PERCEPTION AND REALITY: IRELAND *c*.980-1229

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh

Hi Kalaind Auguist cen ail
tiagtís ind cech tress blíadain;
agtís secht ngraifne im gním nglé
secht laithe na sechtmaine.

And luaitís fri bága bil
certa ocus cána in cóicid,
cech recht ríagla co rogor
cech tress blíadna a chórogod.

'On the kalends of August free from reproach
they would go thither every third year:
they would hold seven races, for a glorious object,
seven days in the week.

There they would discuss with strife of speech
the dues and tributes of the province,
every legal enactment right piously
every third year it was settled.'[1]

This eleventh-century depiction of a gathering (*óenach*) held at regular intervals at Carmain

provides an imagined glimpse of medieval Ireland at work and play. Conventionally but

misleadingly translated 'fair', the *óenach* was an institution in which the wider community

played a part. Among those said to have been assembled on this particular occasion were 'the

clerics and laity of the Leinstermen, as well as the wives of the nobility' (*clérig, láeich Lagen*

ille, mnái na ndagfher). Fasting was undertaken there 'against wrong and oppression' (*ra*

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[1] *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, 18-19 (lines 208-16). I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Fiona Edmonds, for perceptive comments on what follows.

anrecht, ra écomlund).[2] Misconduct was forbidden;[3] knowledge was imparted of various kinds.[4] Kings controlled these occasions, convening an *óenach* for a variety of reasons. It was to celebrate his accession to the kingship of Leinster that the *óenach* at Carmain was held by Donnchad mac Gilla Phátraic in 1033 and this poem may mark that specific event.[5] Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill, king of Mide, had earlier hosted a similar assembly at Tailtiu [Teltown, County Meath] in 1007, when he had already been ruling for more than a quarter of a century and had achieved considerable success.[6] His revival of *óenach Tailten* was designed to bolster his authority further, and it too was commemorated in a composition attributed to Máel Sechnaill's court-poet, Cúán ua Lothcháin. In rejuvenating Tailtiu, Ireland's premier *óenach* (*prim-óenach hÉrend*), this midland ruler takes his place in a long line of ancestral kings. Hailed as 'the glory of the noble West' (*orddan íarthair domuin duind*), he is claimed to occupy by right the royal seat (*forud flatha*).[7]

Underlying these carefully choreographed descriptions is a social reality, which is both mediated and informed by the constructed text. A focus on what has been called the 'social logic of the text' is important as we commence an evaluation of selected aspects of a transformative period in Irish history, for which the rich and varied sources at our disposal form the very fabric of the transformation itself.[8] Máel Sechnaill had earned his kingship, in Cúán ua Lothcháin's words, 'since he raised the fair of Tailtiu from the sod; though of

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[2] *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, 20-21 (lines 280-2).
[3] *Acra, tobuch frithir fíach / écnach, écraite, anríad/ ní lámar … mad aithed and, nír chlunter …*: 'Suing, harsh levying of debts, satirising, quarrelling, misconduct is not dared … as for elopement, it is not to be heard of there': *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, 18-19 (lines 221-3, 227).
[4] This included *cach rand rorannad Héreo* 'every division into which Ireland has been divided'; *fis cech trichat in Hérind* 'the knowledge of every cantred in Ireland'; *coimgne cinte cóem-cheneóil* 'the exact synchronising of the goodly race': *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, 20-1 (lines 247, 249, 265).
[5] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1033.4; D. Ó Corráin, 'Viking Ireland – Afterthoughts', in Clarke et al. (eds.), *Ireland and Scandinavia*, 421-52, at 443-4.
[6] *Chron. Scot.*, *s.a.* 1007. Reference to it was added in a different hand in *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1007.10; for discussion, see M. Ní Mhaonaigh, 'A Man of Two Faces: Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill in Middle Irish Sources', in Clarke and Johnson (eds.), *Vikings in Ireland and Beyond*, 232-52, at 249-50.
[7] *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, 146-63, esp. 150-1 (line 48) and 160-1 (lines 201 and 203). For a discussion of the term *forad*, see C. Swift, 'The Local Context of *Óenach Tailten*', *Ríocht na Midhe*, 11 (2000), 24-50, at 31-3.
[8] G. M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 59-86.

ancestral use, it was unknown' (*tuc óenach Talten a feór / ciarb atharda, rop aneól*). His power is thus presented as deep-rooted, but his learned advocate is also of the view that in Máel Sechnaill 'king of Tara' (*rí Temra*) and 'singular champion of Europe' (*oen-milid na hEorapa*) are one.[9] The historical world encapsulated in this literary creation thus looks inwards and out, marking what Spiegel has termed the 'moment of inscription', by which she means the process through which the text's meaning becomes fixed.[10] As part of learned discourse, 'Tailtiu' itself shaped social ideology and in this way could have informed 'Carmain', a comparable literary representation from a similar milieu. In the case of these two poems, verbal parallels in fact suggest a direct relationship.[11] In his rise to supremacy in Osraige and Leinster, Donnchad mac Gilla Phátraic overcame opposition from the celebrant of *óenach Tailten*, Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill, as well as from his son.[12] The pen served as an effective weapon alongside the sword. In presenting Donnchad as master of a gathering echoing that of Tailtiu, a partisan author buttressed that king's position through the power of the word.

Twelfth-century kings employed *óenach Tailten* to similar effect, specifically the king of Connacht, Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair and his son and royal successor, Ruaidrí, who each convened this intensely symbolic gathering to emphasise acquisition of actual gains.[13] In cultivating a gathering like an *óenach*, recourse was had to a sense of community and

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[9] *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, 160-1 (lines 207-8, 197 and 200).
[10] Spiegel, 'History', 84.
[11] See *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iv, 150-1 (lines 65-8), 152-3 (lines 71-2), and iii, 18-19 (lines 225-8), 10-11 (lines 103-4). These parallels were discussed by Denis Casey in a lecture he presented on 'Carmain' at a conference arising out of 'The Óenach Project' in Cork, March 2012. I am grateful to Dr Casey for sending me a draft version of his work on the poem.
[12] See, for example, *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1016.6, on which occasion Donnchad killed the Leinster ruler with whom Máel Sechnaill had formed an alliance (and *Chron. Scot.*, *s.a.* 1013; *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1015.2). See also *Ann. Tig.*, *s.a.* 1039.
[13] D. Ó Corráin, 'Nationality and Kingship in Pre-Norman Ireland', in T. W. Moody (ed.), *Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence*. Historical Studies, 11 (Belfast; Appletree, 1978), 1-35. T. Charles-Edwards, 'Ireland and its Invaders, 1166-1186', *Quaestio Insularis: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic*, 4 (2003), 1-34, at 23-4.

identity, and an appeal made to a polity as a whole.[14] The communicative force itself, however, was harnessed by the influential few, and the cultural reality refracted represents that of elite society. In delineating the world in which *óenaig* functioned, many of its contours are obscured from view. Notwithstanding this, the mediators cum moulders of eleventh- and twelfth-century Ireland revealed much of their present through elaborate depiction of their past and alleged projection of a specific future. They operated in centres of learning that formed part of ecclesiastical establishments. Throughout the period with which we are concerned, the mutual dependency of cleric and king ensured that written records encompassed religious and secular affairs.[15] Court literacy became more prominent as the administrative support required by rulers in control of larger territories grew. Lay learned families are a feature of the later part of our period, serving eulogy to royal patrons and memorialising significant events.[16] Yet irrespective of this development, the Church maintained an active interest in the transmission of knowledge more generally, even after the introduction of new religious orders in the twelfth century. The set of annals known as the Cottonian Annals or 'Annals of Boyle' deals with a wide range of events and was recorded in the Cistercian monastery of Boyle, County Roscommon, until 1228, before being continued elsewhere.[17] Moreover, the association with the new orders was deemed significant, at least by some kings: Cathal Crobderg Ua Conchobair, was buried in the Cistercian abbey of Knockmoy on his death in 1224, rather than in the traditional burial ground and site of a

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[14] P. Gleeson, 'Kingdoms, Communities and Óenaig: Irish Assembly Practices in their Northwest European Context', *Journal of the North Atlantic*, 8 (2015), 33-51. (http://dx.doi.org/10.3721/037.002.sp801). For the audience of these works see E. Johnston, *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge; Boydell Press, 2013).

[15] See M. Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland, 800-1200: From the Vikings to the Normans', in M. Kelleher and P. O'Leary (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature, Volume I: to 1890* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-73, especially 36-7.

[16] The earliest examples of their poetry are discussed by P. Ó Macháin, 'Aspects of Bardic Poetry in the Thirteenth Century', in C. Breatnach and M. Ní Úrdail (eds.), *Aon don Éigse: Essays Marking Osborn Bergin's Centenary Lecture on Bardic Poetry (1912)* (Dublin; DIAS, 2015), 91-125.

