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Nationalism in Ireland: Archaeology, Myth, and Identity

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
The University of Mississippi

by:

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ABSTRACT

A nation is defined by a collective identity that is constructed in part through interpretation of past places and events. In this paper, I examine the links between nationalism and archaeology and how the past is used in the construction of contemporary Irish national identity. In Ireland, national identity has been influenced by interpretation of ancient monuments, often combining the mythology and the archaeology of these sites. I focus on three celebrated monumental sites at Navan Fort, Newgrange, and the Hill of Tara, all of which play prominent roles in Irish mythology and have been extensively examined through archaeology. I examine both the mythology and the archaeology of these sites to determine the relationship between the two and to understand how this relationship between mythology and archaeology influences Irish identity. It is also the purpose of this paper to discuss for what political purpose these sites have been used such as political events or the creation of a collective memory of the Irish people. The mythological stories of Navan Fort and Tara are still very present in Irish society and it is this presence of mythology which has led Tara, in particular, to often be the symbolic setting for political rallies and protests

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I: INTRODUCTION

My initial exposure to Irish myth occurred in an Early Irish Literature class at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Ireland the fall semester of 2009. Our very first assignment was to read how *Emain Macha*, now called Navan Fort, got its name. I had nearly forgotten the story until I discovered this myth again in J.P. Mallory's article, *Emain Macha and Navan Fort* (1997:198). Upon reading this myth of *Emain Macha* I was reminded how I had become interested in the relationship between archaeology and myth. This myth relates the origin of one of the sites under study in this thesis. According to the Legend of *Emain Macha* (Mallory 1997:198), Macha was one of the Irish goddesses. One day she came to the home of a man named Crundchu and became his wife. During a festival Crundchu made a bet with the Ulster king, Conon Mac Nesa, that his wife could out run Conor's fastest pair of horses. Macha was brought to Conor and ordered to prepare for the race. During this time Macha was pregnant and close to giving birth. She begged the crowd to delay the race until she was recovered, but the bystanders demanded that the race take place. Macha raced against the chariot and won, but upon completing the race gave birth to twins. The spectators also felt the pain Macha experienced. Macha, furious with her husband, the king, and the crowd's treatment of hers cursed the men of Ulster saying, "From this hour the shame you have wrought me will fall upon each man of Ulster. In the hours of your greatest need you shall be weak and helpless as a

woman in childbirth, and this shall endure for five days and four nights – to the ninth generation the curse shall be upon you.” The name *Emain Macha* translates to the twins, or pair of, Macha.

Research Problem and Significance

All nations have a national identity that is determined in part by the nation’s history. Often, an important goal in the creating of a national identity is to create a sense of “wholeness and continuity with the past” (Eriksen 1993:105). Research across the world has shown that archaeology has been used to help create national identities (Boytner 2010; Kohl 1998; Deitler 1994; Dietler 1998). In this thesis I use what has been discovered about the relationship between nationalism and archaeology to examine how the two are used in the construction of Irish identity. My focus in this thesis is the three well known prehistoric monumental sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort in Ireland.

I chose Ireland as the focus of my study because the role of prehistory in Irish identity has been overlooked. The island has a rich archaeological record with Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort being only three of the larger sites. Archaeological monuments such as tombs and ringforts dot the Irish landscape, and many monuments such as Staigue Fort (Figure 1) in County Kerry and Pulnabrone (Figure 2) in the Burren serve as tourist attractions. Ringforts are common representations of Irish archaeology since they are the most numerous archaeological monument in Ireland with over 30,000 known (Eircom n.d.). The megalithic tombs such as Pulnabrone are also numerous in Ireland. Pulnabrone is one of the most visited due to its closeness to the road.



Figure 1: Staigue Fort



Figure 2: Pulnabrone

My interest in Ireland is also personal. I studied abroad in Galway as an undergraduate student in 2009. My initial familiarity with the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort comes from the semester I spent in Ireland. During my time there I learned the myths and read the legends of both Tara and Navan Fort and heard Newgrange described as the “Stonehenge of Ireland.” I was able to visit Staigue Fort and Pulnabrone, pictured above, as well as a number of other archaeological sites. It was during this time that I noticed the strong presence that mythology has in Irish archaeology. I chose to examine Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort

because of their presence in mythology and because of the importance they have to the Irish people. During a conversation with an Irish friend, I asked her what, in terms of archaeology, was most important in Ireland. She replied quickly and without hesitation, “Newgrange and the archaeology of County Meath” (Mary O’Grady personal communication, February 14, 2012). County Meath is the location of Tara and Newgrange, so I became interested in the role of archaeology and monuments in Irish identity.

In this study of the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort, I examine how the mythology of these sites influences Irish identity as well as how archaeology of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort is used to support that identity. I also examine other ways these three sites have been used such as the creation of a collective memory of the Irish people the way Napoleon III did with the sites of Alésia, Gergovia, and Bibracte in France (Dietler 1998) and as was also done in Iraq (Berhardsson 2010) and Troy, Turkey (Gür 2010).

Numerous scholars including Magnus Berhadsson (2010), Michael Dietler (1994), Gabriel Cooney (1996), and Philip Kohl (1998) have written about how archaeology is often used in politics and nationalism. In Ireland, Cooney (1996:148) argues that archaeology “has been freely used by historians, geographers, and others in their constructions of the Irish past.” The Irish Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century was used in the creation of Irish nationalism by gaining a better understanding of the past and recreating the past as a reality for the present by archiving archaeological sites, place names, folk lore, and antiquities (Cooney 1996:151). The understanding of the past created here would, in turn, have helped to create Irish identity since a display of a prestigious past that is based in real experiences and tradition provides “authenticity and a collective desire for renovation and posterity” (Gutiérrez 1997:163).

As Kohl (1998:240) argues, archaeology is inextricably linked with nationalism. The purpose of this thesis is to add to the body of knowledge concerning identity, archaeology, and nationalism. This thesis is a case study that will serve to strengthen the theories that surround the relationships between these concepts and also add to the data on how monuments and landscapes influence identity. This thesis examines how modern interpretations of ancient monuments influence identity as well as how modern views of monumental sites affect the way the archaeology of monuments is received and used. Specifically, the work presented here provides further insight into the identity of Ireland and how this identity is created, in part, through the archaeological interpretations of the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. In general, this work is a further addition to existing knowledge of the relationship between identity, nationalism, and archaeology. It also adds to the study of Irish identity through the interpretations of prehistory and prehistoric monuments.

Background

Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy (2005:1) define identity as “individuals’ identification with broader groups on the basis of differences socially sanctioned as significant.” People divide themselves into groups based on physical characteristics, religious beliefs, or backgrounds; all of which may be used to define a person’s identity. For this thesis, I examine two group identities: ethnicity and national identity.

Gellner (1994:35) defines ‘ethnicity’ or ‘nationality’ as a condition that prevails when cultural boundaries - such as how people speak, what they wear, and whom they marry - converge and overlap. Ethnicity involves an active maintenance of social boundaries in the

process of social interaction rather than a passive reflection of cultural norms (Jones 1999:28). Ethnic groups must maintain these boundaries between themselves and the rest of society in order to retain their ethnic identity. This identity comes from a real or assumed shared culture or common descent (Jones 1999:84). History and blood are important aspects of ethnicity. An unchanging, stable core of ethnic belonging assures the individuals within the group of continuity with the past, which can be an important source of self-respect and personal authenticity in the modern world (Eriksen 1993:68).

It should be remembered that identity is not static. Local, regional, and national identities, for example, are often redefined since their ‘truth’ is based on cultural interpretation of past generations (Claval 2007:87). An example of a non-static identity is Irish identity; the idea that Irish identity is based in the landscape is a recent idea. Irish nationalists have argued that Irish identity is rooted in the landscape ever since the Celtic Revival began in the 19th century (O’Sullivan 2001:87). The Celtic Revival was a growth of Irish national consciousness in the nineteenth century (Sheehy 1980:95), and a process through which, according to Steven Ellis (1999:165), the Irish became “more Irish than the Irish themselves.” The idea of Irish identity and heritage can be found in many archaeological sites including those of Tara (Figure 3), Newgrange (Figure 4), and Navan Fort (Figure 5).



Figure 3: Tara. (Photo Courtesy of Anthony Murphy)



Figure 4: Newgrange. (Photo Courtesy of Newgrange.com)



Figure 5: Navan Fort. (Photo Courtesy of BBC)

The Hill of Tara is associated with the seat of the High King of Ireland (Bhreathnach 1994:94; O'Brien and Harbison 1996:37; Wailes 1982:6). This association is both mythological

and historical. The concept of the High King of Ireland existed in myth long before an actual high-kingship was established (Wailes 1982:6). A true High Kingship was not established until the ninth century AD when Brian Boru was able to achieve the status of High King of Ireland (Newman 1997:129; O'Brien and Harbison 1996:108). Written sources suggest that Tara was abandoned in the sixth century AD (Wailes 1982:5). Tara has often been seen as a symbol of power and Irishness, and remains so today.

Newgrange is one of Ireland's best known prehistoric monuments. This megalithic passage tomb was built on a hill overlooking the river Boyne. Newgrange is part of the *Brú na Bóinne*, the house or mansion of the Boyne (O'Kelly 1982:43). The *Brú* is the home of the Dagda, the Good God, who is sometimes described as the sun god (O'Kelly 1982:47).

Navan Fort, or *Emain Macha*, is the setting of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* which is the great Irish epic with a supposed Iron Age setting (de Paor 1986:42). The *Táin* is part of a series of tales called the Ulster Cycle that were originally written down in the time period between the seventh and fourteenth centuries. According to legend, *Emain Macha* was also once the royal seat of the province of Ulster during prehistoric times (Mallory 1984:68). Due to the large role this particular site has in Irish literature and archaeology it is a logical site to include in this investigation.

Since these are some of the best-known sites in Ireland, I expect them to take a larger role in Irish and "Celtic" identity than other, less well-known locations. These sites have been of great importance throughout history and they still remain so today. It is my goal to determine how they are viewed today and what role they play in Irish identity.

It is sometimes difficult to separate the mythology from the archaeology of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. It is quite common to read details on excavation that include references to places mentioned in mythology and how the archaeological evidence does or does not correspond to what the legends tell us. J.P. Mallory (1997) for example, discusses, in detail, the various possibilities for the actual locations in the landscape that are referred to in the *Táin*. Edel Bhreathnach (1994), James Roy (1996) and many others all discuss the symbolic role of the Hill of Tara as the seat of the High King when presenting archaeological information. In many ways, these types of approaches are attempts to find the validities of myth. In places where the archaeological evidence is unclear or faded the myths are additional sources of information.

The approach to Newgrange is slightly different since at some point, according to Michael O'Kelly (1982:47), the kings of Tara, specifically, the Uí Néill ruling dynasty at Tara began to claim the *Tuatha Dé Dannan* as their ancestors in a propaganda exercise to make their claim to Tara more legitimate. If this is the case, it was a successful strategy since Newgrange is now associated more as the burial place of the High Kings than with the Dagda. Today, Newgrange has a stronger association with a historical group of people than with mythology. Ultimately, it is the archaeology at Newgrange that is the most important to identity today.

Methods

I will discuss my methods in greater detail in chapter three, so for now a brief overview will suffice. To truly understand the links between archaeology and nationalism, it is not enough to read only about Ireland. In order understand how archaeology is influential in the construction of national identity, my study had to expand to other parts of the world as well. I included

Michael Dietler's (1994; 1998) work in France as well as Margarita Díaz-Andrue's (1996) in Spain, Marie Sørensen's (1996) study in Denmark, Ash Gür's (2010) work in Turkey and Magnus Berhardson's (2010) in Iraq (Figure 6).

