : Amañ, dindan ar wezenn veur, ez eus ul lec'h dereat evit prederiañ. Sioulder an traoù a ro meizad an divrall. Awenet eo spered an den gant soñjoù an divent, ha spered an doue gant soñjoù ar marv.

Eskemm a reont o ferzh e-pad ur pennadig, ar pezh a ra aon din. Iskis e ra ma rod amañ. Ret eo din chom harp ouzh ma skiant-prenet ; lakaat a ran em fenn e heuilh ar wezenn veur kelc'hiad ar pevar amzer, hag e c'hel an taran he distruj da bep mare.

JEDI : Hag e vefe traoù, doue galloudus, a laoskfe ho peli divarrek ?



BRETON POET - Beautiful day isn't it, O Taranis, God of the thunder !

TARANIS - Beautiful day, Breton poet !

BRETON POET - I bless the stroke of luck I have to meet you, if luck actually exists in the paradise of the Celtic gods.

TARANIS - Fine ! Today the weather is nice. And everybody knows that a chat in the open air is good for one's health.

BRETON POET - What about a walk together in this park planted with trees ?

TARANIS - OK... We will follow a circular path. The men gave me the wheel as a divine attribute. According to them, it fits deeply with my nature. It is absolutely possible, although it is unwise to take all the human revelations concerning the gods for granted.

BRETON POET - Really, I like to listen to your speech. I am very interested by the question of the circle, whether it is in mathematics, biology, or theology. Do you agree to tell me more ?

TARANIS : Oh, I don't know how to speak about this subject. I think in any case that a scholarly approach would spoil it. I have here a book which deals with our question nicely. Strangely enough, it is written as a dialogue between a god called TARA (probably an abbreviation for Taranis) and a man called BRET (probably an abbreviation for BRETON POET). I will read a chapter for you ...



(Taranis closes his eyes and opens the book randomly. Then he adjusts his glasses and starts to read aloud).

TARA - This sheltered area is favorable for meditation. The restful spots give an idea of what is permanent. They inspire in men deep thoughts about the infinite, and in gods deep thoughts about death. Thus they reverse their fates one

moment, just enough to meet with their own specific nightmares. My wheel is a meaningless attribute here. I cling to my most trivial knowledge, not to be brought towards deeper thoughts. Everything moves, and the trees undergo the cycle of the seasons. The storm can strike them down at any time.

BRET - Are there things, powerful god, over which you have no authority?

TARA : Ar c'helc'h, a zo doare din, a eo ul linenn peurbadel ha bevennet ivez, daoust d'ar vevenn bezañ merk un namm. Ur gaou-gwir eo, a ziheñch ach'anon. Hogen, ret eo din bevañ gant luziadennoù.

JEDI : Nag iskis, un anzav evit un doue divarvel !

TARA : Koulskoude eo ma frankiz ledanoc'h eget hini an doueoù all, a c'hell troiata war ul linenn eeun nemetken.

Honnezh a zo diziwezh a dra-sur, met ken aes eo rakwelout anezhi ma'z eo trist-marv da heuliañ.

Kelc'hiadou ar pevar amzer, ar seizh avel, pe ar mil rummad a zo ur blijadur evit an daoulag. Hag a fell deoc'h lamm ganin eus an eil d'egile ? Feuntus-tre eo...

JEDI : Ober a rit aon din. Ne fell ket din kejañ gant ur JEDI an amzer dremenet pe an amzer dazont. Drezañ e c'hellfen diskrediñ ma buhez, ha koll ma sederidigezh.

TARA : Ha ha ha ha ! ... Se eo ar fentigell am boa savet evidoc'h. Farsus e vije mat, sur on...

JEDI : Sur oc'h ? Ha ma teufec'h a benn deoc'h-c'hwil hoc'h-unan, en ur lamm eus ur c'helc'h d'egile ? Oh oh.. Tara tapet gant Tara o kantreal hag o foetañ hentoù...