[17] 'The Annals in Coton MS Titus A xxv', ed. and trans. A. M. Freeman, *Revue celtique* 41 (1924), 301-30; 42 (1925), 283-505; 43 (1926), 358-84; 44 (1927), 336-61.

significant cultural centre, Clonmacnoise.[18] Notwithstanding the increasing variety of loci for scholarly production, some continuity, as far as ecclesiastical participation in literary cultivation is concerned, was undoubtedly maintained.[19]

Literary production was thus supported and promoted by secular and religious elites alike, and extant texts – whether chronicle or genealogy, legal commentary or imaginative tale – must be evaluated as the ideological documents that they so often are. This pseudohistorical record can be relativised with reference to other valuable source material, archaeological, art historical, linguistic, onomastic, to allow a multi-dimensional picture of the past to be drawn. Loan-words, place-names, coins, as well as arm-rings and the like, provide other types of commentary with which the evidence of written compositions should, where possible, be meshed. Recent scholarship on *óenaig*, for example, places landscape and literature on the same page.[20] Yet as the *óenach* example highlights, we may glean why something happened without determining how it functioned on the ground.[21] The tapestry of surviving evidence contains strands of varying thickness alongside its threadbare gaps.

King of Tara, ruler of the Irish, emperor of the western world

Whatever about its physical manifestation, the *óenach*'s ideological significance was great. By convening *óenach Tailten* in particular, a king's authority was underlined through association with the kingship of Tara. Celebrated in the literature of this period as the prerogative of the ideal sovereign, *rí Temra[ch]* 'king of Tara', as Máel Sechnaill is termed in the poem 'Tailtiu', marked the addressee out as an aspirant to recognition as most powerful

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[18] *AC*, *s.a.* 1224.2.

[19] K. Simms, 'An Eaglais agus Filí na Scol', in P. Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An Dán Díreach*. Léachtaí Cholm Cille 24. (Maigh Nuad; An Sagart, 1994), 21-36.

[20] This is the explicit aim of the Óenach Project, for which see https://theoenachproject.wordpress.com.

[21] For discussion of activities at an *óenach*, see C. Etchingham, *The Irish 'Monastic Town': Is this a Valid Concept?* Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lecture, 8 (Cambridge; Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 2010).

king. Uí Néill, to whose southern branch of Clann Cholmáin Máel Sechnaill belonged, had long been inextricably linked with this prestigious kingship, though its kings were also accorded the title, *rí Érenn* 'king of Ireland' from the time of its first known usage in the ninth and tenth centuries.[22] In the account of the rivalry between Máel Sechnaill and his Munster opponent, Brian Bórama, with which our period opens, the term 'king of Tara' is subservient to 'king of Ireland', at least in the pro-Brian record of events. Thus, while both Brian and Máel Sechnaill are included in a list of Tara kings, as *rí Temrach*, the midlands ruler is clearly subordinate to his southern contemporary, *rí Érenn*, as the two march at the head of an army to Dublin in an encounter that will become known as the Battle of Clontarf.[23] The resonances of the sovereignty of Tara remained useful and it retained its force as a legitimising label throughout our period. An eleventh-century narrative, *Echtra mac nEchach Mugmedóin* (The Adventure of the Sons of Echaid Mugmedón), set out Uí Néill claims to rule, with reference to how their eponymous ancestor, Níall Noígíallach (Niall of the Nine Hostages) acceded to Tara.[24] Appropriating the same story more than a century later, Uí Chonchobair of Connacht employed it with a twist to claim Tara and thus legitimacy for King Cathal Crobderg, descendant of Niall's brother, Brión.[25]

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[22] M. Herbert, '*Rí Érenn, Rí Alban*: Kingship and Identity in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in S. Taylor (ed.), *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland 500-1297: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the Occasion of her Ninetieth Birthday* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2000), 62-72. The concept of a kingship of Ireland itself is attested earlier: E. Bhreathnach, 'Temoria: Caput Scotorum?', *Ériu*, 47 (1996), 67-88.

[23] *CGG*, 4-5 (§3); *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1014.1. The account of the battle in the Annals of Ulster has been augmented in favour of Brian: see M. Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru: Ireland's Greatest King?* (Stroud; Tempus, 2007), 55-6.

[24] 'The Death of Crimthann son of Fidach and the Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedón', ed. and trans. W. Stokes *Revue celtique* 24 (1903), 172-207, at 190-203; 'Echtra maic Echdach Mugmedóin', ed. and trans. M. Joynt, *Ériu* 4 (1910), 91-111; for discussion, see C. Downey, 'Literature and Learning in Early Medieval Meath', in F. Ludlow and A. Crampsie (eds.), *Meath, History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin; Geography Publications, 2015), 101-34.

[25] 'A Poem Composed for Cathal Croibhdhearg Ó Conchubair', ed. and trans. B. Ó Cuiv, *Ériu* 34 (1983), 157-74; D. Ó Corráin, 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative', in D. Ellis Evans, J. G. Griffith and E. M. Jope (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies, Oxford 1983* (Oxford; Cranham Press, 1986), 141-58, at 146; and D. Ó Corrain, 'Legend as Critic', in T. Dunne (ed.), *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*. Historical Studies, 16 (Cork University Press, 1987), 23-38.

It is, however, as 'king of Connacht and king of the Irish of Ireland' (*ri Connacht 7 ri Gaidhel Erenn*), that Cathal is described in his death notice of 1224.[26] Indeed, even the Ua Néill ruler, Máel Sechnaill, was described as *airdri Erenn* in his obit, some two hundred years previously. Almost a decade earlier than that, Brian Bórama had been hailed in death, not simply as *ardrí Gaidhel Erenn* ('chief ruler of the Irish of Ireland') but of the foreigners (*gaill*) and Britons, and 'the Augustus of the whole of north-west Europe' (*August iartair tuaiscirt Eorpa uile*) as well.[27] As rulers of a physical domain, the designation 'king of Ireland', and the depiction as leader of a single geographically-defined people, reflected the territorial basis of rule.[28] The importance of the ideological dimension of sovereignty endured, tales of royal ancestry forming part of the literary arsenal of kings whose ambition often extended beyond island-wide rule. The imperial accolade accorded Brian by a later commentator in the Annals of Ulster is matched by his assignation as *imperator Scottorum* ('emperor of the Irish') by his confessor, Máel Suthain, in a marginal addition penned in the Book of Armagh during the king's own life.[29] It was with the claim to the kingship of Ireland, however, that all further aspiration commenced.

The parallel between Brian's title, *imperator Scottorum* and that of his contemporary, Otto III, *imperator Romanorum*, has long been noted. The imitation could certainly be deliberate, given Ireland's ongoing connections with the Frankish world. Ottonian style may also have informed the later writer who deemed Brian Augustus, since it was as *Romanorum imperator augustus* that Otto II was known from the 980s.[30] Inspired by its use in antiquity, Anglo-Saxon kings had earlier been termed *imperator*, including King Æthelstan in 930, and

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[26] *AU*, ii, *s.a.* 1224. He is enumerated as one of the 'kings of Ireland' in his obit in *AC*, *s.a.* 1224.2.

[27] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1022.3 and 1014.1.

[28] Herbert, '*Rí Érenn, Rí Alban*', 71.

[29] *Liber Ardmachanus: The Book of Armagh*, ed. J. Gwynn (Dublin; Hodges Figgis & Co., 1913), fol. 16ᵛ; D. Casey and B. Meehan, 'Brian Boru and the Book of Armagh', *History Ireland*, 22:2 (2014), 28-9.

[30] A. Gwynn, 'Brian in Armagh (1005)', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 9 (1978), 38-51; K. Leyser, '*Theophanu Divina Gratia Imperatrix Augusta*: Western and Eastern Emperorship in the Later Tenth Century', in A. Davids (ed.), *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-48, at 35.

a later successor, Edgar, who was deemed *basileus et imperator omnium regnum Anglorum*.[31] A number of Irish books have been associated with Æthelstan's court and contacts across the Irish Sea continued after his death.[32] Thus, available models could have been manifold for the expression of Brian's imperial power. The Munster ruler was not unusual in the scale of his ambition and in this can be compared with Cnut the Great whose imperial tendencies have also been observed.[33] In a hyperbolic claim, comparable with Brian Bórama's description as emperor of the western world, Cnut was celebrated as 'king of the Danes, of the Irish, and of the English and of the Island dwellers [Orcadians]' (*konung Dana, Íra ok Engla ok Eybúa*) by one of his most prolific skalds, Óttarr svarti (the black). Nonetheless, in the realm of eulogistic poetry, the description is far from outlandish and Óttarr's desire 'that his [Cnut's] praise may travel with heavenly support more wisely through all the lands' (*at hans fari / með himinkrǫptium / lǫndum ǫllum / lof víðara*) could have encompassed, in the poet's mind, Ireland too.[34]

Similar titles were applied to Irish kings in the twelfth century, including Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair, ruler of Connacht, who was described on his death in 1156 as 'king of all Ireland and the Augustus of western Europe (*rí Erenn uile 7 Auguist iarthair Eorpa*).[35] Brian and Tairdelbach bear further resemblances. Both built fortifications for defence purposes and

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[31] Flanagan, *Irish Society*, 179; S. Duffy, *Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf* (Dublin; Gill & Macmillan, 2013), 143-4 (and references therein). Irish scholars also noted imperial rule before the Ottonian period, as indicated by a reference to 'the emperor of the whole world' (*impir in beatha uile*) in the eighth-century law tract, *Míadshlechta*: see C. Etchingham, 'Review Article: The 'Reform' of the Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Studia Hibernica*, 37 (2011), 215-37, at 222.