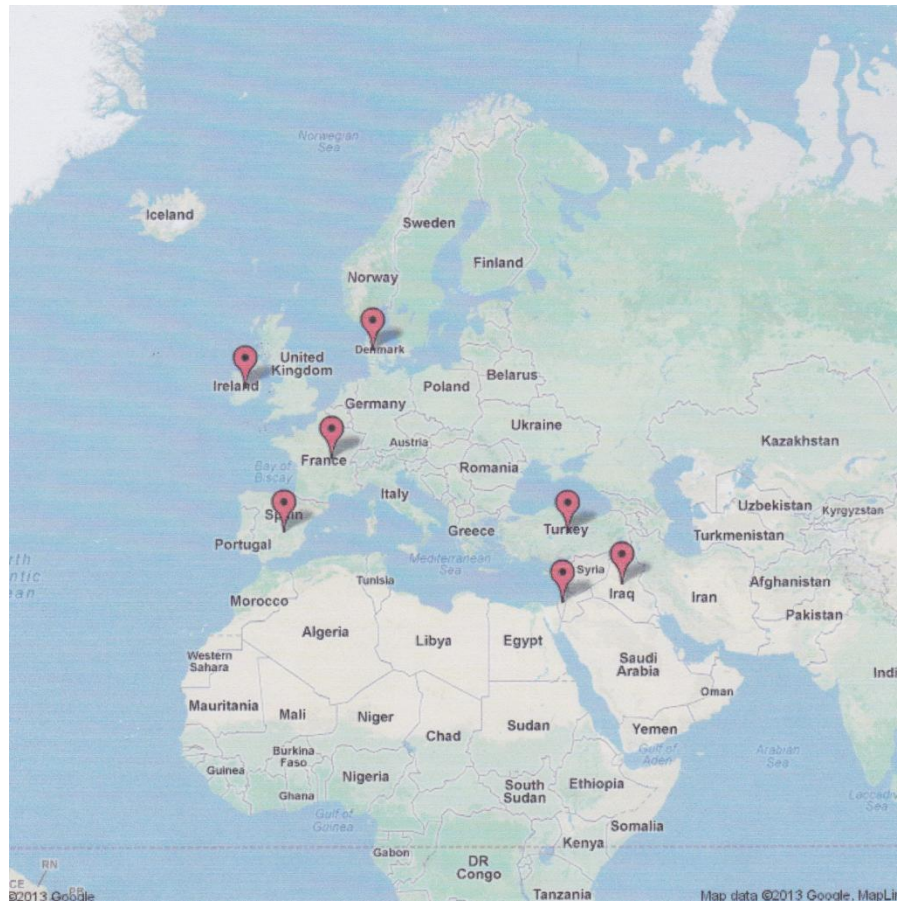


Figure 6: Case Study Map. Map showing locations of studies referenced in this thesis. (Courtesy of Google Maps)

I chose these particular sites for comparison because they offer a wide-range of studies across Europe as well as other countries. There are many other studies on the relationship between nationalism and archaeology, but I chose to focus on a few of the more developed ones. I also briefly examine the abuse of archaeological data in Nazi Germany.

Once I had read all of the necessary sources, I examined the links between archaeology, nationalism, and national identity in both Ireland and in general terms on an international level. I

looked for common themes for how archaeology is used in national identity. After discovering general trends for using archaeology to create national identities I shifted my focus onto Ireland and the relationship between archaeology and national identity in that particular country. I specifically examined the roles Navan Fort, Newgrange, and Tara play in Ireland's national identity.

To determine the role Irish mythology has in Irish identity and archaeology I examined the ways in which the mythology is mentioned in the archaeological information. For example, in J.P. Mallory's chapter of *Excavations at Navan Fort* (1997:197-207), he discusses the archaeological sites and features in the area of Navan Fort and whether they could possibly have been any of the locations mentioned in the various Ulster Cycle tales. Edel Bhreathnach (1994), Richard Bradley (2002), Jacqueline O'Brien and Peter Harbison (1996) and James Roy (1996) all discuss Tara as a symbol of the High Kingship and its association with gods and goddesses. Newgrange, and other tombs, are supposedly the home of the *Tuatha Dé Dannan*, a race of people who inhabited Ireland before the arrival of the Celtic people (O'Brien 2002:165) with Newgrange being the home of the Dagda, the Good God, and his wife and son. At some point, the Uí Néill ruling dynasty began to associate their ancestors with the *Tuatha Dé Dannan*, a propaganda exercise that was very successful since even today Newgrange is regarded more as the burial place of the kings of Tara than the home of the Dagda (O'Kelly 1982:45-47).

Thesis Organization

Chapter two serves as a literature review on the subjects relevant to this thesis. In this chapter I endeavor to synthesize the major literature on the subjects of nationalism, identity, and

the archaeology of the three previously mentioned sites. I also examine the similarities between the archaeology and the mythology of Ireland. In order to establish general trends for how archaeology is used in nationalism and the construction of national identities I examined several case studies on the national use of archaeology. The framework established here will be used to analyze the relationship between nationalism and archaeology in Ireland.

Chapter three, as mentioned above will be a methods chapter. Following that, chapter four will be the analysis portion of this thesis. Chapter four contains archaeological and mythological information on all three sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. I also analyze the relationship between archaeology and mythology at these sites; I discuss the ways in which the archaeological evidence has been used to support the mythology. I also determine the other uses to which these sites have been put such as political rallies, locations of rebellions, protests, and festivals.

In chapter five, I present my overall conclusions on nationalism, archaeology, and identity in Ireland. Afterwards I review possible options for future research in nationalism and archaeology in Ireland. Among these are ethnographic work and research of the English perception of Irish identity.

This work examines the relationship between archaeology and nationalism in terms of mythology and landscape. Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort are all prehistoric monuments within the Irish landscape. These three sites also have the distinction of being important in Irish mythology. This completed work provides information on the role of the landscape, mythology, and archaeology in the creation of national identity. The case study presented here adds to the

already existing work on the relationship between nationalism and archaeology through the perspective of mythological landscapes.

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Archaeology is used in the construction of modern Irish identity. Before ascertaining how archaeology is used to create identity in Ireland it is first necessary to understand a variety of concepts the first two being identity and ethnicity. The next concepts to be discussed are nation and nationalism followed by a summary of the literature of landscape and the role of monuments in identity. As mentioned in chapter 1, there have been studies of the role of archaeology in nationalism. I review these studies in order to understand the trends in using archaeology in identity construction. The final section in this chapter reviews archaeology and nationalism in Ireland. In this section I review, briefly, the history of Irish archaeology as well as the emergence of “Celtic” identity and the controversies surrounding that identity.

Identity and Ethnicity

According to Díaz-Andreu (2005:1) people form groups based on certain physical characteristics, beliefs, or backgrounds. These same groups are used to define a person’s identity. In recent decades, anthropologists, as well as academics from other disciplines such as sociology, have studied the relationships between individuals and the society of which they are part (Díaz-Andreu 2005: 5). One of the people to study the relationship between individuals and society was Pierre Bourdieu (1977), who developed the concept of *habitus* to describe people’s

understanding of how the world operates. In part, identity is structured by the *habitus* of the society in which a person lives, meaning that identity is not completely a conscious choice.

Ethnicity is another aspect of identity. As previously mentioned, Ernest Gellner (1994:35) writes that ‘ethnicity’ or ‘nationality’ is the result of cultural boundaries converging and overlapping. According to Eriksen (1993:18), the first fact of ethnicity is the distinction between outsiders and insiders; between “Us” and “Them.” While identity is crucial in defining who and what we are, it also defines what we are *not*. Robertson and Hall (2007:34), argue that identity is made primarily with reference to the “Other.”

Ethnic identities are a good example of identities made in reference to the “Other” since they are created in opposition to other identities (Lucy 2005: 95). These identities are created based on cultural differences that are considered to be important. The aspects of a culture that are perceived to be the most important will be the ones that are maintained over time. There are other boundaries in place between ethnic groups besides those of material culture. While it may be unclear what these boundaries are, it is clear that they remain in place because when people move or intermarry with members of other ethnic groups they do not change their ethnic identities (Lucy 2005: 94-95). Sam Lucy’s example of marriage demonstrates that “ethnic groups had to be maintained by continual expression and validation of those boundaries: if the boundaries were no longer held to be significant, the ethnic groups would cease to exist in those forms” (Lucy 2005: 95).

At this point I would like to discuss the concept of *habitus* in relation to ethnic identity specifically. Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* has been utilized by many social scientists over the years including Sían Jones. According to Jones (1997: 90), “...*habitus*...provide[s] the basis for

the perception of shared sentiment and interest which ethnicity entails.” Ethnicity is not just a reflection of similarities and differences of other ethnic groups, but instead is based in the *habitus* which “engenders feelings of identification among people similarly endowed” (Jones 1997: 90). *Habitus* provides the basis for ethnic identities, and it is through conscious practice that feelings of identity are displayed symbolically. It is important to remember that ethnicity is a multidimensional phenomenon that appears in many different social domains (Jones 1997: 100). Ethnic boundaries are social as opposed to physical.

Ethnicity was one of the first forms of identity to attract scholars’ attention when they began to study the concept of identity, and there were those who came to see ethnicity as a self-ascribed identity (Díaz-Andreu 2005: 6). The interest in ethnic identity also included the study of the material cultures of societies. Archaeologically, ethnic identity was determined through the distribution of the material culture. People’s identities are formed by their culture and the national identities which are formed by the history of their nation. Ethnic identities have been used for arguments for independence, and for national supremacy.

Nation and Nationalism

The focus of this section is nationalism. However, before nationalism can be discussed in any great detail, it is first necessary to understand what a nation is. According to Thomas Eriksen (1993:105) a “nation” is a community in which the citizens are expected to be integrated into the culture in an “anonymous and abstract manner” meaning that the nation is an impersonal entity and the members will never meet nor interact with most of their fellows.

Eriksen (1993:105) writes, “At the identity level, nationhood is a matter of belief. The nation is a product of nationalist ideology; not the other way around.” The nation exists because a handful of influential people, usually the urban elite, decided that it should exist. Nations do not naturally come into being; people do not automatically organize themselves into what today is defined as the nation. The potential members of a nation who want the nation to exist must put forth enormous effort to make this happen. For the nation to be an efficient political tool the concept of the nation has to first achieve mass appeal (Eriksen 1993:105). In order to create a nation the idea of a nation must be made to seem desirable to the nation’s potential members. This is where the idea of ethnicity comes into play. To those following a nationalist ideology, the political organization of the state should be ethnic in character; it should represent the interests of a particular ethnic group. The leaders of a nation also have to convince the masses that the nation represents them as a cultural unit (Eriksen 1993:101).

Before discussing the role of culture in nationalism, I will first discuss the concept of nationalism itself. According to Kohl (1998:226) nationalism is the program for creating nations: nationalism must exist before the nation. This is because nations are constructed by nationalist politicians and intellectuals. The nationalist processes by which the nation is created are supported by the social classes that benefit from the construction of the nation. Sørensen (1996:25) writes that nationalism is successful because it binds the individual to the nation and creates an emotional attachment that the individual feels for the nation. Despite this emotional attachment, nationalism is still...

...the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves (Gellner 2006:56).

In other words, nationalism results in the creation of anonymous groups where each member is easily replaceable. The nations created share a culture which has replaced a more complex culture, but folk cultures still survive through reproductions.

Ernest Gellner (1994:178) writes that, in the beginning, nationalism was meant to protect the political goals of the nation-state, whereas, now it is the emotional identification with anonymous groups based on pre-existing differences such as religion. Despite how nationalism is presented, Gellner (2006:34) argues that it does not have any particularly deep roots in the human psyche; it is not, in fact, the “awakening of an old, latent, dormant force” (Gellner 2006:46). It is actually the result of a social organization based on an education-dependent high culture which is protected by the nation-state.

According to Gellner (2006:107-108), the most violent phase of nationalism accompanies industrialization. As modernization spreads, people begin to feel mistreated and the abusers are identified as another nation. If enough victims can be identified as being part of the same nation, then a nationalism is born. If the people are successful, then a nation is born.

Benedict Anderson (1991) is another major contributor to the study of nation and nationalism. He writes that the concept of the nation came about in an age in which “Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm” (Anderson 1991:7). He describes the nation as an “imagined community” because most members of a nation feel a sense of camaraderie towards each other despite the inequality and exploitation that takes place in the nation. The “imagined community” also occurs despite the fact that most members of a nation do not know each other (Agnew 2011:37). This feeling of comradeship is what makes so many people willing to die for their

nation. Nations inspire love, and often a self-sacrificing love. The nature of this love can be seen in the language used to talk about a nation. Sometimes vocabulary reminiscent of kinship is used: examples of this include the terms motherland and fatherland. These terms imply that people are naturally tied to their nation (Anderson 1991:141-143). “Official nationalism,” as Benedict Anderson (1991:159) calls it, was a conscious and self-protective policy; its purpose was the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests. In contrast, modern nationalism is the passionate identification with anonymous communities of shared cultures and cultural imagery.

Anderson and Gellner both take similar views on nationalism in that they both consider the nation as an impersonal entity (Anderson 1991:7; Gellner 2006:56), but Anderson (1991:7) goes on to describe this impersonal society as an “imagined community,” a phrase that has been used by others, such as John Agnew (2011) in their studies of nationalism. Both Gellner (1994:178) and Anderson (1991:141-143) acknowledge the deep emotions that nationalism plays upon and elicits. Anderson discusses the emotion and sense of family felt by members of a nation while Gellner chooses to focus on the pre-existing commonalities between members such as religion. Both also agree that nationalism began in the years surrounding the Industrial Revolution (Anderson 1991:7; Gellner 2006:107-108).