TARA : Ober a rit aon din. Ne fell ket din kejañ gant un Tara an amzer dremenet pe an amzer dazont. Drezañ e c'hellfen diskrediñ ma buhez, ha koll ma sederidigezh.

JEDI : Hag e vefe traoù, doue galloudus, a laoskfe ho peli divarrek ?

TARA : Imboudet o'ch diwar an diaoul. Krediñ a ra din e klaskit va lakaat da goll ma fenn.

JEDI : Nag iskis un anzav evit un doue divarvel !

TARA : Oh, komprenet em eus ho irienn. Forzh penaos, he anavezen mat awalc'h endeo. Dre blijadur, an den a laka reuz er c'helc'hiadoù doueel hag er c'helc'hiadoù naturel. Ha ni, an doueoù, hon eus mil boan da gavout penn d'ar c'hoari. Setu, din-me bremañ da zivarc'hañ ac'hanoc'h, a greiz kalon eveljust, en ur cheñch a-daol-trumm kelch'iad ar...

(Taranis a sav e benn eus al levr a oa o lenn a vouez uhel. Diskouez a ra bezañ prederiek ha diduellet keit-ha-keit)



TARANIS - iskis awalc'h ... Echuiñ a ra ar pennad-se en ur mod espar kenañ. Diechu e seblant bezañ, ha koulskoude ne welan ket petra a vefe da lavarout ouzhpenn.

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - An istor-se a zegas soñj din eus ar pezh a vez kontet diwar-benn ar gorriganed. Dañsal a reont dañsoù-tro, en ur ganañ ur ganaouenn savet gant anvioù deizioù ar sizhun. Kelc'hiet kenañ, n'eo ket ?

TARA - The circle is part of my nature. It is a plane geometrical figure, without beginning nor end, but also without infinity. Infinity in the perimeter or the radius would lead to a straight line. It would not be the same thing in curved universes, but the gods, unfortunately, cannot choose the universes in which they act. Thus, my power is perfect and limited, whereas the limits are signs of imperfection. It is a paradox which bothers me, but everybody has to live with his own contradictions.

BRET - That is a strange statement, coming from an immortal god!

TARA - Anyway, my freedom is much larger than that of the linear gods. OK, the line is infinite. But it is so predictable! It is a crime against our godly intelligence. It is too sad... The circles, the cycles of the seasons, of the generations, of the civilizations are a pleasure for the eyes. Do you want to go with me, and jump from a cycle to another? It is lovely ...

BRET - You frighten me... I would not like to meet another Bret on my road, past or future. He would make me have doubts about myself, and I would lose my serenity.

TARA - Ah Ah Ah Ah! ... That is exactly the joke I wanted to make. It would have been very funny !

BRET - Do you really think that ? Imagine, passing from a cycle to another, and meeting yourself? Oh oh... Tara finding an unexpected wandering Tara...

TARA - You frighten me... I would not like to meet another Tara on my road, past or future. He would make me have doubts about myself, and I would lose my serenity.

BRET - Are there things, powerful god, over which you have no authority?

TARA - You are fiendish. I get the clear feeling that you are seeking to confuse me.

BRET - That is a strange statement, coming from an immortal god!

TARA - Oh, I understand your manners. I knew them before. Men find a nasty pleasure disturbing the divine and the natural cycles. After that, they ask us to rectify things. But, more and more, it is such a mess that it is impossible to have them satisfied. Now it is my turn to disturb, with my best regards of course, and I will pass from this cycle to...

(Taranis raises his eyes from the book he was reading aloud. He is at the same time thoughtful and pleased.)