[32] M. Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Boundaries: Irish Written Culture around the Year 1000', in *Crossing Boundaries, Croesi Ffiniau: Proceedings of the XIIth International Congress of Celtic Studies 24-30 August 2003, University of Wales, Aberystwyth* (= *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 53/54 [2007]), 87-101, at 90.

[33] See T. O'Donnell, M. Townend and E. Tyler, 'European Literature and Eleventh-Century England', in C. A. Lees (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 607-36, at 614-15.

[34] M. Townend, 'Contextualising the *Knútsdrápur*: Skaldic Praise Poetry at the Court of Cnut', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 30 (2001), 145-79, at 157-9. The poem in question is edited by him in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, 1 (Turnhout; Brepols, 2012), 786-9; see also O'Donnell, et al., 'European Literature', 615.

[35] *Ann. Tig.*, *s.a.* 1156. Ua Conchobair's rival, Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn, who died a decade later is also termed 'the Augustus of all of north-western Europe' (*August iarthair tuairscirt Eorpa uile*): *AU*, ii, *s.a.* 1166.

were engaged in conflict and communication by water, as well as land.[36] The two rulers imposed their own candidates over subordinate territories, where possible, Tairdelbach doing so with great frequency throughout his reign.[37] Each was intimately associated with the Church, using it to advance political ambition. Brian's ostentatious gift of twenty ounces of gold on Patrick's altar at Armagh, is linked in the annalist's view to his return homewards 'bringing with him the pledges of the men of Ireland' (*co n-etire fer nErenn laiss*). In his will, Tairdelbach left the majority of his not inconsiderable movable wealth to various churches, the culmination of his extensive involvement in ecclesiastical affairs during his lifetime.[38]

The connection between his son, Cathal Crobderg, and the Cistercians has already been noted. Moreover, Pope Innocent III recognised the latter's royal authority.[39] In terms of fortifications, Cathal is better known for his destruction rather than his construction of castles, as part of his campaign against English rule. His relationship with the settlers was more complex, however, than these destructive acts would suggest. He was granted a charter by King John, received royal protection and invoked primogeniture in an effort to secure the succession of his eldest son, Áed. His outward looking attitude is also reflected in the image of him carved about the time of his death, curly-haired and surrounded by fleur-de-lis.[40] Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries and later, Irish kings and their image-makers continued to be influenced by their interaction with English and continental royal rule.

These cross-channel connections had a practical basis. As one of the chosen few of the generous host of Brión (brother of Níall Noígíallach), Cathal Crobderg is depicted in one of a number of contemporary poems on his rule as 'a beautiful salmon' (*éicne án*) destined to

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[36] For fortifications: *AI*, *s.a.* 995.6; *Ann. Tig.*, *s.a.* 1124. For naval warfare: *AI*, *s.a* 993.2; *Ann. Tig.*, *s.a.* 1127. 1140.
[37] E.g. *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1125.3, 1126.7.
[38] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1005.7; *Ann. Tig.*, *s.a.* 1156.
[39] P. J. Dunning, 'Pope Innocent III and the Irish Kings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 8 (1957), 17-32.
[40] *AI*, *s.a.* 1195.2. H. Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier: Connacht and the Anglo-Normans, 1170-1224', in Barry et al. (eds.), *Colony ad Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, 177-200. Perros [Walton], 'Ó Conchobhair, Cathal', in *ODNB*.

defeat 'the British with abundance of weapons and the English and French from over the fair sea' (*Bretnaig co n-imat n-arm ... Sacsain, Francaig tar finnmuir*).[41] Ignoring the political reality of that king of Connacht's day, the author does not make reference to Cathal's support of King John against the de Lacys, nor his recourse to English military allies. At Clontarf, over two hundred years earlier, according to the augmented account in the Annals of Ulster, 'the earl of Marr in Scotland' (*mormhaer Marr i nAlbain*) was killed in the battle fighting on Brian's side.[42] His presence reflects contacts, real or desired, on the part of Brian's descendants in an extended northern world.

Leinster too had recourse to outside assistance, as indicated by a reference in a mid-eleventh-century poem to *Frainc*, in the meaning 'Normans', in the service of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó.[43] Moreover, the latter's relationship with the prominent dynasty of Earl Godwine of Wessex was ongoing and intense. His sons, Harold and Leofwine, found political refuge in Leinster under Diarmait's protection in 1051. After Harold's death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, bringing his short reign as king of England to an end, his sons too were harboured by Diarmait.[44] Their gratitude may be indicated by the gift of Edward the Confessor's standard which Diarmait presented to Tairdelbach Ua Briain, king of Munster, in 1068.[45] Given these dealings, it is scarcely surprising that Harold's sister, Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor, was said by the biographer of her husband to have been proficient in

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[41] 'A Poem for Cathal Croibhdhearg', 166-7, stanzas 41, 47 and 50.

[42] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1014.2. He is accorded a prominent role in the encounter in an early twelfth-century literary account of the battle, *CGG*, 175-7. That text also includes Normans among the battle roll of the dead but this evidence and that suggesting their battle-involvement in the Annals of Loch Cé is not contemporary: see Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, 67.

[43] R. Thurneysen (ed.), 'Mittelirische Verslehren', in W. Stokes and E. Windisch (eds.), *Irische Texte*, 3rd series, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1891), i, 90 (no. 128) and K. Meyer (ed.), *Bruchstücke der älteren Lyrik Irlands* (Berlin, 1919), 18 (no. 36). For discussion, F. J. Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod: Ireland in 1169', in *NHI* ii, 22; and P. Wadden, 'Some Views of the Normans in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Ireland', in Duffy and Foran (eds.), *The English Isles*, 26-7.

[44] B. Hudson, *Irish Sea Studies 900-1200* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2006), 100-8; K. L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales and England in the Eleventh Century* (Woodbridge; Boydell Press, 1991), 164-5; S. Duffy, 'Ostmen, Irish and Welsh in the Eleventh Century', *Peritia*, 9 (1995), 387; C. Etchingham, 'North Wales, Ireland and the Isles: The Insular Viking zone', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 154.

[45] *AI*, *s.a.* 1068.5; the reference is to *merge ríg Saxan* 'the standard of the king of the Saxons'.

Irish, as well as Danish and perhaps French and Latin.[46] Even if not factual, reference to her fluency in Irish is explicable against the general backdrop of this broader integrated Irish Sea world.

Notwithstanding the intensive contacts across the Irish Sea in this period, no record of the Battle of Hastings is preserved in extant contemporary Irish annalistic sources.[47] It is noted by Marianus Scotus, alias Máel Brigte, a monk who received his early education in Moville, County Donegal, before going to the Continent in 1056 in his late twenties. He spent time in such learned centres as Cologne and Fulda, but his *Chronicon*, a universal history similar in concept to that of the early eleventh-century chronicler, Thietmar, Bishop of Merseburg, was produced in Mainz where he had access to that monastery's considerable bibliographical resources, as well as to books he had brought with him from Ireland.[48] These too informed his writing: among the Chronicle's prefatory material is a list of Irish kings, nestling alongside a catalogue of popes.[49] Three stanzas of a versified biblical history by an early eleventh-century Irish scholar, Airbertach mac Coisse, are quoted in one of the margins, while the obits of some Irish and Scottish kings who had died after his departure for the Continent are also recorded.[50] For Marianus, and others like him, the learned activity in which he engaged in ecclesiastical centres abroad was a continuation of that he had practised at home.

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[46] *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin*, ed. and trans. F. Barlow (Oxford University Press, 1992), 22-3; E. Tyler, 'The *Vita Edwardi*: The Politics of Poetry at Wilton Abbey', *ANS*, 31 (2009), 131-56; M. Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Carait tairisi*: Literary Links between Ireland and England in the Eleventh century', in A. and N. Harlos (eds.), *Adapting Texts and Styles in a Celtic Context* (Münster; Nodos Publikationen, 2016), 265-88.

[47] In addition to the high-level contacts just discussed, trade between Chester, Bristol and Dublin should also be noted: D. Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea: Conflict and Assimilation AD 790-1050* (Stroud; History Press, 2010), 119-39.

[48] Marianus Scottus, *Chronicon*, ed. G. Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 5 (Hannover, 1844), 559. For his account of the Battle of Hastings, see Wadden, 'Some Views of the Normans', 17-18.

[49] B. Mac Carthy, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus, No. 830*, Todd Lecture Series III (Dublin; RIA, 1892), 7-8.

[50] B. Ó Cuív, 'The Irish Marginalia in Codex Palatino-Vaticanus No. 830', *Éigse*, 24 (1990), 45-67. The biblical poem in question is edited by P. Ó Néill, 'Airbertach mac Cosse's poem on the Psalter', *Éigse*, 17 (1977-78), 19-46.