The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries coincides with the time when many European national identities were created by political elites who ‘invented’ traditions of groups occupancy of their national territory (Agnew 2011:37). Modern European identities are considered to be the product of the progression of people through history from ‘savages’ to ‘civilization’ (Shore 1996: 106), and archaeology and history are used to demonstrate this evolution of civilization (Kristiansen 1996: 139).

One of the functions of archaeology and history within a nationalist ideology is to create continuity with the past in addition to creating a shared culture (Eriksen 1993:105). This past can either be real or invented (Kohl 1998:223). When a new nation comes into being, a national identity has to be constructed. This is done through the forgetting, misremembering, or inventing part of the nation's past (Van Dyke 2008:277). In order to use the past to create a present national identity it is necessary to create the memory of the past. Creating memory involves carefully selecting ideas for preservation and construction as well as obliteration; certain themes and events become the subject of national pride and remembrance. In most cases, it is the upper middle class and the intelligentsia who determine what is to be part of the national memory. This is done through rhetorical discourses that are aimed at other members of the society or at opponents (Van Dyke 2008:277). However, the myths of the nation cannot be invented out of nothing; sources for the nation's past come from the material remains of cultures once found within the nation's borders (Kohl 1998:228). This is where archaeology has a role in nationalism which will be discussed later in this chapter in the section on archaeology and nationalism.

The primary role of the past in identities is to make it seem as though nationalism has its roots and reason in the past; it anchors the nation by making it seem both "timeless and very old" (Sørensen 1996:28). For example, many historians in modern Europe have gone to great lengths to make their nations seem very old despite the fact that many European countries were not created until the nineteenth century (Eriksen 1993:71). Oftentimes, the past is used to characterize the nation and the national identity by giving the past characteristics of the present nation and using artifacts, monuments, and events as reference points. Through this use of real

places and events specific symbolic representations become slogans, signs, and emotions (Sørensen 1996:29).

In nationalism complex historical events are often reduced to very basic plot structures (Bernhardsson 2010:61). According to Sam Smiles (1991:6), past events will also commonly be presented in a mythical or symbolic fashion since this is the form which tends to have the maximum impact in stirring feelings of patriotism. Ancient history and contemporary political concerns are often integrated in the effort to convey that ancestral civilizations are still alive in the nation's current incarnation. The purpose is to convince the citizens of a nation that they are the direct descendants of the ancestors (Bernhardsson 2010:61). Evidence for the past of the nation can be found in the landscape and monuments built by past civilizations.

Monuments, Landscape and Identity

Irish nationalists began claiming that the Irish identity was based in landscape in the nineteenth century. Landscape also has a special importance to this thesis since the focus is on three monuments within the Irish landscape: Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. Below I examine and summarize literature about the concept of the "landscape," the purpose of monuments within the landscape, and the role of such monuments in identity.

What is landscape?

According to Barbara Bender (1993:1), in today's Western societies "landscape" often refers to the surface of the land, that is, what is seen when people look through windows or through view finders at scenic lookouts along highways such as the Blue Ridge Parkway in

North Carolina and Virginia. According to Küchler (1993:85), the landscape can be described, measured, and portrayed or illustrated in various forms of art. Landscapes consist of rivers, mountains, lakes, valleys, and any number of individual features and specific locations (Bergh 2002:139). In Western society landscapes are admired for their beauty and people will often take trips for the sole purpose of seeing them. My grandparents, for example, drive into the mountains of North Carolina every fall to “look at the leaves.”

Landscape is an important concept to the social sciences because landscapes are ways of expressing ideas and understandings of the world and of referring to physical entities or abstract meanings (Layton and Ucko 1999:1). Landscapes play major roles in the creation and development of a sense of history. There are many different perceptions of landscape, the modern Western interpretation as “the view” is only one. For many, landscapes are home to the ancestors and other forms of spirits; they are significant in mythologies, and are often used to define social groups and the relationships these groups have to resources (Tilley 1994:67). Landscape makes up a group’s *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). According to Tilley (1994:26), landscape has an ontological impact because it is “lived in and through.” Landscape is not something that is just looked at or the subject of thought. It has a very real presence in people’s lives; people work on and alter the landscape. As a result, the landscape is filled with cultural meaning and symbolism.

Landscapes are created by people both in terms of meaning and physicality. People create landscapes through their experience and interaction with the world; landscapes are physically influenced by people working on and living within it (Bender 1993:1). Landscapes are often experienced as a narrative sequence. According to Chris Fowler (2008:294) these narratives can be compared and even equated with journeys of personal transformation. Context

is important in landscape; time, place, and historical conditions will influence the way people understand and interact with the world (Bender 2003:2). The social condition at the time of a person's interaction with the landscape will also influence experiences of landscape; is there a revolution and does the landscape symbolize what is being fought for, or is it a time of peace? Landscapes constantly change whether it is through the forces of nature or by human hands, and these changes result in different interpretations of the same location. These changes demonstrate why time and history are important in the determining of the significance of landscape.

Monuments in the Landscape

As the focus of this thesis is the three monuments of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort, it is helpful to explore the significance of monuments in general. According to Tilley (1994:204), construction of monuments may prevent the mythological and ritual significance of specific locations from being lost or forgotten; monuments stabilized the cultural memory of certain places. Bradley (1998:162) describes monuments as mnemonic devices. These monuments are sometimes the only way of remembering an otherwise forgotten past; memory is subjective and sometimes differs from the facts. Sometimes traditional practices will still be performed, but the social settings and even the significance of such practices will have changed (Bradley 1998:162).

Memory is an important aspect of any kind monument. In order to create memory within a society people within that society must carefully select what ideas about the past they wish to preserve, create, or destroy (Van Dyke 2008:277). Elements of landscape that have both a practical use and cosmic meaning are the most effective carriers of social memory (Crumley 1999:271). This is because memory stresses the continuity in landscape through the re-use,

reinterpretation of specific places (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14). Places continue to have meaning because they continue to have a purpose in the lives of the people.

As John Barrett (1994:76) argues, once places are associated with some meaning they will retain some form of significance, but meaning is not inherent to places and cultural resources. Places do not come with a particular significance already assembled; rather meaning is attributed to places by people to contribute toward “the structuring of knowledge only when situated in a particular social practice and interpretive framework” (Barrett 1994:76). In other words, places are given meaning through the way they are used by society. Since the significance of a place is dependent on a particular time and society, meanings may often change as society changes. According to Lynette Russell (2008) one such place where this happened is Stonehenge. Modern druids claim that Stonehenge is a heritage site for them and many migrate to Stonehenge every year to celebrate the summer solstice. Archaeology tells us that Stonehenge predates the druids and that it is not aligned with the summer solstice at all, but rather with the winter solstice (Russell 2008:642). It would be easy to dismiss the druids of today; to either ignore them or write them off as annoying and poorly educated on the true purpose of Stonehenge, but this would be unwise. Contemporary relationships with the landscape should not be trivialized because to do so would be to ignore the contemporary importance of historical sites today (Russell 2008:642). In order to understand the importance of places in the shaping of identity we must also be sure to consider contemporary interpretations of such places. Our understanding of the significance a place might have had in the past depends on our ability to reconstruct the social practices which provided places with meaning (Barrett 1994:110). The meanings of places and monuments depend on the beliefs, rituals, and experiences of the

societies that constructed them. In order to know what significance these monuments had we must understand the culture of the people who built them.

Monuments and Identity

People who share a cultural identity will often maintain monuments and other places that are instrumental in the creation and expression of this identity (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14-15). These places make up a part of what is called a “cultural landscape” which incorporates every aspect of a culture and the material expressions of that culture including a society’s cosmological understanding of the world, their religious practices and beliefs, their languages, and their social organization (Strang 2008:52). As has been discussed previously, ethnic or cultural identity sometimes becomes a national identity when an ethnic group wants to be a recognized nation (Gellner 1994:35). Landscape is an important aspect of cultural identity because nationalists occasionally define their identity in relation to the landscape.

People all over the world use the landscape and monuments within the landscape to establish and maintain their identities. According to Christopher Tilley (1994:18), sometimes creating identity through landscape is done through naming and identifying recognizable topographical features such as hilltops, inlets, bays, and sand dunes. Oftentimes this is crucial to establishing and maintaining of a social group’s identity. These places become infused with significance and meaning through the development of human and mythological associations (Tilley 1994:18).

Archaeology and Nationalism

It is common for nationalism and identity to be intertwined (Hassen 1998:213). The nationalist ideology that influences identity manifests itself in discourse, practice, and materiality. Industrial, financial, and military activities are immersed within it. Nationalism is often based in the ideas of a shared culture and a shared history. There is a body of literature on the connection between archaeology and nationalism. In this section I examine studies about the nationalist use of archaeology from different part of the world. I use the work of Neil Silberman, Marie Sørensen, Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Michael Deitler, Magnus Berhardsson, and Ash Gür. The studies examined here provide a global context of the relationship between nationalism and archaeology that I utilize in my study of Ireland.

Philip Kohl (1998:226) examines the relationship between nationalism and archaeology, and he makes a distinction between *national archaeology* and *nationalist archaeology*. *National archaeology* is the archaeological record within a specific nation-state. *Nationalist archaeology* refers to national archaeology and the political policies that make use of archaeologists and archaeological information for the purpose of nation building and creation of national identities. Such policies may extend beyond the nation's borders as the process of nation building and creating a national identity extend as states expand and interact with other nations.

The close ties between nationalism and archaeology formed when the modern concept of the nation came into being, and the appearance of nationalism stimulated the establishment of archaeology as a science (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996:3). Part of the reason for the link between nationalism and archaeology is due to the fact that in many countries support for archaeological research and employment comes from the state. Archaeologists often work for state-run institutions such as museums and research institutes (Kohl 1998:240). Since the state is

such a major supporter of archaeological research it is hardly surprising that patterns of support for excavations are conditioned by national mythologies of identity (Dietler 1994:597).

Michael Dietler (1994:599) argues that archaeology only truly gained ground as a professional discipline around the same time as the rise of modern nation-states and their demands for construction of identity is cause for a serious examination of the social construction of the field of archaeology. Archaeologists such as Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Timothy Champion (1996), Marie Sørensen (1996) and Neil Silberman (1990) who are examining how archaeological data are manipulated for nationalist purposes. At the same time there are other archaeologists such as Peter Ucko (1995) and Paul Graves Brown et. al (1996) who Kohl (1998:225-226) claims are celebrating the political nature of the field and are promoting alternative version of the remote past.

Archaeological data are sometimes used for the benefit of the nation, but this use is dictated by those outside of the profession of archaeology rather than archaeologists themselves. As Sørensen (1996:26) writes, in the effort to understand how archaeology is used for nationalist purposes, one of the first things to investigate is how archaeology provides an index of object and images that are appropriate for the intended messages of nationalism. One of the reasons for the nationalist use of archaeology is because it provides physical connections to an identity that is based in the past – places and objects become powerful symbols of the nation and national identity as well as authenticating any national myths (Dietler 1994:597). Archaeology may be particularly vulnerable to the manipulations of nationalism because it provides physical and visible information that the citizens of a nation interact with everyday: artifacts and monuments may become symbols of the state and appear on stamps, money, and postcards (Kohl 1998:240).

As discussed above, groups that share a vision of how the world should be structured share an ethnicity or cultural identity. Archaeology is often used to provide an ‘anchor’ of sorts for ethnicity by linking archaeological sites to ancient events and people that are important to the identity of ethnic or cultural groups (Dietler 1994:597). It is this potential use that draws nations to archaeology. Archaeology is able to provide a physical connection to ancient-times in which identities are rooted (Dietler 1994:597). Places and artifacts become powerful symbols that authenticate the view of the past. As Silberman (1990:29) writes, when examining the past, it is important to remember that the “past may not have an independent existence apart from the present. Its ancient texts, architecture, and artifacts (fragments of a living reality now dead) could only be brought back to life by taking on meanings in our own living reality.” In other words, the meanings of the past are determined by the present. The social concerns of the present determine how the past is viewed. This view is not often determined by archaeologists themselves, but rather those outside of the archaeological profession (Sørensen 1996:25). The present will always influence the interpretation of the past. No matter how disinterested or ‘scientific’ the methodology used in interpretation, it is always influenced by contemporary concerns and interests (Smiles 1991:7). The past is important to political goals and needs (Dodd and Boynter 2010:5); the purpose of integrating ancient history and modern political concerns is to convey that the “spirits of the ancient civilizations are still alive and well in the modern nation” (Berhardsson 2010:61). This provides proof, as it were, that modern citizens are direct descendents of the inhabitants of ancient times. Proof of cultural continuity is important to those nations that have a base for their identity in the ancient past. This is especially true for newly-created ethnic groups or nations (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998:14). For new nations, images and symbols of the past play conscious and powerful roles in politics. Archaeological finds may

become banners for the nation; they enable nations to authenticate their existence by proving that their ancestors lived in the territory that the nation is claiming for its own.