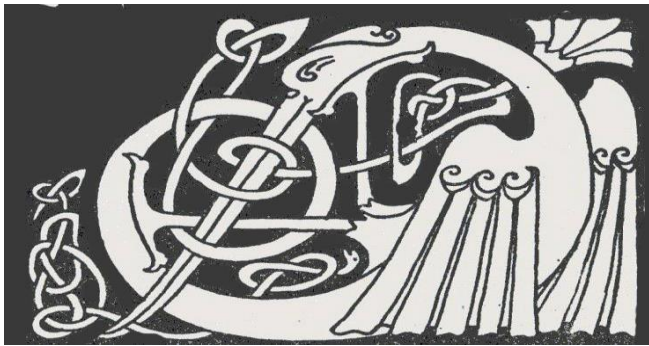
TARANIS - That is odd. The chapter ends weirdly. It seems unfinished, and yet I do not see what can be added.

BRETON POET - This story reminds me of what the Bretons tell about the Korrigans. These goblins dance in a circle during the night, singing a song whose only words are the days of the week. That is very circular, of course.

Ha pa vez strobinellet ganto ur beajour e lanneier Menezioù Are, en em lakaat a ra-eñ da dreiñ hep gouzout dezhañ. Distreiñ a ra atav er memes lec'h ; "kelc'hiet" eo. Ar c'helc'hioù-hud-se a zo graet en un doare ispisial evelkent. Netra 'zo evel a-raok evit ar re a zo bet tapet e-barz dañs ar gorriganed, hag a zo bet "kelc'hiet". Heuliañ a reont, n'eo ket ur c'helc'h, met kelc'hioù spinennek. Skeudenn trimentek ur seurt lun mentoniezhel a dle bezañ studiet, dre meur a du zoken...

TARANIS - Ar pezh lavarit a zo gwir-tre. Kejet en eus gant un den a oa kelc'hiet. Kaozeal a rae evel doc'h. Daoust hag en deus spiet hor c'haozeadenn ?

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Ne welan den ebet amañ... Ma n'eus adlavaret ma c'herioù, n'emañ ket marteze war an hevelep kelc'h egedomp. Peseurt kelc'h, neuze ? Marteze en deus lennet dreist skoaz unan bennak, war ul levrig a vefe bet graet diwar hon diviz. Piv a oar ?



TARANIS - Plijout a ra din ho klevout. Dedennet on gant kudenn ar c'helc'h, ken er jedoniezh, er bevoniezh, pe en doueoniezh. Hag e vefec'h a-du da lavarout muioc'h diwar-se ?

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Ya blijfe awalc'h. Deomp d'ober kelc'hdroioù e-touez ar wez. Hervez an doueoù, ar rod a zo en flanedenn din-me. Gallus eo, met dievezh e vefe krediñ eo gwir bater an holl ziskuliadennoù doueel diwar-benn an dud.

TARANIS - Un dro el liorz-mañ a blijfe deoc'h ?

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Sklaer eo an oabl hiziv ; ha divizout dindan an amzer a raio vad deomp.

TARANIS - Bennozh da chañs hon emgav, ma'z eus chañs e bed an dud.

AR JEDONIOUR DISPAR - Brav an amzer, Taranis, Doue an taran !

TARANIS - Brav an amzer, Jedonour Dispar !

When they bewitch a traveller in the moors of the Arrée Mountains, the poor man turns and turns. He returns unceasingly to the same place. The Bretons say that he is "kelc'hiet", which means, in our language, at the same time "ringed" and "bewitched". However, these magic circles are of a particular kind. Nothing is the same as before for those who had been involved in the circle of the Korrigans. I believe that those who are "kelc'hiet" followed, not a circle, but tangent circles. The image of such a figure in time-space deserves to be studied, from various points of view.

TARANIS - What you said is absolutely true. I happened to meet a Breton guy, who was seemingly "kelc'hiet". He wandered in the past or in the future or, to be more exact, somewhere and somewhen else. He spoke as you did. Would he have spied our meeting?

BRETON POET - I do not see anybody here... If he repeated my words, perhaps he stays on a tangent circle, not far from here. What circle? Perhaps, over the shoulder of somebody, he would have read my words, printed in some magazine... Who knows?