The Chronicle of Marianus Scotus proved influential and his work was drawn on by the twelfth-century English historian, John of Worcester, whose *Chronicon ex chronicis*, continued the Irishman's history, augmenting it considerably with English affairs. Another English historian of the same period, Henry of Huntingdon, a secular cleric and one time bishop of Lincoln, produced for England an historical mythology, the *Historia Anglorum*, that bears comparison in approach and outlook with *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (The Book of the Taking(s) of Ireland), which was being revised and written across the Irish Sea just as the Englishman was composing his account.[51] What links these disparate texts despite their many differences is their focus on what Rees Davies called 'the unity, the identity, the ethnic homogeneity of a people';[52] each eloquently bears witness to a shared intellectual strand. In any exploration of Ireland's history in this vibrant era, this broader cultural heritage has an important part to play.

God's chosen people; Gaídil and Gaill

At the heart of what was a broader Christian learned heritage was the biblical concept of a people chosen by God.[53] This idea underpins the elaborate history of Ireland set out in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* in which the wandering Irish (*Gaídil* 'Gaels') are identified with the exodus of the Israelites, *túatha Dé* (the peoples of God). Descended from Japheth son of Noah, the Irish too are accorded their place among the nations of the earth.[54] Read in conjunction with another medieval staple text, *Sex Aetates Mundi*, with which it is often associated in

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[51] The text is commonly known as the Book of Invasions: J. Carey, *A New Introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn, The Book of the Taking of Ireland* (Dublin and London; ITS, 1993).

[52] R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100 – 1400: IV, Language and Historical Mythology', *TRHS*, 6th ser., no. 7 (1997), 1-24, at 20.

[53] M. Garrison, 'Divine Election for Nations – a Difficult Rhetoric for Medieval Scholars?', in L. B. Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.100-1300)* (Copenhagen; Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 275-314.

[54] J. Carey, '*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History of Ireland', in H. Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2005), 32-48 and the essays in his *Lebor Gabála Érenn: Textual History and Pseudo-History* (Dublin and London; ITS, 2009).

manuscripts, *Lebor Gabála* elucidated and embedded the Irish strand in the universal history of mankind.[55] This is mirrored in microcosm in the *Banshenchas* (Lore of Women), a metrical version of which was composed by Gilla Modutu Ua Casaide who died in 1147. Concerned primarily with Irish women who were wives and mothers of kings, the text takes as its starting point Eve and other notable females from biblical and apocryphal sources.[56] The self-awareness and self-confidence this approach necessitated is evident in Irish learning from a much earlier period. The developed vernacular literature that has been posited as key to the growth of nationhood had been present in Ireland from the seventh century or so.[57] Yet exploration of group identity and nationality acquired renewed emphasis in Irish writing in the period under consideration here.[58]

In this, Ireland was not unusual. Susan Reynolds has documented the extent to which historical writing in general and myths of common descent in particular acquired a new purpose from the tenth century. As stories binding a particular people, they came to epitomise the unity of a group owing loyalty to what was an increasingly powerful leader, contributing to the construction of newly evolving kingdoms in the process.[59] The eleventh- and twelfth-century Irish phase of this development saw provincial rulers – the so-called *ríg co fressabra* (kings with opposition) – jockeying with each other for supreme position of *rí Érenn* (king of

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[55] *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi*, ed. D. Ó Cróinín (Dublin; DIAS, 1983); another edition with commentary is found in, *Sex Aetates Mundi. Die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren. Untersuchungen und Texte*, ed. H. L.C. Tristram. Anglistische Forschungen, 165 (Heidelberg, 1985). For comment, M. Herbert, 'The Irish *Sex Aetates Mundi*: First Editions', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 11 (1986), 97-112, and more generally P. Geary, 'Reflections on Historiography and the Holy: Center and Periphery', in Mortensen (ed.), *Making of Christian Myths*, 323-9.

[56] A. Connon, 'The *Banshenchas* and the Uí Néill Queens of Tara', in Smyth (ed.) *Seanchas*, 98-108, at 98. For the edited text, M. C. Dobbs, 'The Ban-shenchus', *Revue celtique*, 47 (1930), 283-339; 48 (1931), 163-233; and 49 (1932), 437-89.

[57] See, for example, D. Ó Corráin, 'The Church and Secular Society', in *L'irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo, Spoleto, 16-21 aprile 2009*, Atti delle settimane, CVII (Spoleto, 2010), 261-321, especially 261, 266 and Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*; A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2-3.

[58] David Dumville evaluates the general context in his article, 'Did Ireland Exist in the Twelfth Century?', in Purcell et al. (eds.), *Clerics, Kings and Vikings*, 115-26.

[59] S. Reynolds, 'Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm', *History*, 68 (1983), 375-90.

Ireland) or *rí Temra* (king of Tara) in turn.[60] Fostering a shared identity by means of a universal origin myth enhanced a sense of communal solidarity. A powerful ruler, be he Ua Briain of Munster, Ua Conchobair of Connacht or Mac Lochlainn of Cenél nÉogain, could turn the conceit of collective ancestry articulated in such texts as *Lebor Gabála* to his advantage when his place in the political pecking order allowed. Writing this particular brand of history flourished as a medieval industry precisely because aspiring, ambitious rulers had a vested interest in its promotion.

Lebor Gabála Érenn was first written and then re-written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, drawing on the work of contemporary poets, including a mid-eleventh-century lector of Monasterboice, Flann Mainistrech. Of note is the fact that texts concerning other peoples, such as Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People' and *Historia Brittonum* ascribed to Nennius were also translated into Irish at this time.[61] A ninth-century Frankish text, *De proprietatibus gentium*, describing the defining characteristics of particular *gentes* was similarly cast into vernacular form as *Cumtach na nIudaide nard*.[62] Literary enterprises were often perceived as island-wide. The landscape captured in story in *Dindshenchas Érenn* (The Lore of Ireland's Notable Places), for example, which contains the poems on 'Tailtiu' and 'Carmain' with which we commenced, extended throughout Ireland. The Church too came to form a unit of interlinked dioceses, as the reform of the long twelfth century progressed. In the person of Patrick, it was granted access to past knowledge by means of a

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[60] M. T. Flanagan, 'High-Kings with Opposition, 1072-1166', in *NHI* i, 899-933.
[61] P. Ní Chatháin, 'Bede's Ecclesiastical History in Irish', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 115-30. Thomas Owen Clancy has argued that the translation of *Historia Brittonum* was undertaken in Abernethey whence it was transmitted to the Cistercian monastery at Sawley in Lancashire: 'Scotland, the 'Nennian' Recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, and the *Lebor Bretnach*', in Taylor (ed.), *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles*, 87-107. If so, the text was certainly in Ireland by the late eleventh century as it forms part of the earliest extant vernacular manuscript, *Lebor na hUidre*: see D. N. Dumville, 'The Textual History of "Lebor Bretnach": A Preliminary study', *Éigse*, 16 (1975/6), 255-73, at 255.
[62] 'Two Middle Irish Poems', ed. K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 112-13.

journey throughout Ireland, according to the narrative, *Acallam na Senórach* (The Colloquy

of the Ancients), which may have been written in Cathal Crobderg of Connacht's reign.[63]

By then the arrival of the English had introduced a different dimension but one which

a malleable sense of community could accommodate. *Gaill*, originally signifying Gauls came

later to mean vikings; in its third reincarnation, it was applied to English settlers, though

Saxain was also used, as well as *Engleis* in French texts.[64] The separateness signalled by such

terminology underplayed the links forged between different groups from the outset of the

conquest. Thus, in the late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century 'Song of Dermot and the Earl',

which focuses on the activities of the Leinster king, Diarmait Mac Murchada, and Richard

fitz Gilbert de Clare (Strongbow), a clear distinction is drawn between *nos Engleis* 'our

English' and *les Yrreis* 'the Irish'.[65] Subcategorisation of the latter, in terms of dynastic

affiliation, reveals more detailed knowledge. Nonetheless, King Diarmait apart, the Irish for

the most part are rebel tyrants who oppose an altogether more civilised, chivalrous host.[66] A

contemporary of the author of this French poem, Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis),

expresses it more vividly, the Irish 'live like beasts' (*bestialiter vivens*). Much superior to

them are the new settlers with whom this Cambro-Norman cleric identified, and whose

conquest he sought to justify.[67] Notwithstanding the fact that Gerald had come to Ireland in

1185 with Henry II's son, John, who was later himself to become king, his colourful

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[63] 'Acallam na Senórach', ed. and trans. W. Stokes in *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch*, ed. E. Windisch and W. Stokes, 4 vols, vol. 4:1 (Leipzig, 1900). For a translation, see A. Dooley and H. Roe, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 1999). A. Dooley, 'The Date and Purpose of *Acallam na Senórach*', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 97-126.

[64] M. T. Flanagan, 'Strategies of Distinction: Defining Nations in Medieval Ireland', in H. Tsurushima (ed.), *Nations in Medieval Britain* (Donington; Shaun Tyas, 2010), 104-20, at 112-14.

[65] The text continued to be revised for a further quarter of a century after its initial composition in the 1190s: *Deeds of the Normans*, 27-32.

[66] Thus, *les Yrreis de O Kenselath* 'the Irish of Uí Chennselaig' (line 11740), alongside *tut Yrlande les Yrreis* 'all the Irish of Ireland' (line 1745): *Deeds of the Normans*, 22-3; Charles-Edwards, 'Ireland and its Invaders', 10-15.