The time period and interpretation of the past that is most important can change when the social situation of a nation changes. For example, Trigger (1984:359) writes that Egypt and Iran place more emphasis on pre-Islamic times when nationalistic and secular politics are in place, but de-emphasize them when the political situation favors a pan-Islamic or pan-Arabian orientation. Silberman (1990:159) argues that pro-Islamic Egyptology considers the Pharaoh as an evil oppressor who forced his people to worship him as a god. Silberman (1990:159) also point out that this viewpoint changes when the political movement is more secular.

By its very nature, archaeology has always had a political dimension, and most archaeological traditions are nationalistic in their orientation (Trigger 1984:388; Knapp and Antoniadou 1998:14). Prehistoric archaeology was encouraged in post-Napoleonic Europe by an upsurge of nationalism and a romantic desire to understand the ancestral past. Historically, according to Kohl (1998:225), archaeologists helped in the development of nationalist programs by assigning historical significance to the visible material remains of past cultures within a nation's territory.

The relationship between nationalism and archaeology only came about with the development of the nation (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996:3), and it was with the development of the nation-state that archaeology became a locally-based activity meaning that members of the nation-state were the ones who were most interested in archaeology (Trigger 1984:357). Nationalist archaeology is frequently involved in the creation of national identities both within states and as the states expand and interact with one another (Kohl 1998:226). Gür

(2010:76) describes the importance of archaeology to national identity when he writes, “Archaeology, because of its integral relationship to both land and culture, plays a special role in bridging the national territory and the imagined past of the nation.” In other words, archaeology connects the physical space the nation occupies with the history (real or imagined) that is associated with the nation. The people who share an “imagined past” will form an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) on the basis of common history.

Within the below discussed case studies on the nationalist use of archaeology, there are three trends that I continue to discuss throughout this thesis. First, nationalist archaeology tends to focus on sites associated with significant historical events or people. Nationalist archaeology is used to create links between the past and the present; it also focuses on sites that are settings for stories and myths of the nation.

In modern Israel archaeology has been used to affirm the link between an intrusive population and its own ancient past (Trigger 1984:358). This explicitly political use of archaeology helps to assert the right of a given population to land, even if that land is occupied by others. One example of an archaeological site that has been used to “prove” that the current occupants are entitled to the land is Masada in Israel as discussed by Silberman (1990:87-99). Masada (Figure 7) was the palace of King Herod the Great from 37-4 B.C.



Figure 7: Masada. (Photo courtesy of Israeli Ministry of Tourism)

There is evidence at Masada of an unsuccessful attempt by Jewish rebels to prevent Masada from being captured by Romans (Silberman 1990:87). For many Israelis, Masada is a tangible link between the present and the past; it is also the site of a significant historical event. In 1968, the Israeli government reburied 28 skeletons found at Masada with full military honors under the same headstones used during the Israeli-Arab war for fallen soldiers (Silberman 1990:99). For a number of years the summit of the mountain where Masada is located was the swearing in site of the Israeli tank corps who vowed, “Masada shall not fall again.” Today, most visitors to Masada come as part of a modern pilgrimage ritual rather than for archaeological interest. Tour guides tell the story of Masada’s most famous and stirring events, and Neil Silberman (1990:88) writes that the archaeological remains are more like stage scenery for a play of national rebirth than tangible proof of the story.

According to Sørensen (1996:33), an important time period in the development of nationalist archaeology was the Romantic period of the nineteenth century. It was during this time that the ideological framework that places history and tradition hand in hand with emotions was created. This union between history and emotion is vital to nationalism and national identity. If people are to identify with their history they must have an emotional connection to it. Historians working in modern Europe have put much effort into demonstrating that their nations

are very old when in reality they usually were not created until the nineteenth century (Eriksen 1993:71).

In Great Britain, France, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, and Germany the national rediscovery of ancient relics and texts symbolized the retaking of a national birthright and the tying of the ancient past to the present (Silberman 1990:2). Pride in the nation's ancestors was another way of being proud of the nation. Sørensen (1996:32-35) has studied the nationalist use of archaeology in Denmark in particular. Archaeology in Denmark had its formal beginnings in the early nineteenth century. During the 1920s, archaeology was being established as a profession and as an institutionalized and centralized activity with a "national" focus. After the Napoleonic war, the structure of archaeology in Denmark changed from individual collectors of antiquities to a professional institution that focused its attention on the nation's (pre)history. At the start of the professional phase of archaeology in Denmark, archaeologists studied saga texts and early historic sources which included the mythology and other stories of the Danish nation. It was during this time that Denmark was defeated by the English in 1801, and suffered from a state-bankruptcy in 1813. After these events the Danish people needed to focus their attention somewhere other than the present. So, Denmark used the past to create the myth of Denmark as a nation that had existed since the beginning of time as an unmixed and independent people (Sørensen 1996:35). The Danish people found consolation in their nation's past greatness (Trigger 1984:358). For example, they took pride in the fact that they had never been conquered by the Romans. They also developed an interest in the Vikings. According to Sørensen (1996:36), much of the factual archaeology was ignored in the myth-making process. References to the past in contemporary Danish culture are references to a politically constructed past and not the archaeological past. This example from Denmark demonstrates that nationalist

archaeology is sometimes used to help nations recover from tragedies by reminding people of a glorious past.

Díaz-Andreu (1996:43-45) presents several examples from Spain on how nationalist archaeology is used. Archaeology in Spain did not gain much importance until the twentieth century (Díaz-Andreu 1995:43-45). Spain, like other countries, glorified its national past. In Spain, one of the focuses of nationalist archaeology has been historical events. Such events often become mythologized. The successful defense of pre-Roman cities like Saguntum and Numantia against invaders is associated with the resistance of Spain against those that would wish to conquer the country and the unshakeable Spanish spirit. Stories about places like Numantia and Saguntum were more frequently included in children's literature, a fertile context for national narratives.

The nation of Iraq is an excellent example of how archaeology can be used for political purposes. Magnus Bernhardsson (2010:57) has written of Iraq "the political use of archaeology and ancient history has been intimately intertwined with the state-building process, particularly in forging a national identity." During the 1930s, historical artifacts were a crucial part of the foundation on which the nation could build a present for itself based on a "modern" past (Bernhardsson 2010:58-61). A new interpretation of Iraq's past allowed Iraq to re-create itself with a new identity. Also during the 1930s, Dr. Sami Shawkat, director of education in Iraq, noted that in the eighth and ninth centuries the caliphs al-Ma'mun and Harun al-Rashid ruled over 200 million people in the Middle East. Dr. Shawkat wrote that the spirits of the caliphs would lead Iraq to a formidable state. He used the history of Iraq to rouse patriotic sentiment and to validate domestic and foreign policies. According to Bernhardsson (2010:59) it is difficult for Iraq to define itself in opposition of another group, that is, to have a *negative identity*, due to

the linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. Instead Iraq, as a nation, has to present itself as the collective of past achievements of the people who lived in the land area occupied by Iraq have a positive identity. In other words, the nation has what Berhardsson (2010:59) refers to a *positive identity*. Archaeology is used to help authenticate these past achievements and to define a national identity.

Dietler (1998:72-84) points out that archaeology is useful to the creation of collective memory as it can be used to provide physical proof of memorialized events; it provides a link between the texts, people, events, places, and things that make up the history and the memory of a nation. France provides us with an example of a nation that linked place, event, and historical figures to the modern landscape. Recently, three sites from the period of the Roman conquest of the Celtic people which Michael Dietler (1998:73) has referred to as the holy trinity of Gallic identity, have been re-imagined as symbolic focal points in the very politicized creation of France's modern, national identity. These three sites are Alésia and Bibracte in Burgundy and Gergovia in the Auvergne. It is important when examining nationalistic uses of archaeology, whether in France or any other country, why certain sites from among numerous other possibilities became the focus of national mythology and identity. Julius Caesar wrote about all three of these sites, but those original writings have been embellished and reinterpreted according to national sentiment and mythology in France. A character of great importance in French history is Vercingetorix, a noble who led the Gauls to victory over the Romans at Gergovia (but was eventually defeated at Alesia), and who is associated with these three sites. Dietler (1994:84) believes that it is the association of these sites with the national character of Vercingetorix that helped these three sites to become part of the project of creating a national identity as opposed to others. Archaeology was then used to provide an authenticated account of

the continuity between the ancient event of the Roman conquest and the modern place that existed on French soil.

Vercingetorix's defeat of the Romans has become mythologized, and it is perhaps for this reason that France chose the three previously mentioned sites to represent French national identity, something which is not uncommon when nations are creating national identities. The use of mythology in national identity can be good or bad. As Moody (1999:71) writes...

All nations have their myths, which affect their corporate lives and do so most strongly in times of strain or crisis or unresolved conflict. Such myths can be sustaining or destroying, benign or malignant, influences, a stimulus to effort or an encouragement to resignation, a source of harmless amusement or an incitement to malice and hatred – or they can be a mixture of such elements.

Silberman (1990:31-32) writes that in regards to archaeology, the appeal of ancient sites that have associations with mythological stories is the verification of these stories; the sites are physical proof that the stories are true, or at least contain some measure of truth. For example, the appeal of the site of Troy was not the Trojan War, but the discovery that there was truth to the ancient legends. While archaeology cannot provide evidence of some of the more abstract details, such as Helen's beauty, it can show that there was a violent confrontation between the Trojans and the Greeks during the thirteenth century B.C. The Turkish Ministry of Culture built a horse, the most famous symbol of the Trojan War, near the site of Troy to convey the romantic associations of Troy for tourists in a way that the ruined buildings could not (Silberman 1990:32). Silberman (1990:32) writes of Troy, "For here, I eventually came to discover, archaeology was not the handmaiden of history. It was the delivery boy of myth." People look to archaeology to prove the stories that they already know.

Myths are found throughout the world. Myth is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013) as a...

Traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the worldview of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon. Myths relate the events, conditions, and deeds of gods or superhuman beings that are outside ordinary human life and yet basic to it. These events are set in a time altogether different from historical time, often at the beginning of creation or at an early stage of prehistory.

Myths also include sagas and epics and have specific historical settings. Since mythological stories sometimes have real physical settings it should be no surprise that archaeology has been used to attempt to find physical evidence that upholds the stories. Archaeology is often utilized in attempts to authenticate historical narratives and the finding of material remains links together texts, events, and places (Dietler 1998:74). While Silberman (1990:32) writes that archaeology cannot provide us with a particularly imaginative version of history, he is also of the opinion that it can validate the imagination (Silberman 1990:32). For example, archaeology is not able to provide us with proof Macha's race against Conor's chariot, but excavations can tell us whether or not *Emain Macha* was ever used as a dwelling place for elites. This comes back to Silberman's (1990:32) ideas of archaeology being the "delivery boy of myth." Myth is more about the emotion that it elicits, rather than accurate portrayals of history; people want evidence to validate their emotions, and will pick and choose what evidence they acknowledge on that account. Myths can foster a sense of history and connectedness with the ancestors of a nation or with higher beings. They also provoke a sense of excitement and nostalgia.

Eriksen (1993:105) writes that the link between mythology and archaeology becomes more important when a nation-state emerges and has to create a national identity through nationalistic ideologies of continuity with the past. According to Kohl (1998:228) this past can be either real or imagined (Kohl 1998:228). The past and myths of national origins have to be

elaborated on and come from many sources including material remains. Also involved in the creation of national identity is the misremembering or forgetting of the past. History is about memory and bringing the past into the present, but memory is larger and something more than history (O'Keefe 2007:5). Memory includes myth; the things that are a part of the nation and for which there is no physical proof. This lack of proof may be either because these things are real and never happened or because they are thoughts and ideas which take no physical form. Memory and history are part of what makes up a people's heritage which is about people as individuals and groups. It is about their sense of inheritance from the past and to what use they put that inheritance (Robertson 2012:2).