TARANIS - Really, I like to listen to your speech. I am very interested by the question of the circle, whether it is in mathematics, biology, or theology. Do you agree to tell me more?

BRETON POET - OK... We will follow a circular path. The gods gave me the wheel as a human attribute. According to them, it fits deeply with our fate. It is absolutely possible, although it is unwise to take all the gods revelations concerning men for granted.

TARANIS - What about a walk together in this park planted with trees?

BRETON POET - Fine! Today the weather is nice. And everybody knows that a chat in the open air is good for one's health.

TARANIS - I bless the stroke of luck I have to meet you, if luck actually exists on the earth of living men.

BRETON POET - Beautiful day isn't it, O Taranis, God of the thunder!

TARANIS - Beautiful day, Breton poet !

An American from Harvard University presents Brittany in 1930

Harold S. Kemp, "Brittany: The Backward Child of a
Stern Environment"

The Journal of Geography, Vol. XXIX, Number 6,
September 1930

Editor's Note: The following is a remarkably stereotypical presentation of Brittany which emphasizes environmental and social elements which make Brittany picturesque to foreign visitors. Kemp, from Harvard University, paints such a broad picture that one has to wonder if he ever set foot in Brittany before writing this article for The Journal of Geography, which is subtitled - A Magazine for Schools. While travel writers of the 19th century might be excused for their ignorance due to limited travel options, it frightening that a university professor in 1930 can do no better than dismiss Brittany as a land of "simple, backward people." His ignorance of Brittany's history as a land of explorers and adventurers is particularly evident in the last paragraph printed here where he proclaims that because Brittany is a peninsula its people have remained remote from the world. He also mistakenly assumes that the isolation of Bretons has caused them to forget that they are French and to view the French as tyrants. Could there be other reasons for this???

... A picturesque country this, long before man, trying to make the most of so inhospitable a region, added to its charm. One might list here those things which man has added: he has been able to do relatively little, but, appropriately enough - inevitably enough, one suspects - he has done nothing that does not add to the country's inherent quality. Indeed, so closely are environment and the social complex interwoven that one might list those things which the visitor to Brittany counts as Brittany's "attractions" under environmental heads, thus:

Granite:

Megaliths or menhirs (popularly called Druidic monuments)
Fences, well-copings and windlasses, threshing floors, cottages, barns, farm carts
Wayside crosses, calvaires, ossuaries, churches
Town walls and gates, castles, châteaux, public buildings

Coastline and banks:

Fishing fleets
Fishing villages
Harbor calvaires or images
The fish-wives and fish auction

Votive boat models in the churches
Blessing of the fleet, by priests
Drying nets
Net-makers
Fishing costumes
Artists and their paintings
Pea pickers

Climate:

Moss-covered trees, notably in apple orchards
The crops
The "bocage" - high windbreak hedges
Butter and cattle markets
Drunken peasants

Location:

Peasant costumes
Pardons
Wedding processions and dances on the green
The Breton language
The Breton character

Under these four heads are grouped practically all of those features which make the Breton scene a delight to an outsider.

The Cultural Landscape Reflects the Environment

Really, there are two scenes Breton, instead of one; the coastal, fishing scene, and the interior, farming scene. Entering the province from elsewhere in France, one is first struck by the wooded aspect of the country. Wherever there is soil, there is cultivation - the cultivation of tiny fields separated one from the other by stone and sod dykes from which spring withering oak trees, spaced some ten feet apart in a row. These trees serve two purposes - the first, to break the winds which sweep across the peninsula from the sea, and the second, to provide, thru the ruthless annual pollarding of their branches, a supply of fuel in a region where there is no coal. So small have the fields become, thru division with succeeding generations, that these windbreak hedges quickly multiply into what seems at first glance a forest. Indeed, the local term, "bocage," means "grove."