[67] *Gir. Camb. Op.* i, 151; *Topographia*, 101; Flanagan, 'Strategies of Distinction', 105-6.

commentary owes as much and more to his own specific bias and the ethnographic tradition within which he was writing.[68]

Nor was his negative view anything new.[69] A satirical Latin poem written around the year 1000 by Warner of Rouen, whose principal subject is a slow-witted (*stultus*) Irishman, Moriuht, ascribes bestial behaviour to the latter's countrymen.[70] In his castigation of their ignorance of God, Warner foreshadows the twelfth-century Cistercian, Bernard of Clairvaux, who considered the Irish pagan in all but name.[71] Similar aspersions continued to be cast on what was perceived as a peculiar brand of Irish Christianity in the thirteenth century, as shown by the remark in 1229 of an abbot of Savigny who later followed in Bernard's footsteps as abbot of Clairvaux, Stephen of Lexington: 'How can anyone love the cloister of learning who knows nothing but Irish?'.[72] Stephen's concern in this regard, however, must be read in the context of what was perceived to be a more general crisis of the Cistercians in Ireland. Attempting to impose uniformity, he was opposed to difference in language as in other spheres, wishing to promote Latin as the language of the Church, or French as the vernacular of the Cistercians' spiritual home.[73]

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[68] According to Gerald himself, he was 'specially sent with John by his father': *Expugnatio*, 229. On the ethnographic traditions, see R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud; Tempus, 2006) and his *Gerald of Wales and the Ethnographic Imagination*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures, 12 (Cambridge; Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 2013).

[69] J. Gillingham, 'Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Britain', in his *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge; Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 41-58; L. Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 117, 175 (the latter reference I owe to Fiona Edmonds).

[70] *Warner of Rouen, Moriuht: A Norman Latin Poem from the Early Eleventh Century*, ed. and trans. C. J. McDonough (Toronto; Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995), 74-5. The author claims that though 'many facts have been reported to me about these Irish, it is immoral to record them and it shames (me) to recount (them)' (*de his Scottis mihi multa relata / scriber quod nefas est quodque referre pudet*).

[71] *Warner of Rouen*, 74-5, line 38: *et ignari luminis [et] Altithroni* 'They are also unaware of the light of God enthroned on high'. Bernard's remark (*Christiani nomini, re pagani*) is the culmination of a long diatribe against the uncivilised Irish: *Vita Sancti Malachiae*, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq, H. M. Rochais and C. H. Talbot. 8 vols. (Rome, 1957-77), iii, 307-78, 325. D. Scully, 'Ireland and the Irish in Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of Malachy', in Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel (eds.), *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century*, 239-56.

[72] *Stephen of Lexington, Letters from Ireland*, ed. B. W. O'Dwyer (Kalamazoo; Cistercian Publications, 1982), 68, 91, 162. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, IV', 13-14.

[73] Watt, *Church and the Two Nations*, 106.

Yet Cistercian houses embodied connections too. The foundations of John de Courcy were affiliated with Furness in Lancashire. His involvement with that abbey is further indicated by his role as one of a trio of patrons to commission Jocelin, a monk of Furness, to write a biography of Patrick.[74] One of de Courcy's Irish monasteries was Inch Abbey, County Down. In relative proximity to it was Grey Abbey founded as a daughter-house of Holm Cultram in 1192 by his wife, Affreca, daughter of Gofraid mac Amlaíb, king of Man. De Courcy's liaison with Gofraid's daughter was a major part of his political strategy and had happened by 1180, if not before. In allying with the Manx ruler who was linked to the northern dynasty of Mac Lochlainn, de Courcy sought to invoke the support of his two powerful neighbours.[75] While the Isle of Man was pivotal to de Courcy, the Isles, under the leadership of Gofraid's enemies, Meic Shomhairle, were also increasingly drawn into Irish politics. Along with Gofraid of Man, they came to the aid of the king of Connacht, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, in his blockade of Dublin against Henry II in 1171. They became increasingly enmeshed in internal Irish struggles, supporting Ruaidrí's sons in their succession struggle against their uncle, Cathal Crobderg, after their father's death in 1183. John de Courcy himself too was drawn into this contest after 1185, the year in which he was entrusted with the administration of Ireland by King John.[76] In this justiciar, Gofraid of Man had a powerful ally in his final years and the association between the two men exemplifies how the English conquest of Ireland influenced insular, and not just Irish, politics in a range of spheres.

Gofraid himself had been active in Ireland and he undertook what was ultimately an unsuccessful expedition to Dublin sometime in the 1150s. According to the Chronicle of

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[74] S. Duffy, 'The First Ulster Plantation: John de Courcy and the Men of Cumbria', in Barry et al. (eds.), *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, 1-27, at 8 and n. 37; Flanagan, 'John de Courcy, the First Irish Plantation and Irish Church Men', in Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland*, 154-78; M. T. Flanagan, 'Jocelin of Furness', in C. Downham (ed.), *Jocelin of Furness: Essays from the 2011 Conference* (Donington; Shaun Tyas, 2013), 45-66.
[75] Duffy, 'First Ulster Plantation', 25, 26, and n. 167.
[76] *Expugnatio*, 78-9, 243; S. Duffy, 'The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World, 1306-29', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 21 (1991), 55-86, at 60 and n. 6.

Man, his expedition there was in response to an invitation by the men of Dublin to become their overlord and he was appointed king by them of one voice.[77] Opposed by Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn, the most powerful king in Ireland at the time, he retreated to Man, despite being victorious in battle, according to the *Cronica*.[78] A later alliance with Mac Lochlainn is indicated by his marriage to a member of that dynasty, Finnguala. The precise date of that union is not known, though it is frequently placed in the period between 1170 and 1172, since their son, Amlaíb, was around three years of age at the time of their canonical union in 1176.[79] This coincides with Gofraid's known involvement in the siege of Dublin organised by King Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair in 1171 as noted above.[80]

Gofraid's grandfather, Gofraid Méránach, had ruled Dublin and Man though he was expelled as *rí Gall* in Dublin by Muirchertach Ua Briain, great-grandson of Brian Bórama, in 1094.[81] Gofraid died the following year, the victim of a widespread plague, according to some sources.[82] On his death, the Munster ruler became king-maker in Man, installing a family member, Domnall mac Taidc, in the kingship there.[83] The allegedly tyrannous rule of Domnall was interrupted by the assumption of control in the region by King Magnús Berfœttr

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[77] *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum*, ed. G. Broderick (Belfast; Manx Museum and National Trust, 1979), fol. 37r.

[78] *Cronica regum Mannie*, fol. 37r. The dating of the episode is far from certain; see I. Beuermann, *Masters of the Narrow Sea: Forgotten Challenges to Norwegian Rule in Man and the Isles, 1979-1266*, Acta Humaniora (Oslo, 2006), 100-22 and S. Duffy, 'Irishmen and Islesmen in the Kingdom of Dublin and Man, 1052-1171', *Ériu*, 43 (1992), 93-133, at 126-8.

[79] Beuermann, *Masters of the Narrow Sea*, 150-6.

[80] Gerald of Wales writes that both Ruaidrí and Lorcán Ua Tuathail, archbishop of Dublin, sent letters to Gofraid seeking assistance in return for financial reward: *Expugnatio*, 78-9.

[81] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1094.2; *AI*, *s.a.* 1094.2. He is termed *rí Átha Cliath 7 Inse Gall* on his death: *AI*, *s.a.* 1095.13.

[82] *AI*, *s.a.* 1095.13. The Annals of Ulster mention his death and the plague separately: *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1095.8 and 1095.11.

[83] See Duffy, 'Irishmen and Islesmen', 108-10. Domnall may have been the son of Muirchertach's brother Tadc, and hence was also the Munster king's nephew and grandson of an earlier king of Man, Echmarcach mac Ragnaill. According to the Manx Chronicle, Muirchertach was requested to intervene by the people of Man and grant them a ruler 'until Óláfr son of Guðrøðr should have grown up' (*donec olauus filius godredi cresceret*), as a result of strife between Gofraid's two adult sons: *Cronica Regum Mannie*, fol. 33v. This period is also discussed in a contribution in S. Duffy and H. Mytum (eds.), *A New History of the Isle of Man*, vol. III, *The Medieval Period, 1000-1406* (Liverpool University Press, 2015), for which reference I am indebted to Fiona Edmonds.

(Barelegs) of Norway, who was allied with and opposed to Muirchertach Ua Briain in turn.[84] The backdrop to the shifting allegiances between Magnús, Muirchertach and Normans of Shrewsbury was control over Gwyned.[85] Marriage alliances bolstered relations: a truce between Muirchertach and Magnús in 1102 was symbolised by a union between the latter's nine-year old son, Sigurd, and the Irish ruler's five-year old daughter, called Bladmynja in the saga of Magnus Barelegs.[86] Around the same time, another of Muirchertach's daughters was married to Arnulf de Montgomery, brother of Robert de Bellême, Earl of Shrewsbury, who sought the assistance of the Munster king in his rebellion against Henry I.[87] That Muirchertach was involved is indicated by a letter written by him to Anselm of Canterbury, in which he gives thanks to the archbishop for interceding with the king on his son-in-law's behalf.[88]

Muirchertach's correspondence with Anselm, like that of his father, Tairdelbach, before him, highlights once more the ecclesiastical dimension of Ireland's contacts with the wider world. Tairdelbach had also exchanged letters with Pope Gregory VII, as well as with Anselm's predecessor, Lanfranc, the latter considering him king of Ireland, as suggested by his address to him as *magnifico Hibernie regi Terdeluaco*.[89] Lanfranc was closely associated with William the Conqueror, with whom Tairdelbach may also have had links through a shared interest in encouraging trade across the Irish Sea.[90] In this connection, we may note

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[84] According to the *Cronica* (fol. 33v), Domnall 'reigned ruthlessly for three years' (*tribus annis enormuiter regnavit*). On Magnus Barelegs, see Etchingham, 'North Wales, Ireland and the Isles', 148-50 (with references to earlier literature). R. Power, 'Meeting in Norway: Norse-Gaelic Relations in the Kingdom of Man and the Isles', 1090-1270', *Saga-Book*, 29 (2005), 5-66.