The modern nationalist movement got its start in the nineteenth century. Around the same time the Romantic Movement got its start which linked history and tradition with emotions (Sørensen 1996:33). Many modern European nation-states emerged during this time and set out to prove that they were very old even though they were new (Eriksen 1993:71). Archaeology is sometimes used to assert the rights of a group to live in a certain area – to provide proof (real or imagined) of rights to the land. Masada has been used to assert Israeli ownership of modern-day Israel (Trigger 1984:358; Silberman 1990:87-99). For modern Israelis, it is proof of Israel's sovereignty and the tangible link between Israel's past and present. Most of the visitors to Masada do not come for the purpose of seeing an archaeological site but to be transported back in time to Masada's most important event. The archaeological evidence is regarded as irrefutable proof of the story. The site has mythological significance and so archaeological evidence is interpreted in such a way as to verify this significance.

Dietler (1994:597) writes that, considering that the state controls most of the resources that support archaeological research it is not surprising that archaeology would support national

mythology of identity, meaning the invented traditions of the past. That archaeology should be seen as supporting the stories associated with a particular landscape is politically important because landscapes represent power and control, and those who have power will write the story of the landscape in their own image. Nation-states control land, and in order for their control of the land to be respected, others must believe that history verifies the nation's right to own and control the land it does (Robertson and Hall 2007:33).

The Abuse of Archaeology in Nazi Germany

Archaeological information has also been abused for nationalist purposes. One example of this occurred in Germany under the rule of National Socialist party. Archaeologists during this period used material cultural patterning in the archaeological record to identify ethnic groups. This approach was pioneered by German linguist Gustaf Kossina (Arnold 1997:238).

The National Socialist party appreciated the value of propaganda about the past (Arnold 1992:30). The fact the prehistory had been largely ignored in Germany before 1933, made it that much easier to use prehistory for propaganda purposes. According to archaeological information as presented by Nazi doctrine, Germanic culture originated in northern Europe and was the source of almost every major intellectual and technological achievements of Western civilization (Arnold 1997:247). Bettina Arnold (1997:247) writes, "This perspective was not only ethnocentric, it also supported a genocidally racist agenda."

As mentioned above, archaeologically, the German race was determined by material culture. During the first half of the twentieth century, Germany was considered to be where ever Germanic material culture was found (Arnold 1997:250). This interpretation of material culture

was used as part of an expansionist policy (Arnold 1990:464), and any territory that had been occupied by Germans in the past could be reclaimed (Arnold 1997:250).

One of the ways the prehistoric past was manipulated by the Nazis was through the popularization of prehistoric archaeology (Arnold 1997:247). The public outreach campaign included funding new museums, amateur journals and organizations, documentaries, and financial support for archaeological excavations. Many smaller excavations had the purpose of uniting Germans by involving the public in retrieving and interpreting archaeological remains (Arnold 1990:474). This example of Germany demonstrates how easy it is for archaeological information to be abused.

Archaeology and Nationalism in Ireland

Historians, geographers, and politicians have used archaeological research to construct the Irish past. Gabriel Cooney (1996:146) is quick to point out that nationalism has not only influenced the field of Irish archaeology but has impacted ideas and research within the broader framework of contemporary thought. George Petrie is considered to be the founder of Irish archaeology as a systematic and scientific field (Sheehy 1990:19-20; Raftery 1972:154). Petrie was an antiquarian in nineteenth century Ireland. In 1828, he became a member of the Royal Irish Academy, the academy for the sciences and humanities in Ireland, and in 1829, he was elected to the council. Later, he was commissioned to compile a catalogue for the Royal Irish Academy museum. Petrie was also heavily involved with the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, which, as mentioned above, was a collection of information on geology and natural history. The Ordnance Survey was also dedicated to correcting the spellings of place names in Ireland.

Arguments over the control of landscape are often about the use of names or of language forms in the labeling of the landscape (Strathern and Stewart 2003:231). During this process placenames in Ireland were simplified, standardized, anglicized, transliterated, and translated. Examples of standardization are Drum, Drim, and Drom which were standardized as ‘Drum.’ Andraigh was transliterated to Andrea. *Lis na Mac* which means ‘Fort of the Pigs’ was translated to Swinefort (Smith 2003:79-80). Placenames are important to identity and political control because place names on maps reflect the culturally meaningful landscape; they serve as mnemonic codes for stories and traditions for the local community (Smith 2003:78). When the place names are controlled, the memories of the local community are controlled.

Petrie also studied two of the sites that are incorporated into this thesis: Tara and Newgrange. Petrie was the first to conduct an archaeological survey of Tara (Newman 1997:3). Petrie was the first to link Newgrange to the *Brú na Bóinne*, which, as mentioned in chapter 1, is the mansion of the gods near the Boyne River. Today, the location thought to be the *Brú na Bóinne* is referred to as the Bend of the Boyne, and is located along the River Boyne in County Meath (O’Kelly 1982:35). Even though the *Brú* plays an important role in Irish mythology, the exact location of the *Brú* was not known until Petrie made the connection between Newgrange and the *Brú na Bóinne*. O’Kelly (1982:35) writes that even though Petrie “wrongly attributed the mounds on the Boyne to the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, the mythical semi-divine ancestors of the Gael; the significant thing was that he initiated a new approach to this ancient monument.” Petrie was the first to credit the Irish with building Newgrange.

Today, all known archaeological sites in Ireland are protected as Recorded Monuments (Eogan 2002:477). This means that any and all work at or near the monuments needs prior approval from the Irish Parliament in order to be completed. Archaeology in Ireland is very

urban based; approximately 50 percent of all the excavations carried out in an average year are urban (Eogan 2002:479). Urban archaeology is carried out in an effort to salvage archaeological data before it is destroyed by Urban Renewal projects.

Despite all the archaeological work that is being done in Ireland today, George Eogan (2002:477) writes that archaeology is still not allowed as important a role in Ireland as it should have. He finds this to be strange as “archaeology is an invaluable local resource, a source of pride and cultural value, but also commercial through tourism.” Eogan (2002:477) would like to see further steps taken to protect archaeological resources. Local authorities have the ability to establish a National Monumental Advisory Committee to advise on archaeological protection, but few Local Authorities have created such a committee. Another issue with archaeology in Ireland is that while extensive excavation is being done, there is not a comparable amount of publication (Eogan 2002:484). As of 2002, there are dozens of unpublished excavations.

A part of archaeology’s role in nationalism is to create national symbols. Nationalism claims symbols that are important to the people of the nation and can be used to represent the nation (Eriksen 1993:107). According to Sørensen (1996:41), the selected symbols must be understood and be able to participate in the daily life and reality of the groups represented by said symbols. The three sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort are all symbolic of Ireland. The significance of these sites is discussed and analyzed in chapter four. Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort are important symbols of “Celtic” identity in Ireland. The Irish used ancient archaeological sites to assert the legitimacy of their culture, identity, and nation.

Today, Ireland is considered to be a Celtic country by its inhabitants, but the arrival of the “Celts” in Ireland was not one major event, rather a series of gradual arrivals (de Paor 1986:37;

O'Brien and Harbison 1996:36). The island was completely "Celticized" by the sixth century A.D., meaning that the culture was thought to be predominately "Celtic." Irish was established as the dominant language in Ireland and when native historical records appear. Descriptions of the speakers of Celtic languages can be found in historical texts of both the classical world and in the literature of early Christian Ireland (Dietler 1994:586). The Greeks and the Romans were the first to record anything about the people who lived to their north. While the representations written by these people may not be completely accurate, if it were not for them we would never have heard of the "Celts" at all (Collis 2003:13). Outside of the works of Caesar, there are very few references to the Celts since the classical cultures of the Mediterranean, on the whole, took very little interest in the people they thought of as only barbarians from the North (Chapman 1992:165). According to John Collis (1996:17), when classical authors did refer to the Celts, they used the term in "...the most general way...for the inhabitants of the area west and north of the Mediterranean world." The Greeks and Romans who wrote the ancient descriptions of the Celts would naturally have included their own ethnic biases in their descriptions of other cultures (Collis 2003:14).

Before the nineteenth century, the reconstruction of Celtic customs was based almost entirely on foreign testimony and classical texts (Dietler 1994:585-599). While the Irish refer to themselves as a Celtic people now, it is unlikely that they did so before the nineteenth century (Dietler 1994:585). The Gaelic Revival was the reclaiming of Irish identity. The Gaelic Revival was expressed through literature and politics; it was greatly concerned with Ireland's freedom from Great Britain (Sheehy 1980:95).

Until recently the dominating viewpoint of the "Celts" was that they were, "...one of the great peoples of early Europe. They apparently emerge, from archaeological evidence, in central

and southern Europe, sometime in the first millennium BC and seem to have occupied or invaded the greater part of Europe during the centuries up to the birth of Christ” (Chapman 1992). It is only recently that other theories regarding the Celts and Celtic identity have been put forward by English academics such as Malcolm Chapman (1992), Simon James (1999), Stephen Jones (2001), and John Collis (2003). As these more recent explanations have mainly consisted of the idea that the Celts did not exist, at least not in the form they have always been perceived, there has been a great deal of controversy, name-calling, and figurative hair-pulling within the academic world. Jones (2001:4) criticizes the idea of continental unity by saying “Celtic models are based on the assumption that polities *could* be identical virtually from one end of Europe to another.” The emphasis on the word ‘could’ is important. Here he is pointing out that while the idea of unity is theoretically possible there is no real proof.

It has also been suggested that the Celtic countries of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are not in fact Celtic at all, and that the insular Celts never existed (James 1999:32). Evidence in favor of this argument is the fact that no one in Great Britain or Ireland called themselves a Celt before the eighteenth century (James 1999:17), and no one else, Romans, Greeks, or otherwise, did so either. According to James (1999) and others (Chapman 1992; Collis 2003) the idea and identity of Celts today is largely the result of eighteenth century nationalism in Ireland. Gaelicization and “Celtic” identity are important to the interpretation of the monuments of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. There were several political events that took place at Tara in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which are discussed in chapter four.

The new theory regarding the presence and even the existence of Celts has been a source of controversy within the academic world. One of the issues here as pointed out by Vincent and Ruth Megaw (1997:117) is that by denying the existence of the “Celts” the ethnic identity of

those who claim to be “Celts” today is also denied. They show that Celt deniers are exercising their political power over a particular group. The “Celts” did exist; there were people living in Gaul and the British Isles, who, while they may not have referred to themselves as “Celts,” were real. The Megaws (1997:117) compare the denial of Celtic existence to the genocide and assimilation of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia.

James (1998:205) argues that part of the reason for trying to ditch the old theories is that “it is seen as denying, or at least obscuring, important and interesting differences, and probably identities, amongst the many peoples shoe-horned into the Celtic mould.” The theory of continental unity may result in the application of Celtic identity to people who were not Celtic at all, but it is also possible that the theory that the “Celts” did not exist at all will result in the denial of Celtic identity to those who were Celtic. The argument that the Celts were defined as being the ‘Other’ and therefore did not really exist has a logical flaw. The Megaws (1996:177) point out this flaw when they write that just because the Greeks misunderstood the people on their periphery “does not prove the fictitious nature of the Celts.” The people the Greeks referred to as Celts existed whether the Greeks understood them or not. The Megaws (1997:119) write that to deny the existence of the Celts is to deny a possible past. If a group of people are written off as having not really existed then so is the information we may learn from them.

Typically, it is English academics such as Malcolm Chapman (1992), Simon James (1999), Stephen Jones (2001), and John Collis (2003) who deny the existence of “Celtic” identity. While I have discovered no Irish archaeologist who critiques “Celtic” identity, Irish author, Steven Ellis (1999:165) does have issue with the term “Gaelicization.” Brendan Bradshaw (1999:194) writes that the term Gaelicization “well describes the specific content of the process of acculturation as it occurred in late medieval Ireland.” Steven Ellis (1999:165)

concedes that the term may have some cultural merit, but that after the thirteenth century there appear to be no further significant politico-military developments that justify its use.

The debate surrounding “Celtic” identity began in the mid-1980s (Megaw and Megaw 1996:177) with the argument, as outlined above, that there was no Celtic unity in prehistory, and no continuity of Celtic identity from prehistory to present. In the Megaws (1997:118-119) examination of why the English have begun to deny the “Celtic” identity they point out that the English have the habit of being nationalist in response to minority groups in the United Kingdom. The recent hostility towards the “Celts” seems to have come about in an age of post-Imperial decline; England is now a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious community. There has also been a need to reassess the English identity with the rise of nationalism in Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland and the establishments of parliaments in Wales and Scotland. The Megaws (1997:119) write that if Englishness is no longer safe in Britain, neither is it internationally. This statement is supported by the sovereignty in England with regards to economics, military, and politics being increasingly transferred to the European Union, NATO, and the International Monetary Fund since the 1980s. The English have paralleled this loss of sovereignty by increasing the emphasis of their national past (Megaw and Megaw 1997:119). At the same time that England has had to relinquish some of their sovereign control over economy, military, and politics, they have also had a decreasing influence over “Celtic” nations. The English have responded to this loss of influence by denying the existence of the “Celts” altogether. While the argument presented by English archaeologists in regards to the “Celts” does present a few valid point, the English have overlooked, or chosen to ignore, the power that “Celtic” identity has today.