One may traverse this farm country at length without seeing a house, unless his route leads him into a ravine or valley, where he will find a farm village snugly ensconced about the village well - often, the village baking oven, with its heap of fagots. The village is picturesque because of its

stout construction of great granite blocks, the ponderous walls of the houses being carried up into massive dormers and the whole monumental construction carrying nothing heavier than a relatively flimsy thatching of straw. Very "different," these houses. About them may be a fence of granite slivers, miniature replicas of those great granite slabs which we call "megaliths," and which were set up in the same land and in the same fashion, by pre-historic folk, long centuries ago. Where one turned off from the highway to plunge down the lane which led to the village hiding place, was, as at every road intersection, a tall stone cross, hewn from one piece of granite and generally graced with crude local carving, much after the fashion of early New England gravestones, where again, stone had easily suggested itself. The village church is of granite, and because granite is a difficult material in unskilled hands, however devout, the Breton artisans developed a diminutive spire of granite which was adapted to the material and which has no duplicate elsewhere - one of the most distinctive, wide-spread and delightful things in the province and definitely tied up to the granite area. Beside the church one generally finds that delight of the tourist - the calvaire - a calvary, or crucifix, of granite, some ten to twenty feet high. Since a crucifix demands at least one figure, stone-cutters, in spite of their hard material, developed a crude skill at figure-sculpture which led them to add mourning figures about the foot of the cross. So strangely crude, or impressively naturalistic are these figures, that again the resistant material available has helped to evolve a "novelty" for present-day visitors.

In the rear of the church, no doubt, stands another Breton expression of environment - the ossuary, or bone-house. In a region of so little soil, the burying of the dead long ago threatened to become a grief-ending worry and expense to the living; hence, after a few years of mourning, the bones were dug up from their snug but scanty resting place and dumped, with more or less ceremony, into the bone-house, which, occupying a modicum of land, and made of age-resisting granite, solves the problem very well indeed.¹

The well, which centers the hamlet, has the familiar coping of stone, but on either side is an upright post of granite which supports a heavy stone windlass - unique to a country where granite is more easily got than wood of any size. Above the

windlass one often finds a not ungraceful stone shed, of the lychgate type. Châteaux, in such a country, are rare; while castles, built largely for defense, and town walls, are more common. These, of course, are of granite, as well as the town hall, large or small; the little school-house; and, in larger towns, a rambling convent. Floors, of course, are of stone, except in cases where comparative wealth justifies the elegance of a deal floor. In the village *place*, the well is one of a community trinity with the stone threshing floor and (in the occasional larger town) the market house, rather necessary in a peninsular climate where drizzles, if not downright rain, are frequent. In fact, this need was recognized so long ago that market-houses are still standing - as, notably, at Le Faouet - which were solidly and confidently set up in granite in the 16th century.

Barns, in striking contrast to the huge painted wood structures of America, are made as small as possible, to minimize stone-masonry, and are almost universally set against the house, to save the building of one wall. This tiny barn is really a stable, housing the cattle and horses, while the hay which figures so largely in this climate, is built into marvelously neat and shapely stacks. The problem of protecting these stacks from the humid climate which evolved them was solved by thatching them - a well-laid and tied thatch being constructed upon each stack.²

Crops may not be considered, at first thought, as part of a region's picturesqueness, but second thought, perhaps, will remind one of the distinctive scene peculiar to certain crops, as in the hop country of Surrey; the tulip lands of western Holland; the vineyards of any wine-growing region; olive groves of Italy; or the terraced lemon groves of Sicily; the cotton fields of our own South; the waving sea of western wheat fields or the ordered rows of California's orangeries - to mention only a few. Breton farmers have found that potatoes and other vegetables give best-paying yields on the most fertile soil. These crops, however they figure in Breton economies, do not add perhaps, to the *scène Bretonne*. But the lush hay fields; the orchards, "bearded with moss," and pink with blossom or red with fruit; and under the trees, the elusive pink-white of the buckwheat blossoms make pictures never to be forgotten by one fortunate enough to see them, fretted with the net-work of the pollarded green bocage. Surely the farming