[85] Etchingham, 'North Wales, Ireland and the Isles', 150-1.

[86] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1102.7; *Heimskringla*, ed. B. Aðalbjarnarson 3 vols. Íslenzk fornrit 26-8 (Reykjavík, 1941-51), iii, 224-5.

[87] Flanagan, *Irish Society*, 67-8; E. Curtis, 'Murchertach O'Brien, High-King of Ireland and his Norman Son-in-Law, Arnulf de Montgomery, *circa* 1100', *JRSAI*, 51 (1921), 116-34.

[88] A. Candon, 'Muirchertach Ua Briain: Politics and Naval Activity in the Irish Sea 1075-1119', in Mac Niocaill and Wallace (eds.), *Keimelia*, 397-415 at 411-13.

[89] *The Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans., H. Clover and M. T. Gibson (Oxford University Press, 1979), 70-1 (no. 10).

[90] A. Candon, ''Barefaced Effrontery': Secular and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Twelfth-Century Ireland', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 14 (1991), 1-25, at 4; B. Hudson, 'William the Conqueror and Ireland', *IHS*, 29 (1994), 145-58, at 149-51.

the visitation to Tairdelbach in 1079 by a group of five Jews who may have had commercial interests. For whatever reason, their gifts were repudiated and 'they were sent back again across the sea' (*a ndíchor doridisi dar muir*).[91] Tairdelbach, and in particular his son, were heavily associated with the movement of Church reform. Muirchertach convened the first of the reforming synods at Cashel in 1001. He was closely connected with Gille, bishop of Limerick and papal legate, whose treatise, *De statu ecclesia*, set out in detail the structured hierarchy of a reformed Church. Alluding to secular ranks also, his unitary structure, which implicitly extended to the kingdom within which this unified Church operated, would certainly have appealed to his patron, Muirchertach Ua Briain.[92]

Muirchertach's northern rival, Domnall Mac Lochlainn, was similarly engaged in the movement of reform, as were his successors.[93] As *rex totius Hiberniae*, his grandson, Muirchertach, granted land to a Cistercian house at Newry, County Down. He was also a generous patron to Flaithbertach Ua Brolcháin, abbot of Derry and head of the important Columban federation. The building of 'the great church of Derry' (*tempull mór Dairi*) at this time symbolised that centre's role as head of the Columban church.[94] Such was Ua Brolcháin's fame that the abbacy of Iona was offered to him in 1164 'on the advice of Somhairle, and of the men of Argyll and Innsi Gall' (*a comairli Somarlidh ocus Fer Aer[th]er-Gaidhel ocus Innsi-Gall*). It was the intervention of Muirchertach, together with the abbot of Armagh, which ensured that the offer was rejected.[95] The incident revealed the underlying belief that *Gaídil* in Ireland were ultimately different from *Gaídil* 'to the east'

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[91] *AI*, *s.a.* 1079.3. Hudson speculates that they were requesting permission for a settlement at Dublin, 'William the Conqueror', 154.
[92] J. Fleming, *Gille of Limerick (c. 1070-1145): Architect of a Medieval Church* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2001); Flanagan, *Transformation of the Irish Church*, 59-60.
[93] Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry*, 109-23.
[94] *AU*, ii, *s.a.* 1164.
[95] *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1164: *co ro [fh]astaei comarba Patraic ocus ri Erenn, idon, Ua Lochlainn ocus maithi Cene[oi]l Eogain e*.

(*anair*).[96] Nonetheless, for ideological as well as political reasons, commonalities were often emphasised. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scottish kings promoted their Irish origins, acquiring 'the legitimising lustre of ancient royalty' in the process.[97] In the same way, his Irish connections were emphasised by Ragnall, son of Gofraid, king of Man in the early thirteenth century, most notably in *Baile suthach síth Emna* (The otherworld of Emain is a fertile place), a conventional bardic eulogy, in which his suitability for the kingship of Tara is to the fore.[98]

Collective ancestry, therefore, remained pivotal in certain circumstances and the myth of common descent served as a flexible device. The expression of sharp distinctions, when useful, between 'us' and 'them', was part of the same process of communal definition. It was for this reason that the viking as a negative type was resurrected in eleventh- and twelfth-century Irish compositions. This northern caricature, as he appeared in a number of what are often termed pseudo-historical tracts, bore no resemblance to his Scandinavian relative who had long since been assimilated into the Irish social and political landscape. While the tenth-century king of Dublin, Amlaíb Cúarán, patronised churches and had vernacular poetry composed in his honour by one of the foremost authors of the day, Cináed ua hArtacáin, his recent ancestors were to be cast as destructive marauders in some eleventh- and twelfth-century literary texts. Defined solely by their difference in such matters as mores, weaponry and appearance, these *gaill* were deliberately set up in stark opposition to *Gaídil*. Moreover, the contrast becomes more marked as the period progresses. The eleventh-century author of

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[96] M. Herbert, 'Sea-Divided Gaels: Constructing Relationships between Irish and Scots *c.*800-1169', in Smith (ed.) *Britain and Ireland*, 87-97, at 97; S. Duffy, 'Ireland and Scotland, 1014-1169: Contacts and Caveats', in Smyth (ed.), *Seanchas*, 348-56.

[97] D. Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge; Boydell Press, 1999), 132. Matthew Hammond's important caveat should also be borne in mind: 'any pan-Gaelicism must be balanced against the understanding that peoples like the Galwegians, men of Moray, men of Argyll, seem to have seen themselves as distinct *gentes*, despite being all Gaels: 'Ethnicity and the Writing of Medieval Scottish History', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 85 (2006), 1-27, at 17. See also, D. Broun, 'Becoming a Nation: Scotland in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in Tsurushima (ed.), *Nations in Medieval Britain*, 86-103.

[98] 'A Poem in Praise of Raghnall, King of Man', ed. and trans. B. Ó Cuív, *Éigse*, 8 (1957), 283-301; A. Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 159-67.

the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland allows for the possibility of good and less good pagans of Scandinavian ancestry, distinguishing between *Danair* who had 'certain kinds of piety' (*cinele crabhaidh*) and *Lochlannaig* who are beyond redemption.[99] By contrast, twelfth-century examples of the genre, specifically the related texts, *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* (The War of the Irish against the Foreigners) and *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil* (The Battle-triumph of Cellachán of Cashel) can countenance only negative examples of what appears as a monochromatic, relentlessly evil viking type.[100]

Ethnic stereotyping was scarcely the preserve of the Irish, however, as the depiction by Gerald of Wales of the Irish (and elsewhere the Welsh) makes clear. Gerald's barbarian Irish, like the vikings of the *Cogadh* and *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil*, are distinctive in weaponry and dress. They may not be heathen, in contrast to Scandinavian *genti* (pagans), nonetheless, as Gerald echoing Bernard of Clairvaux complains, they were 'most uninstructed in the rudiments of faith'.[101] In constructing a savage Other, twelfth-century Irish authors sought to legitimise ruling dynasties by associating them with glorious ancestors who overthrew an almost invincible foe. In the same way, reformers and ethnographers, such as Bernard and Gerald, employed their description of a barbarian, well-nigh pagan race to justify take-over and conquest in religious and political spheres. As outsiders looking in, the perspective of Bernard and Gerald was in contrast to that of Irish writers purporting to

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[99] *The Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, ed. and trans. J. N. Radner, (Dublin; DIAS, 1978), §235: *Uair as amhlaidh ra bhattar na Danair, ocus cinele crabhaidh aca, .i. gabhaid sealad fri fheóil ocus fri mhnáibh ar chrabhudh.* C. Downham, 'The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: Portrayals of Vikings in 'The Fragmentary Annals of Ireland'', in E. Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle III: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, Doorn/Utrecht 12-17 July 2002* (Amsterdam and New York; Rodopi, 2004), 27-39.
[100] *CGG*; *Caithréim Cellacháin Caisil: The Victorious Career of Cellachan of Cashel, or the Wars between the Irishmen and the Norsemen in the Middle of the 10th Century*, ed. and trans. A. Bugge (Oslo; J. C. Gundersens bogtrykkeri, 1905).
[101] *Topographia*, 169. These accounts also bear comparison with Adam of Bremen's description of Scandinavians written in the 1070s as part of his history of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen: *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. B. Schmeidler (Hanover, 1917), revised version *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches*, ed. W. Trillmich (Darmstadt; Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

comment on those who came to dwell in their midst. But all were writing within a broader ethnographic tradition, the influence of which is detectible in their common slant.