Identity is hard to determine archaeologically since the people who are being studied are usually dead, and are thus not around to tell us about their own identity. As the Megaws (1996:176) reminds us identity is a “landscape of the mind.” In the case of the Celts, they did not even have their own written language so any written sources about them come from other cultures which may not have understood the Celtic culture either. As noted above, the biases of the observers are often written into these documents, and their view thus affects the view of archaeologists. For many years now, archaeologists have often assumed that the Celts were a great people who controlled much of northern Europe because the Classic sources said that they were. This idea is now beginning to change with the understanding that the Greeks and Romans may have just grouped all the peoples north of them together in an “Us” versus “Them” fashion.

“Celtic” identity has been used for different purposes over the years (Dietler 1994:586). It is complicated by nationalist rivalries that underscore the importance of archaeology to contemporary European identities. The English have used it as a means of classifying “others” due to their prejudice against the Irish and the Scottish. The “Celtic” identity has also been adopted as a concept of ethnic self-identity by the people to whom it was historically applied. This interpretation of identity relies on more positive views of the same stereotypical images than ancient texts depict. Any archaeological research done in the Celtic domain is politically charged, and it is crucial to understand the potential ramifications of this work (Dietler 1994:597). Archaeologists find themselves in the position that they supply both evidence for Celtic tradition, and for the destruction of “Celtic” tradition.

Summary

Ethnicity is a common form of group identity – one which is often used in the creation of nations and nation-states. When nationalists are working to create a national identity it is common for them to base identity in the landscape and the monuments within the landscape that were built by the “ancestors,” that is, the people of who current inhabitants of a landscape claim to be the descendants. The use of ancient landscapes and monuments utilizes the past and creates a sense of continuity with history. The purpose of continuity is to show that the nation is very old and for the people of the nation to feel a sense of pride in the history of their nation. Shared history creates emotional ties between the people of a nation which is necessary for the success of the nation. In order to determine how archaeology and the past are used to construct modern Irish identity I employ a variety of methods which are discussed in the next chapter.

III: METHODS

The three sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort play important roles in Irish mythology as well as politics both today and in the past. The goal of this thesis is to examine how archaeological data from these three sites are used for nationalist purposes. I do this by examining how mythology influences archaeological interpretations as well as how mythology and archaeology are used to construct Irish identity.

In order to complete this project I needed information on the following: ethnicity and identity, nation and nationalism, archaeology and the political use of archaeology as well as monuments and landscape. Ethnicity and identity are central themes of this thesis so it was vital to conduct a thorough study of the two. In my examination of ethnicity and identity, I read from anthropological and sociological sources. Since this thesis is archaeology based, I also looked at identity from an archaeological perspective. It was also necessary to examine “Celtic” and Irish identity in order to effectively study Ireland. Irish “Celtic” identity is one part of overall “Celtic” identity which includes the other “Celtic” nations. The same controversies apply to Irish “Celtic” identity as to “Celtic” identity, and so, in any study of “Celtic” identity the controversy surrounding “Celtic” identity must be examined. I read from each of the different viewpoints on this subject and read critiques of each viewpoint, as well.

Since archaeology is often used by those outside of the profession for nationalist purposes, I next reviewed the literature on nation and nationalism. I researched several case

studies from around the world about the nationalist use of archaeology. Examples I used came from Denmark, Spain, France, Turkey, and Israel, and Iraq. I used these case studies to determine general patterns for archaeology in nationalism. This thesis reviews the nationalist use of archaeology through monuments in the landscape, so I also examined the literature on landscape and monuments.

Landscape is important because it is where memory, identity, and social order are created, re-invented, and changed (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:10-14). Memory stresses continuity in the landscape through the re-use, restoration, and reconstruction. The myths and memories that are associated with the landscape links the landscape to the identity of the people that live in it. Landscape also transmits memory (Bradley 1998:90). Cultures transmit themselves through time by building within the landscape structures that are meant to endure for multiple generations. The artifacts and structures that people leave behind serve to remind those who come later of their presence even if the original creators are gone. Monuments are often used as mnemonic devices (Bradley 1998:162). Ancient monuments are ways of remembering a past that would otherwise have completely disappeared. The three Irish sites of Newgrange, Navan Fort, and the Hill of Tara are all reminders of the ancient Irish past, a past which plays an important role in Irish identity. It is for this reason that the study of these sites is important.

Our understanding of monuments may not be completely flawless, but our interpretation of monuments is dependent on our ability to imagine the social practices in which the monument was created (Barrett 1994:110). People will place more significance on one place than on another due to events that took place there, and people associated with the location (Tilley 1994:24; Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14-15). These places have ritual and symbolic importance, and will create and express socio-cultural identity. Places that have symbolic significance are

what Peter Howard (2011:143-145) refers to as ‘golden places.’ A golden place is an area of the country where the landscape represents the country as a whole to both citizens and foreigners alike. It is easy to discover what the ‘golden places’ are by referencing propaganda and tourist brochures: they will be the ones portrayed most commonly.

Landscape provides a way for people to engage with the world and to create a sense of shared identity (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:15). People create landscapes through their experiences, their work, the places they live, and even through their fantasies (Bender 1993:1). People create these landscapes because they want to belong; they want to fit into their landscape even if their relationship with the landscape is imagined; it is people’s imagination and memory that connect them to landscapes and places (Russell 2008:642). Landscape plays a major role in creating a sense of history and the past; it is populated by ancestral entities, has a place in mythology, and defines social groups (Tilley 1994:67). Monuments preserve the mythological and ritual significance of particular places which helps to stabilize cultural memory of a place. The monuments I examine are filled with meanings that are preserved through myths and stories. All three sites have political significance today, each for different reasons.

In order to discuss the individual significances of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort, I read excavation reports from these sites including the excavations of D.M. Waterman (1997), Conor Newman (1997), and Michael O’Kelly (1982). I also read various other interpretations of these sites from authors such as J.P. Mallory, and Michael Slavin. Since I am examining these sites from an identity perspective rather than a strictly archaeological one, it was necessary to read from sources that examined the emotional and mythological significances of these three sites such as Slavin’s (1996) book on Tara.

After collecting the necessary data I examined the archaeology and mythology of the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. I looked for instances where the archaeological evidence was used to support mythological stories. In my study I refer many times to Silberman's (1990:32) idea of archaeology as the "delivery boy of myth."

Upon establishing the generalities of the nationalist use of archaeology I looked at the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort to determine if the general rules could be applied to these sites. Upon determining that Irish archaeology followed the basic structure for the nationalist use of archaeology at these sites, I examined how each site is specifically used to create Irish identity. The importance of these sites extends beyond their use in the construction of Irish identity, but into other functions as well; they are also representative of the cultural achievements of the ancient Irish and have been used as sites for political rallies and festivals. The political use of the sites of Tara, Navan Fort, and Newgrange will be further discussed in chapter four.

IV: DATA AND ANALYSIS

As stated previously, the three sites chosen for examination in this thesis are Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. In the course of this chapter I discuss the archaeology and mythology of each site. I examine each site in relation to the concepts of identity, nationalism, and landscape and monuments to determine how each site is used in the creation of Irish identity. All three sites play a different role in Irish identity and all have their own significance which will be discussed in the analysis section of each site. Before discussing the three sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort I give a very brief overview of the history of ancient Ireland.

History of Ireland

Early “Celtic” tradition divides Ireland into four distinct regions: Connacht, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster (Figure 8). In many ways, the people of Ireland still acknowledge this division. There is a University of Ulster, and during my time in Ireland I frequently heard the whole of Northern Ireland referred to as Ulster. The other regions are acknowledged as well through the various means including provincial rugby teams (Provincial Rugby 2013).

Cruachain was the capital of Connacht in the west of Ireland, *Dún Ailinne* was the capital of Leinster in the east, and *Emain Macha* was the capital of Ulster in the north. Munster has no defined capital in the written sources from the Middle Ages (Raftery 1994:70-74).



Figure 8: Provinces of Ireland. (Map courtesy of Irish Times)

The stories of ancient Ireland were written in the Middle Ages. These stories are written in a group of books that includes *The Book of Dun Cow*, *The Book of Nuachongbáil*, *The Book of Leinster*, as well as other named and unnamed manuscripts (Raftery 1994:14; Slavin 1996:12-13). The Irish sources, in contrast to the works of Classical authors, do not claim to document historical events or people (Raftery 1994:13). These written documents contain a mix of legend, fables, and folk tradition.

Hill of Tara

When people think of the Hill of Tara, located in Co. Meath (Figure 9) they think of the kings of Ireland, druids, sacred rituals, and St. Patrick (Bhreathnach 1994:94).



Figure 9: Location of Tara (Map courtesy of Reformation.org)

Tara is one of Ireland's most well-known sites, but its fame has more to do with its prominent role in Irish mythology rather than in-depth scientific knowledge (Eogan 1997:ix). Conor Newman (1997:xi), an Irish archaeologist who carried out an excavation at Tara, writes of Tara "myth, politics, and romanticism have contrived for Tara, chief among the great 'royal sites' or Ireland a special place in the Irish national psyche." Michael Slavin (1996:10), and Irish author who lives near Tara and has made the site his life project, describes the importance of Tara as being all things to all people: to the romantic it is the remains of a heroic age, to the historian it is a prize that was fought over in medieval times in an effort to gain political supremacy, and to archaeologists it is a "palimpsest of prehistoric ritual." Slavin (1996:11) further writes "Tara's story is Ireland's story. Tara's symbols are Ireland's symbols – the harp, the shamrock, the ancient gold."

History of Investigation

The first archaeological survey of Tara was done by George Petrie and was published in 1839 (Newman 1997:3-5). Petrie described all of the surviving monuments at Tara and included

scale drawings and measurements. He also produced an idealized map of Tara (Figure 10) in which he included monuments that were no longer visible on the hill. He determined the location of these monuments by reading Medieval sources on Tara referred to collectively as the *dindshenchas*.

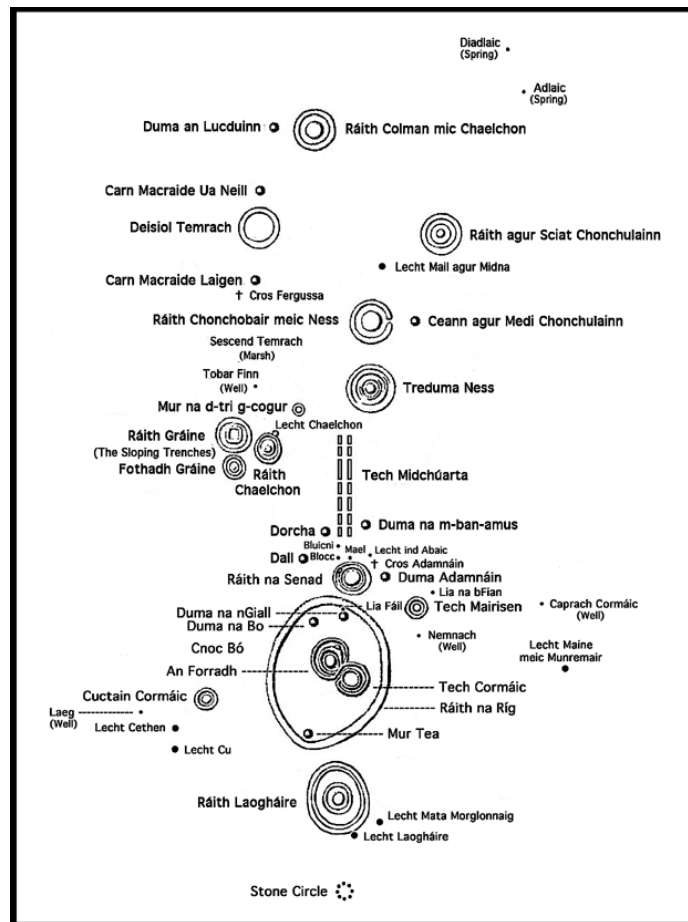


Figure 10: Petri Map of Tara

S.P. Ó Ríordáin conducted the first modern excavation of the site which began in 1953 (Newman 1997:5). Ó Ríordáin carried out excavations at Tara between 1953 and 1956. During his work at Tara he excavated the *Ráith na Senad* and the Mound of the Hostages.

In 1991, the Discovery Programme at Tara was established. The purpose of this program is to add non-invasive techniques to the study of Tara (Ryan 2005:vii). Before Conor Newman

conducted an excavation of Tara (published 1997) a series of topographical, geophysical, and aerial surveys were carried out over the site.