country-side makes a striking and beautiful contrasting note with the ever-encountered intervals of scrub-forest or wide stretches of purple-heathed moorland. Apples figure universally, as a part of every agricultural scene, because Brittany lies just north of the vine-land, and this part of France, in reluctant but convivial response to the dictum of climate, drinks cider - cider as hard as the granite on which it is grown, and responsible, because of its fiery quality, for far more drunkenness than one sees elsewhere in France, where the milder (and more expensive) wines are in vogue. Imported wines, of course, would be in vogue as well in Brittany, but for the poverty which is associated with so rigorous and environment.³

Along the encircling coast of Brittany one finds, added to the *scène rustique*, the *scène maritime*. "Added," because as in most fishing littorals, farming is concomitant with fishing, and extends across every foot of tillable soil to the very edge of the sea-cliff; it is not uncommon, along the Breton coast, to find that a recent fall of rock has torn a crescent out of the green of the season's crop, and tumbled it into the sea.

Bays, inlets and estuaries are half the story of this coast, as rocky promontories are the other half. And each re-entrant has, according to its size, a fishing village.⁴

Breton Fishing Villages Lead All Others In Charm

The fleet, whether strung along the far horizon, streaming in or out in friendly race or lying snug within a rock-ribbed harbor, is a thing of beauty, partly because of the grace not uncommon to craft, but far more, and uniquely, because the thrift of these hard-pressed Bretons has led them to dip their sails in a happily brown-red preserving fluid which renders them more resistant to the moisture of sea and air. The nets, on the other hand, bellying out from the mast-head where they are hung to dry, are dyed blue by this canny old race of fishermen, to the end that they shall be less visible when in the water of the almost-spent, but still blue Gulf Stream. The rare combination of color effects which result, account for such agglomerations of painters, picturesque in themselves, as one can find perhaps nowhere else - not even excepting the four much more limited areas which immediately suggest themselves.

The wide range of tide, characteristic of these coasts, plays a variant on the picturesqueness of the fleets at anchor, since one sees the boats, now standing sedate and lovely, mirrored ravishingly in still water, and now lying dully on their round sides, reflections banished by the slimey ooze on which they rest; or standing, stiff and self-conscious, propped up on two stilts, and, thanks to the withdrawn tide, grotesquely, rather than beautifully, picturesque.

On the point of rock which cuts the harbor off from the sea, stands a particularly elaborate calvaire, in propitiation to angry seas, or perhaps a chapel, dedicated to the same end. The small waterfront behind the calvaire or chapel is alive with fisher "types" - men carrying osier baskets of sardines to the *criée*, or auction-shed (if a granite building may be called a "shed"); other men, and women, carrying a thirty-pound tuna by the tail in each hand, the dry snouts of the fish rasping creepily on the granite of the harbor ramps; dozens of women buyers, each representing a little canning factory, knitting incessantly on the long woolen socks while they scan the incoming fish and haggle over price, or wait, craftily, until the size of the yield brings down the price in the *criée*. Bare-footed children, down to greet their fathers and to carry back the carefully set-aside fish which is to be cooked for supper - some rare stray - a St. Denis, perhaps, or, equally good, a chance lotte - too good for "us" if there is a tourist hotel, or a railroad to take it to Paris, but an available treat otherwise, because the canneries can handle only the commonplaces - sardines or tuna.

Because their fishing clothes are made of the same material as the sails, and are equally subject to wetting and consequent rotting, they too are dyed in the same brilliant colors - red or blue - often one, liberally patched with the other. A riot of color - flapping in the wind or stalking about on its own legs - these fishing villages; and yet the artists, frenziedly trying to catch and hold it, paint one awesome canvas after another which manages to be doubly lurid - trebly patch-worked - and so, doubly and trebly interesting and amusing to gaping tourists.