Lord and subject; commoners and elite

That common intellectual tradition accommodated diversity.[102] Historical memory was specific even if the framework within which it was conceptualised and constructed was general.[103] As the specifics were adapted to fit ever-changing circumstances, the overarching structure required flexibility. The ideology it supported could shift in significant ways and be formed of overlapping cultural spheres. What was expressed, however, was the mentality of an elite. It is the views of kings concerned with control and continuity that are reflected, and of ecclesiastics and scholars, fellow-actors on an aristocratic stage. Some of these sophisticated literary productions may have been performed at an *óenach*, as the poem on Carmain suggests. As the nature of that institution continues to elude us, so too does a detailed appreciation of the life of those summoned to the 'fair'.

Although activities associated with an *óenach* have been misleadingly adduced in support of the existence of earlier monastic towns, the only fledgling urban settlements at the beginning of our period were the port towns founded by vikings at various points in the tenth century. The minting of the first coins in Dublin under King Sitriuc Silkenbeard marks a significant moment in the history of urbanisation and archaeological finds from Dublin provide evidence for a thriving urban culture there in the eleventh century.[104] The

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[102] R. Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31 (2001), 39-56.

[103] For a highly relevant exploration of the relationship between memory and social identity: J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1992).

[104] Etchingham, 'Irish "Monastic Town"'; M. A. Valante, 'Re-assessing the Irish "Monastic Town"', *IHS*, 31 (1998), 1-18 and her *The Vikings in Ireland: Settlement, Trade, and Urbanisation* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2008), 26-30. P. Wallace, 'The Archaeology of Ireland's Viking-age Towns', in *NHI* i, 814-41; L. Simpson, 'Forty Years a-digging: A Preliminary Synthesis of Archaeological Investigations in Medieval Dublin', in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin I* (Dublin; Four Courts Press, 2000), 11-68.

development of towns in Ireland in this period undoubtedly affected the lives of many, both

beyond the burgeoning settlements, as well as within. A fertile hinterland provided foodstuffs

for a growing population.[105] Goods produced and processed in commercial centres had utility

outside a town's walls. Agricultural production intensified and economic prosperity reached

both farmer and craftsman alike.[106]

The nature of the bond between king and subject was altered somewhat, as a result of

these and other developments. A king's authority no longer revolved around a relationship of

clientship alone and administrative structures increased accordingly. Royal officials became

more prominent, their various duties categorised in a textual genre concerned with 'customs'

(*nósa*) and 'rights' (*certa*).[107] An early twelfth-century example, *Lebor na Cert* (The Book of

Rights) stems from the court of Muirchertach Ua Briain.[108] It sets out the rights and

concomitant duties of particular peoples, according a central role to the king of Cashel (Ua

Briain) therein. Groups such as the Norse of Dublin are given a place, reflecting an evolving

political order. Subordinate kingdoms owe tribute (*cís*), emphasis on which highlights its

importance in a changing world; remuneration (*tuarastal*), for what might range from food-

renders to military service, was paid by a king in return. In effect, what is a system of

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[105] J. Bradley, 'The Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement in Ireland', in Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland*, 49-78. B. Hodkinson, 'Viking Limerick and its Hinterland', in Clarke and Johnston (eds.), *Vikings in Ireland and Beyond*, 183-8; M. A. Valante, 'Dublin's Economic Relations with Hinterland and Periphery in the Later Viking Age', in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin I*, 69-83.

[106] S. Lyons, 'Food Plants, Fruits and Foreign Foodstuffs: The Archaeological Evidence from Urban Medieval Ireland', in E. FitzPatrick and J. Kelly (eds.), *Food and Drink in Ireland* (= *PRIA*, 115 C [2015]), 111-66. S. Geraghty, *Viking Dublin: Botanical Evidence from Fishamble Street* (Dublin; RIA, 1996). Her analysis of plant remains from tenth-/eleventh-century Fishamble St, Dublin, notes a preponderance of barley, but also oat and wheat. Barley and oat are the most common cereal products grown in Ireland throughout the early medieval period: F. McCormick, T. Kerr, M. McClatchie and A. O'Sullivan, *The Archaeology of Livestock and Cereal Production in Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400-1100* (Oxford; British Archaeological Reports; Archaeopress, 2014).

[107] Katharine Simms has suggested that the section of a fifteenth-century Ua Conchobair inauguration ode listing the king's officers may have been written as early as the twelfth or thirteenth century: '"Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh": A Fifteenth-Century Inauguration Ode?', *Ériu*, 31 (1980), 132-45, at 143.

[108] *Lebor na Cert*, ed. M. Dillon (London; ITS, 1962). For discussion of different aspects of the text, see Candon, ''Barefaced Effrontery''; C. Swift, 'Royal Fleets in Viking Ireland: The Evidence of *Lebor na Cert* A.D. 1050-1150', in J. Hines, A. Lane and M. Redknap (eds.), *Land, Sea and Home: Proceedings of a Conference on Viking-period Settlement at Cardiff, July 2001* (Leeds; Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2004), 189-206; T. Charles-Edwards, 'Society and Politics in pre-Norman Ireland', in *L'irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo, Spoleto, 16-21 aprile 2001*, Atti delle settimane LVII (Spoleto, 2010), 67-90, at 88-90.

taxation comes into being. It may be that due tax was considered at an *óenach*, as intimated in one of the stanzas quoted above; however, it is equally likely that successful kings employed tax-collectors, not dissimilar from those described as cruel viking bailiffs in the twelfth-century pseudo-historical tract, *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*.[109] The model for the system of taxation implemented according to this text, may well have been one somewhat closer to home.

Taxation and tribute lie behind the system of land-holding also, and territorial units such as *trícha cét* and the smaller *baile bíataig* suggest a shift away from the community-focussed *túath* of earlier times.[110] Such developments reflect gradual changes in the structure of government and the nature of lordship, a relationship of service between king and subject becoming more structured and controlled. Military assistance formed part of this bond, as the evolution of the meaning of the term *trícha cét* makes clear. First attested as 'a force of fighting men', it came to signify the number levied in a division termed *trícha cét* and is thus intimately connected with the militarisation of Irish society.[111] It is the *trícha cét* that lies behind the post-Conquest cantred[112]; and thus a system associated with the English in actual fact continued an arrangement that had evolved in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in response to the need for a more centralised administration, as well as ready, regular access to tribute and armed forces on the part of powerful Irish kings. Thomas Charles-Edwards has observed that *Lebor na Cert*, written for Uí Briain at the beginning of the twelfth century, as already noted, embodies aspects of these changes. Failure to pay tribute or provide service on the part of a sub-king led to loss of land, highlighting the dependent nature of tenure.[113]

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[109] *And luaitís fri bága bil / certa ocus cána in cóicid* 'There they would discuss with strife of speech the dues and tributes of the province': *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, 18-19 (lines 213-14); *CGG*, 48-51 (§XL). Swift discusses tribute and reward in the case of this text and *Caithréim Cellacháin Caisil* in her 'Royal fleets', 194.

[110] MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland* and for the *baile biataig*, G. Toner, '*Baile*: Settlement and Landholding in Medieval Ireland', *Éigse*, 34 (2004), 25-43.

[111] For these developments see Charles-Edwards, 'Society and Politics in Pre-Norman Ireland', 87-90.

[112] Mac Cotter, *Medieval Ireland*, especially 39-44.

[113] Charles-Edwards, 'Society and Politics in Pre-Norman Ireland', 87-90.

Moreover, the growth in popularity of tracts like *Lebor na Cert* concerned with the physical

manifestation of the bond between ruler and subject, is in itself indicative of change.[114]

As elsewhere in the changing Europe of this period, the bond between lord and man

remained a constant, though it was scarcely, as claimed by Patrick Wormald 'almost all that

was left by way of social cement'.[115] The extent to which Ireland was affected by

developments prevalent in other regions, however, is sometimes difficult to measure. In the

case of population growth, for example, the increase in urbanisation which we have seen to

be a feature of the eleventh century in particular was undoubtedly of significance in this

regard. Yet as Howard Clarke has noted 'only about one fifth of the island would have had

regular access to town life even at the height of the Anglo-Norman colony' around 1270,

some forty years after the end our period.[116] While population density undoubtedly increased,

whether that expansion matched the steep rise suggested for Britain and other regions of

Europe is impossible to say. Population growth is certainly reflected in an increase in food

production, specifically cereals.[117] An improved plough with coulter appears to have been

used from the tenth century and this facilitated better preparation of the soil for seed planting.

A further refinement in plough design saw the addition of a mould board, but it has been

suggested that implements with both coulter and mould board were not employed in Ireland

until after the arrival of the English in 1169.[118] Concomitant with these changes was a decline

in the significance of cattle in economic terms, arable land rather than livestock yielding

[114] For a discussion of the genre in general, see M. Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Nósa Ua Maine*: Fact or Fiction', in T. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen and P. Russell (eds.), *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff; University of Wales Press, 2000), 362-81, at 367-9.

[115] 'The West Dishes It Out' (review of Bartlett, *Making of Europe*), *London Review of Books*, 16:4, 24 February 1994.