Archaeology of Tara

At Tara, there are remains from over 30 monuments which were constructed over a period of 4000 years, from the middle Neolithic to the early Christian period (Eogan 1997:ix; Newman 1997:225). Excavations show that Tara was an important location in the Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages (Wailes 1982:12). Tara appears to have been a predominately ritual site where the focus was on ceremonial activity and the burial of the dead; it may have been considered to be an entrance to the Otherworld (Eogan 1997:ix). Newman (1997:2) writes that this mostly ritual appearance might be due to the better survival rate of monumental ritual earthworks and “the contrasting difficulty of identifying prehistoric settlement sights on the basis of survey alone.” Tara is said to be a “royal site.” In Ireland, “royal sites...consist of palimpsests of *prehistoric* monuments dating from the Iron Age: in current archaeological parlance they are ‘ritual landscapes’ or ‘ritual complexes’” (Newman 1997:xiv). The continuous development of such sites is indicative of their continuing significance.

The monuments that make up the complex of Tara are located along a ridge about 2000 meters in length and oriented North-South (Newman 1997:1). The oldest monument at Tara is the Mound of the Hostages (Figure 11), referred to by its Irish name, *Duma na Giall*, in Figure 9, which is a passage grave that was constructed in the late 3rd millennium B.C. (Newman 1997:74; O’Brien and Harbison 1996:40). It is located near the summit of Tara Hill, and its name comes from the legendary king Cormac Mac Airt who shall be discussed in further detail later.



Figure 11: the Mound of the Hostages (Photo Courtesy of Knowth.com)

The burial chamber is divided by sill-stones into three compartments, and the floor of each of these compartments is a large, flat slab as shown in Figure 12 (Newman 1997:71-74). The tomb is oriented East-West and the entrance is flanked by two portal stones.

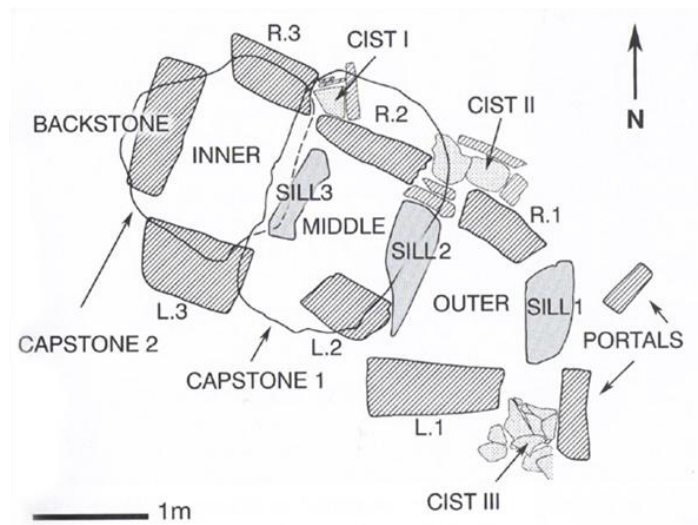


Figure 12: Plan map of Mound of the Hostages. (Courtesy of Ursula Mattenberger)

Within the tomb, undisturbed primary burial deposits of cremated bone survived to a depth of 0.3 meters in the central compartment. The burials were accompanied by pottery, bone pins, pendants, and stone balls. Within the soil mantle covering the cairn of the Mound of the Hostages are the remains of approximately 40 cremated burials from the Bronze Age. There are

also several inhumation burials from the Bronze Age in the chamber of the tomb, but only one in the mantle which is of a 14 or 15 year old boy.

Tech Midchúarta (Figure 13), built sometime between the mid-4th and mid-3rd millennium B.C., is one of the most celebrated monuments in early Irish history.



Figure 13: *Tech Midchúarta* (Photo Courtesy of Anthony Murphy)

The monument now consists of two parallel earthen banks running North-South down the North flank of Tara Hill. Mythological interpretations claim that this monument is the remains of a great banquet hall where feasts were held during festivals such as *Samhain* and *Feis Teamhrach* (Newman 1997:103-104,227). The *Book of Leinster* and the *Yellow Book of Lecan* describe how people were seated by profession (poets, wisemen, musicians, physicians, builders) in the banquet hall. Newman (1997:110) writes that one should be cautious when relying on these medieval sources, but that they do have relevance.

Archaeologically, the orientation of *Tech Midchúarta* suggests that it was meant to be formal approach avenue to the summit of the hill (Newman 1997:227). It is likely that the two banks that make up the monument were originally meant to be identical, but there is now a distinct difference in their appearance (Newman 1997:104). This change in the appearance of the banks is largely due to cultivation ridges that were located near the monument. Also,

quarrying at the North end of the monument has shortened the eastern bank and removed any evidence of how the bank ended there.

The largest enclosure, *Ráith na Ríg* (Figure 14), dominates the Hill of Tara and is thought to have been constructed after the introduction of iron (Newman 1997:2, 67-68, 230).



Figure 14: Aerial view of Tara from the North. *Ráith na Ríg* is the outermost circular enclosure. (Photo Courtesy of Anthony Murphy)

The enclosure is made up of a bank with an internal ditch. This is a trait that it shares with the other “royal” sites of Navan Fort and Knockaulin. There is no evidence of an original entrance into *Ráith na Ríg*, but there are three that appear to have been added later.

Within *Ráith na Ríg* the three most prominent monuments are the *Forrad*, *Tech Cormaic*, and the Mound of the Hostages which were built before the *Ráith na Ríg* (Newman 1997:68). The conjoined earthworks of the *Forrad* and *Tech Cormaic* are the focal points of the complex (Newman 1997:77-83). The *Forrad* is located to the west of *Tech Cormaic* and is one of the more complex monuments at Tara. The *Forrad* is 87 meters in diameter with a central mound that has steep sides and a relatively flat top. *Tech Cormaic* is joined with the south-east quadrant

of the *Forrad* and can be provisionally classified as a ringfort due to its inner fosse and external bank.

Mythology of Tara

Tara is associated with the Iron Age and is one of the great royal sites of proto-historic Ireland (O’Sullivan 2005:5). According to legend, Tara is the seat of the high-king of Ireland, but it is unlikely that any king who ever lived there actually had political control over all of Ireland (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:37).

Written sources such as the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (*The Book of the Taking of Ireland*), *The Book of Leinster*, and *The Book of Ballymote*, all written between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, claim that Tara was inhabited by gods and goddesses and was a sacred location that provided access to the otherworld (Bradley 2002:146). Two deities commonly associated with Tara are Lugh and Medb. In mythology, Lugh is the most powerful Celtic god, ancestor deity of Tara, and the divine manifestation of the kingship of Tara. Medb is the female manifestation of the sovereignty of Tara (Newman 1997:xi).

According to Irish mythology, Medb was the prime goddess of Tara and any who wished to be king had to symbolically marry her by drinking ale or wine that was the symbol of her sovereignty (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:40). The name “Medb” originally meant ‘one who intoxicates’ and was associated with mead (Slavin 1996:29-30). Medb is an important figure in Irish mythology even outside of her role at Tara. In addition to being the goddess of sovereignty at Tara, she appears as the Queen of Connacht, the region in the west of Ireland; she was also a battle goddess, a sex goddess, and the instigator of the *Táin*.

According to myth, the original inhabitants of Tara, or the *Dé Danann* as they were called, left Tara when they were defeated by the Milesians who were the ancestors of the Celtic people (Slavin 1996:22). The *Dé Danann*, did not leave Ireland after their defeat, but rather went to the otherworld which has entrances at Tara, Newgrange, and Loughcrew where they were ruled by the Dagda. Even though the *Dé Danann* were defeated they were not forgotten. The name for Ireland (*Eriú, Eire, Éireann*) comes from the wife of the *Dé Danann* king who led the *Dé Danann* in to battle against the Milesians.

Kingship of Tara

As noted above, in mythology and part of history, Tara is associated with the high-kingship of Ireland, and since Tara is politically regarded as the seat of the High King, holding the kingship at Tara was a pre-requisite to being king of Ireland (Newman1997:xi, 129; Wailes 1982:6). Even though the ‘Roll of Kings’ in the *Book of Leinster* and the *Book of Ballymote* lists over 142 kings ruling at Tara from approximately 1970 B.C. to A.D. 565, and another 40 ruling in the name of Tara after that, there appears to have been no actual high-kingship until the ninth century A.D (Slavin 1996:69). Slavin (1996:72) argues that the list of Tara kings should be regarded as fables which contain an element of truth meaning that there are kings listed that are historical figures. The names of the kings were passed on orally over centuries through the legends and stories of the people who came to Ireland during the last millennium B.C.

While a High-Kingship was established in the ninth century A.D., men were trying long before then to be the High King. The efforts of the provincial kings that tried to obtain the High Kingship were so bad analysts call them ‘High Kings with Opposition’ since they each failed to

achieve their goal of becoming High King (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:108). The reuse of a Neolithic passage grave during the Early Bronze Age suggests that the 'Kings of Tara' attempted to legitimize their claim to the kingship by associating themselves with the burial place of their 'ancestors' which in reality may not have been any such thing (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:37).

A man called Diarmaid is the first Tara king that is generally accepted as historical (Slavin 1996:95). He is recorded as coming to the throne in A.D. 554. While Diarmaid may have been the first, according to Slavin (1996:86) it is Cormac Mac Airt who embodies the mystery and glory of Tara. There are some historians who believe that Cormac Mac Airt was a real person whose rule at Tara was that of a Leinster king. Due to his fame as a man of wisdom and valor he was written into the Uí Néill chronicles. The *Annals of the Four Masters*, written in the seventeenth century, have Cormac Mac Airt recorded as ruling from A.D. 227-266, the *Annals of Innisfallen*, a history of Ireland written between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries by the monks of Innisfallen Abbey, have him taking the throne in 219, and the *Annals of Ulster* write that his rule was during the fourth century instead of the third.

As mentioned above, Cormac Mac Airt was appropriated by the Uí Néill chroniclers. Whether Cormac Mac Airt is a historical figure or not is up for debate, but he was considered to be so by the people of the time. The Uí Néill, are people from the North and midlands of the island, and they traced their descent to Conn-Niall 'of the Nine Hostages' (de Paor 1986:43). The Uí Néill dominated Ireland from approximately A.D. 400 to 1200, and are, according to Slavin (1996:91) the most well-known kings of Tara. As a display of their dominance they seized Tara. In addition to controlling Tara, the Uí Néill wanted 'King of Tara' to mean 'King of Ireland' and they claimed to be the rulers of Ireland as early as the seventh century (Slavin 1996:99).

Despite the claims of the Uí Néill, the king who achieved a true high-kingship was Brian Boru, who was the king of Cashel before he was the king of Tara (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:108; Slavin 1996:113). Brian Boru attacked the Uí Néill king Malachy who surrendered to him in A.D. 1002. Brian Boru fell at the Battle of Contarf in 1014, and his death left the kingship open to different groups who tried to create their own kingdoms which were becoming increasingly feudal. Malachy took over the kingship of Tara once again and ruled there until his own death in 1022. There were no more kings at Tara after the death of Malachy.

Tara and Christianity

In addition to being the seat of the High King of Ireland, Tara also has a Christian history. The purpose of the final construction phase at Tara which took place during the early medieval period may have been to convert *Ráith na Ríg* from a ritual site to a defensive enclosure. Newman (1997:230) argues that the conversion of *Ráith na Ríg* may indicate the arrival of a new order – possibly Christianity. An important theme in the nationalist use of archaeology is the role of a site as a setting for the stories and myths of the nation (Silberman 1990:31-32). One of the most remembered stories of Tara comes from the life of St. Patrick *versus* the pagan king and his druids (Newman 1997:xii).

It is significant that the stories of St. Patrick's confrontation with paganism occur at Tara which was the center of druidism (Slavin 1996:36-37). According to legend, at one point in the seventh century St. Patrick entered the court of Tara he did so through a closed door as Christ did when he came into the dining room. During St. Patrick's confrontation with the chief druid, the druid offered Patrick a cup of poisoned wine, but Patrick blessed the wine and the poison fell out

of it. The triumph of Christianity at Tara further adds to the importance of the site in Irish identity since Catholicism is a major element in Irish identity (Lyons 1999:95-96).