Doubtless on one side of the harbor entrance is a crumbling turreted fort, built long ago when each little remote town had to be a citadel; at St. Malo

and Concarneau the fort enclosed the whole village, and in the latter, one still crosses the drawbridge which connects the fortified harbor-island town to the mainland, now strewn with canning factories. On certain days the votive boat-models are taken down from before the church altars, dusted by a heavy hand, and borne out into the sunlight of broad day to be carried around the harbor on litters, each perched on the shoulders of four suddenly important acolytes. "Sisters" come behind, herding the girls, who can only clutter along and envy their brothers; and priests walk before, sprinkling holywater over the harbor, such boats as lie warped to the shore or, in a final comprehensive gesture, in the direction of the others. The townsfolk sing, with feeling, and those who are not in line uncover or bow reverently, hoping that loss is not to come to them this year. On the fringes scatter American tourists, with an occasional British competitor, snapping the choicer bits, shouting for the film reserves, pushing to "catch" the priest at a critical juncture. It is all - all - very picturesque.

Back of the town, in sheltered patches, are fields of peas - (the famed *petits pois de France*) - with their chatting windrow of women pickers, and the great two-wheeled carts piling high with pods. This development (not to be found inland) is added to the picture of the Breton fishing village because there only in Brittany are to be found the canning plants and skilled labor which suggest the brief season of pea-canning as a side-line.⁵

The Breton people, as a social group, reflect, as surely as does the landscape, the environment which is theirs. Farming, they are as poor as other farmers the world over where the land is as unyielding as this. Fishing, they are no more prosperous - no less hard-working - than the fishermen of Norway, Nova Scotia, or Portugal. Townsfolk, almost without exception, are the folk of little towns - of villages; and there is almost nowhere a sophistication which is more than that of little villages.

But the story of Breton character and habit is more than that of a hard land and uncertain hauls; of little, scattered farms, and meager, long-stunted hamlets. It is the story of a people who, in the midst of the world, are out of it; mewed up, like monks in a monastery, on a peninsula. It is the story of a remote people.

Brittany's remoteness lies chiefly in the fact, common to peninsulas, that the province leads nowhere. No great trade route has ever led across it, because to cross it is but to go to, or come from, the sea; and cargoes today, as always, sail the length of its northern or southern coast to reach harbors closer to the busy world of France; to Le Havre on the north, or Nantes, on the south.

In olden days, English armies sometimes slipped cross the Channel to strike France over the shoulder of Brittany; and here France was wont to meet the invader and drive him out, leaving the Bretons to recover from the despoiling, harrying hands of both. Such experiences often repeated and often prolonged, made the Bretons distrustful of the foe across the water and the "ally" to whose land his peninsula was attached. Today he will exclaim, bitterly, "*Oo! Les cochons Anglais!*" And, if he is one of the more rabid, racially self-conscious of the Bretons (i.e., one of the most isolated ones), he may add, as bitterly, "*Et les tyrans Français!*" actually forgetting, in his provincial egoism, that he too is French.

To be continued ...

Footnotes

¹ The oldest standing ossuary dates from the 15th century, showing the pressure of land scarcity as long ago as that.

² This adaptation to a lack of building material is not unique in Brittany, but is to be seen, notably, in treeless Holland and Belgium.

³ Mark the analogy to "apple-jack" - a liquor of terrible potency - which persists to this day among the interior hill-farmers of New England, where in pre-prohibition days, the lack of corn for whiskey corresponded to the grape-lack in Brittany.

⁴ Nature or depth of bottom, and relation to banks or rail transportation determine whether the village shall concern itself with oysters, fresh fish, or sardines and tuna for canning.

⁵ Another similar alliance is to be found in Sarlat (in southern France) where the rare presence of native truffles, with consequent canneries, has developed the growing of peas and other choice vegetables for canning, instead of grain.

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