[116] H. Clarke, 'Population', in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopedia* (New York and London; Routledge, 2005), 384.

[117] M. A. Monk, 'The Archaeobotanical Evidence for Field Crop Plants in Early Historic Ireland', in J. M. Renfrew (ed.), *New Light on Early Farming: Recent Developments in Palaeoethnobotany* (Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 315-28; N. Brady, 'Labor and Agriculture in Early Medieval Ireland: Evidence from the Sources', in A. Frantzen and D. Moffat (eds.), *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery and Labor in Medieval England* (Glasgow; Cruithne Press, 1994), 125-45.

[118] See McCormick, Kerr, McClatchie and O'Sullivan, *Early Medieval Agriculture*, 24-5; N. Brady, 'Reconstructing a Medieval Irish Plough', in *I Jornados Internacionales sobre tecnologia agraia tradicionale Museo Nacionale de Pueblo Español* (Madrid, 1993), 31-44.

more food.[119] Concern with regulation of food resources is indicated in developments in fishing in the tenth and eleventh centuries. As sources of wealth and power, fishing rights were controlled by either secular or Church authorities, and arrangements concerning them are often laid down in *nósa* texts.[120]

An aristocratic elite remained dominant, therefore, controlling new developments, as well as the commoners beneath. It encompassed lay nobility as well as ecclesiastics, with both strands of society's upper echelons undergoing significant change in the two hundred and fifty years under discussion here. Brian Bórama's rule retained some aspects of itinerant kingship: his circuit of the northern part of the country in the early eleventh century was designed to impose his authority through his physical presence.[121] His grandson, Tairdelbach, made his son, Muirchertach, governor of Dublin in 1075, seeking thereby to tighten control through having a deputy on site.[122] Administration from afar of what was increasingly in effect a 'capital city' remained of key significance in the following century; a crucial factor in Diarmait Mac Murchada's decision to seek military assistance in England was his loss of Dublin to a rival, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, in 1166.[123] The latter's brother and successor, Cathal Crobderg, who held his land under the English crown, had recourse to an organised political machine in the running of his kindgom.[124] His affairs involved intercourse with society's other aristocratic arm, the Church, whose episcopal appointments he sought to influence. Brian Bórama's brother, Marcán, as well as other members of his extended kin, held key ecclesiastical positions in Munster in his own time and that of his descendants, even

[119] F. McCormick, 'The Decline of the Cow: Agricultural and Settlement Change in Early Medieval Ireland', *Peritia*, 20 (2008), 209-24. I am indebted to Fiona Edmonds for discussion on this point.

[120] A. O'Sullivan, 'Place, Memory and Identity among Estuarine Fishing Communities: Interpreting the Archaeology of Early Medieval Fish Weirs', *World Archaeology*, 35 (2003), 449-68; P. Russell, '*Nósa Ua Maine*: The Customs of the Uí Maine', in Charles-Edwards, et al. (eds.), *Welsh King and His Court*, 527-51, at 546-7 (§6.44).

[121] *AI, s.a.* 1005.3; *AU* (Mac Airt), *s.a.* 1005.7.

[122] *AI, s.a.* 1075.2-4.

[123] *AI, s.a.* 1166.7 and 1166.9; Flanagan, 'High-Kings with Opposition', 932-3.

[124] Perros, 'Ó Conchobhair, Cathal'; Mac Shamhráin, 'Ua Conchobair, Cathal Mór Crobderg', in J. McGuire and J. Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography from the Earliest Times to the Year 2002* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), ix, 569-71.

in an age of Church reform.[125] Reform was also championed by Diarmait Mac Murchada, but he too had his own political interests at heart.[126]

Relgious change, supported by secular authority, was a feature of Irish life in this period, and can be measured in part through the work of a series of twelfth-century synods and the foundation throughout Ireland of a considerable number of Augustinian and Cistercian houses.[127] Closely associated with it were developments in art, literature, sculpture, as represented in architectural terms by the construction in Cashel of the earliest extant Irish Romanesque monument, Cormac's chapel, in 1134.[128] The vibrancy of literary culture is manifest in a trio of vernacular manuscripts, *Lebor na hUidre* (The Book of the Dun Cow), Rawlinson B 502 and The Book of Leinster, which span the twelfth century and preserve a wide variety of earlier and contemporary material in a number of forms.[129] The main scribe of the earliest of these codices written *c.* 1100 was also responsible for a copy of Boethius' *De re arithmetica*. Moreover, Boethius' works were being studied and glossed at Glendalough, a centre which has been associated with the second of our vernacular manuscripts, Rawlinson B 502.[130] The third, the Book of Leinster, preserves an early vernacular adaptation of *De excidio Troiae historia* ('A History of the Destruction of Troy') by Dares Phrygius, whose influence on vernacular narrative literature was extensive and

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[125] D. Ó Corráin, 'Dál Cais – Church and Dynasty', *Ériu*, 24 (1973), 52-63; C. Etchingham, 'Episcopal Hierarchy in Connacht and Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 52 (2000), 13-29, at 24-7.
[126] Byrne, 'Trembling Sod', 23.
[127] See the chapter by Ó Clabaigh in this volume.
[128] R. Stalley, 'Design and Function: The Construction and Decoration of Cormac's Chapel at Cashel' in Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel (eds.), *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century*, 162-75.
[129] *Lebor na hUidre: Codices Hibernenses Eximii I*, ed. R. Ó hUiginn (Dublin; RIA, 2015).
[130] E. Duncan, '*Lebor na hUidre* and a Copy of Boethius's *De re arithmetica*: A Palaeographical Note', *Ériu*, 62 (2012), 1-23; P. Ó Néill, 'Irish Glosses in a Twelfth-Century Copy of Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*', *Ériu*, 55 (2005), 1-17. Rawlinson B 502 was composed in a Leinster monastery, perhaps Glendalough or Killeshin: see C. Breatnach, 'Rawlinson B 502', in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland*, 398-400.

profound.[131] Irish scholars were clearly immersed and engaged in the intellectual currents of their day.

Perception and reality; learning and its place

As the monastic provenance of these three codices indicate, the context for this learning was ecclesiastical. Yet their wide-ranging subject matter explored concerns shared by kings and clerics. Thus, when copying a tenth-century poem by Cináed ua hArtucáin into the Book of Leinster, Finn, bishop of Kildare, updated his exemplar, to bring the battles listed down to his own time. A more prolific scribe of the same manuscript, Áed mac Crimthainn, an ecclesiastical official (*comarba*) of the monastery of Terryglass, is likely to have composed a considerable part of the Book of Leinster version of a secular tale *Esnada Tige Buchet* (The Melodies of Buchet's House).[132] By the time Áed and Finn were writing, however, a process of profound cultural realignment had been set in train, as a result of which secular learning moved out of ecclesiastical establishments into the hands of professional learned families over the course of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth. The stanzas from *Óenach Carman* with which we commenced survive in the Book of Leinster, a monastic production, as does the poetic celebration of the *óenach* at Tailtiu convened by Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill in 1005. His ascent to power in 980 marks the beginning of our period; the death of Raghnall, king of Man, in 1229 its end. As a Manx ruler intimately associated with Ireland, Raghnall's career symbolises the extent to which any evaluation of the history of Ireland in this period must look beyond its geographical confines. His descent from his Hiberno-Norse ancestor, Amlaíb Cúarán, was deliberately recalled in a praise-poem in Irish to him.

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[131] B. Miles, *Heroic Saga and Classical Epic in Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge; Boydell Press, 2011) and the essays in R. O'Connor (ed.), *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative* (Woodbridge; Boydell Press, 2014).
[132] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Literature of Medieval Ireland', 36.

Moreover, its author equated his kingship with that of Tara. Raghnall was legitimised, as Irish kings before him, through 'the flagstone on the side of Tara' (*labra ón leic a taeib Themra*) emitting an approving noise.[133]

Raghnall's anonymous eulogist and those of his contemporaries, including Cathal Crobderg Ua Conchobair (d. 1224), formed part of a reconstituted learned order. A member of a professional poetic family, his educational context lay beyond the confines of a reformed Church which had refocussed its intellectual efforts on more specific ecclesiastical ends. This pronounced shift in the locus of learning is one of the most significant, and 'arguably the most certainly detectable', outcomes of reform.[134] It may be compared more broadly with the decline of the eleventh-century European cathedral schools with their emphasis on education for both imperial and ecclesiastical concerns.[135] Secular learning became a feature of the court from the twelfth century, and from that point Ireland was imagined without the same level of input from the Church.

In reviewing how Ireland was perceived in the rich and varied sources of our period, I have surveyed no more than a number of pertinent themes, probing what may lie beneath. Change was undoubtedly constant though often difficult to decipher in the rich and complex textual imagery produced by professional learned classes themselves undergoing profound developments. What we know of Ireland is informed by their ideology and to gain access to her history we must negotiate their literary layers. The dual nature of what they so skilfully imaged is encompassed in the *óenach* – at once symbol and real.

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[133] 'Poem in Praise of Raghnall', stanza 10.
[134] Etchingham, 'Review Article', 217.
[135] S. C. Jaeger, *The 'Envy of Angels': Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).