The abandonment of Tara is blamed on the conflict between the Uí Néill and the Christian Church although, Slavin (1996:94) writes “One has the suspicion that much of what is said about this group of kings was fabricated by the Uí Néill themselves...to explain to the people of the ninth and tenth centuries why this sacred home...was then but a deserted, grassed-over hill.” While the exact reason behind the abandonment of Tara may not be known, the generally held historical view is that the role of Tara did change with the arrival of Christianity (O’Sullivan 2005:233). Tara changed from being a symbol of royal power to the focus of cultural memory about the prehistoric and proto-historic past. There is still a presence of Christianity at Tara in the form of a church which is still at the site (Newman and Fenwick 1997:39). The current church, which is dedicated to St. Patrick, was built in 1822, and replaced an earlier church that was built in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Tara after “Abandonment”

Tara has remained an important site throughout history even after it was no longer used as a royal or ritual site (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:40). One of the earlier recorded events took place during the Nine Years War (Slavin 1996:126), in the late sixteenth century, Red Hugh O’Donhnaill, and Irish Earl, used Tara as a rallying ground. The Nine Years War resulted in ‘the Flight of the Earls’ when the Irish chieftains left Ireland for the continent thus marking the end of Gaelic culture and customs in Ireland.

Later, in the seventeenth century, when the Irish and the Catholic Norman-Irish felt threatened by English and Scottish settlers, the two groups formed an alliance (Slavin 1996:126). On December 7, 1641, the Irish and the Norman-Irish gathered at the Hill of Tara to protest against the government. Forms of protests against the English-controlled government would continue at Tara over the next few centuries.

One of the groups to use Tara as a rallying point was the United Irishmen (Slavin 1996:127-128). The United Irishmen formed in Dublin and Belfast in 1791; their goal was to achieve parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. In 1798, a rebellion began. The Meath units of the United Irishmen were to prevent British reinforcements from reaching Dublin. Over the next three days, the action was centered on Navan Road and Dunboyne, Clonee, Dunshaughlin, and Tara. Tara had been selected as a gathering point before the fighting even began. The reasons behind choosing Tara were both strategic and romantic. The hill provides a good view of the surrounding area and is well-situated for cutting off the Dublin-Navan Road as shown in Figure 15.

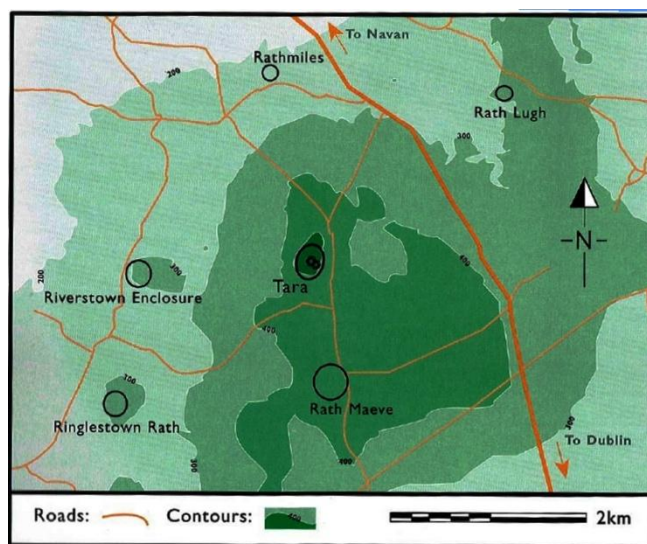


Figure 15: Map showing relation between Tara and Dublin-Navan Road (Map courtesy of TaraWatch)

Tara is also easily defensible due to its existing earthen fortifications. Tara is also a symbol of Irish independence since it is the ancient seat of the Irish High King.

After the Battle of Tara many of the rebels who were killed were buried on the hill (Slavin 1996:130). To mark their graves, the standing stone called *Lia Fáil*, or the Stone of Destiny was moved from its original location near the Mound of the Hostages to Rath Cormac. Later, in 1938, a headstone was erected near the *Lia Fáil*, and in 1948, a Celtic Cross was placed to the west of the Mound of the Hostages. Both these monuments were erected to further commemorate those who died in the battle.

Not every gathering at Tara has been violent. On August 15, 1800, the “Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary” took place at Tara (Slavin 1996:132). This was a peaceful display of sentiment for Irish rule. The gathering is the largest to ever have assembled on the island and was characterized by ceremonial floats and banners. Later, in 1843, Daniel O’Connell used Tara for a political rally (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:40; Slavin 1996:11). During the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tara became the symbol of hope for those who wished to unite Ireland under the banner of the ancient and romanticized “Celtic” past; it became the backdrop for the dreams and messages of the people of Ireland. There were various articles printed about Tara in nationalist newspapers like *The Nation* and *The United Irishmen* (Newman 1997:xii).

Analysis of Tara

The importance of Tara today has more to do with the memory it provides of mythical and romantic Ireland than the archaeological facts of the site. According to O’Keefe (2007:5),

memory is a part of history but it is something larger and deeper than history. Memory has more to do with emotion than facts and its purpose is to bring the past into the present which is the role Tara fulfills today. The past provides a memory of the nation with which members of the nation can identify. Tara plays a role in Irish *habitus*. *Habitus* helps to provoke feelings of identity (Jones 1997:90), and Tara, due to its role in the creation of memory in Ireland aids in the construction of Irish *habitus*.

The memory of Tara extends beyond the time of the Celts. It is from the gods of Tara, the *Tuatha Dé Danann* that Ireland gets its name. The *Tuatha Dé Danann* left Ireland after they were defeated by the Milesians, the pre-Celtic people who came to Ireland (Slavin 1996:22). After their defeat, the *Tuatha Dé Danann* relocated to the otherworld that was ruled by the Dagda and whose home was at Newgrange, one of the other Irish sites that will be examined in this thesis. The name for Ireland, *Eriú*, *Eire*, or *Eireann* comes from the wife of the king of Tara who led the *Tuatha Dé Danann* in battle against the Milesians. She was killed, but the leader of the Milesians promised her that her name would become the island's name and would remain that way forever.

Although Tara was used in the Iron Age, it is remarkable how little Iron Age material has been found at Tara and other royal sites considering that it is during the Iron Age that the literature claims the sites to have been the most important (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:37). There is very little evidence from the Iron Age to the fifth century A.D. with the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. Written sources suggest that Tara was abandoned in the sixth century A.D (Wailes 1982:5). The date of abandonment further suggests that it was Christianity that led to the decline of power at Tara. Tara which had been a center of druidism, the indigenous religion (Slavin 1996:36), would have diminished in power with the arrival of a new dominant

religion. There are some scholars such as Bernard Wailes (1982:5) who hint at the possibility that Christianity may have been a factor in the abandonment of the royal sites, but do not actually claim that it did so. Michael Slavin (1996:117) writes that the royal history of Tara ended when the last Uí Néill king surrendered to Brian Boru who was a Christian. This is one area in which the archaeology appears to verify the mythology: both archaeologists and legends claim that Christianity brought about the end of Ireland's royal sites.

Another area where mythology and archaeology coincide is the *Lia Fáil*, or the Stone of Destiny (Newman 1997:86; Slavin 1996:17-18). The Stone of Destiny (Figure 16) is a phallic-shaped stone that stands at Tara and is said to have chosen the next king of Ireland by crying out whenever the rightful king rode near.



Figure 16: *Lia Fáil* (Photo courtesy of Dave Walsh)

According to mythology, the stone was brought to Ireland by the *Tuatha Dé Danann*. The phallic shape is symbolic of the ritual mating that took place between the king and Goddess of Sovereignty, Medb. Today, the *Lia Fáil* stands near the central mound at Tara where it was

moved from its original location near the Mound of the Hostages in 1824, to mark the graves of those who fell during the Battle of Tara in 1798. While archaeologists cannot confirm whether or not this is the stone that was referred to as the *Lia Fáil*, they can confirm the presence of a standing stone that may have had ritual significance at Tara.

Monuments preserve the significance of specific locations (Tilley 1994:204). Tara was regarded as a place of power in the past, and Tara retains that significance today. It was also home to the woman who gave the island its name (Slavin 1996:22), and so played an important part in the birth of the nation itself. Through all of this Tara has become a metaphor for the nation of Ireland (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996:20). Due to this overwhelming presence of Tara in the lives of the Irish people it is unsurprising that several of the national symbols of Ireland would be associated with this site. Two of Ireland's national symbols that originate at Tara are the *Lia Fáil* and the harp.

As discussed in chapter 2, one of the trends in nationalist archaeology is the use of archaeology to create links between the past and the present. This is often done through the use of symbols (Sørensen 1996:29). By marking the graves of the soldiers who fell in the Battle of Tara in 1798, with the *Lia Fáil*, the ancient past is linked more closely with modern times. According to Dietler (1994: 597), symbols also authenticate national myths. As discussed above, the *Lia Fáil* and the harp are important in Irish myth. The use of these two artifacts as national symbols implies that there is an element of truth surrounding the myths. The presence of the *Lia Fáil* and the harp in the daily lives of Irish people makes the connection between ancient and modern Ireland stronger.

As discussed above, the *Lia Fáil* was brought to Ireland by the *Dé Danann* (Roy 1996:237; Newman 1997:86; Slavin 1996:17-18). Due to its associations with the king of Tara and therefore the High-Kingship, the *Lia Fáil* is a further representation of Ireland's sovereignty. The stone is also a symbol of the fight for Irish freedom. The stone used to stand next to the Mound of the Hostages, but in 1824, it was moved from this original position to mark the graves of those who died during the Battle of Tara in 1798 (Newman 1997:86). This battle, which the British won, was part of the 1798, Irish rebellion against the British.

According to myth, the harp has been a symbol of Ireland for many years, and a symbol of Tara for even longer. The harp was another of the gifts brought to Ireland by the *Dé Danann*. Later on, during the rule of the Uí Néill dynasty, the harp was the symbol of the kingship at Tara. The harp is said to have been on the Irish Arms during the time of Henry VIII during which time the Earl of Northampton, the Deputy Earl Marshall said the reason for the use of the harp symbol was that it resembled the Irish in that it cost more to keep than it was worth (Sheehy 1980:12). During the nineteenth century, the model of the harp that was favored as the symbol of Ireland was the Harp of Brian Boru (Figure 17), the former High King of Ireland.



Figure 17: Brian Boru Harp. (Courtesy of *The Irish Book of Days*)

The harp referred to as the Brian Boru Harp dates from the fifteenth century, and it is probably the oldest intact wire-strung harp frame in existence (Yeats 2006). Since its date of construction is some 400 years after Brian Boru's death, clearly it was not his harp. The harp is intricately ornamented indicating that it was probably made for a member of an important family. The harp is now kept in the library of Trinity College in Dublin. Today, an image of the harp is found on Irish government documents and uniforms. It is also the trademark of Guinness. The harp symbolizes everything Irish from mythology, to the government, to beer. Like a national symbol should, the harp is a part of the daily life of the Irish (Sørensen 1996:41). The symbol of the harp dates back to ancient times and the strength of its association with Tara and Ireland has allowed it to remain a symbol of Ireland to this day.

Tara plays a very significant role in Irish mythology, history, and identity. For some the connection is more personal; the O'Neill family in County Tyrone claims to be descended from Niall Glúndubh, who was the Uí Néill ruler killed in 919 (de Paor 1986: 43). Tara as a location helps to create a sense of history and the past; it is the landscape of the ancestors much like Masada in Israel. Both Masada and Tara provide the people of their countries with a physical

link between the past and the present (Silberman 1990:87-88); and like Masada, visitors come to Tara to hear the famous stories associated with the place. The remains of the monument are the stage for the stories that are told about it. Slavin (1996:11) writes, “Tara’s story is Ireland’s story. Tara’s symbols are Ireland’s symbols.” Tara marks the beginning of Ireland with the battle of the *Dé Danann* and the Milesians from which Ireland gets its name. Tara also marks the end of the “Celtic” way of life with the loss of The Nine Years War which concluded with “the Flight of the Earls” was the end of Gaelic culture in Ireland (Slavin 1997:126).

Tara is an area of Ireland where the landscape is representative of the whole country (Howard 2011:143). Landscape is important to creating a sense of history (Tilley 1994:67). This is especially true of Tara since it was the seat of the High King. Landscapes also represent power and control (Robertson and Hall 2007:33). The representation of power is especially true of Tara since it was the seat of the high king (Wailes 1982:6; O’Brien and Harbison 1996:37). The power that is associated with Tara has been politically significant even in modern times.

Loyalty to the past, whether real or mythical, is important while a nation fights for its independence. The integration of ancient history and contemporary politics gives the impression that the ancient civilization is still a presence in the nation today and that the current citizens are the direct descendents of the ancient people who occupied the land (Berhardsson 2010:61). It is for these reasons that Tara has remained an important part of Ireland’s past even after it ceased to function as a royal site (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:40).

Tara has been a part of many conflicts between the Irish and English rulers. It was the rallying point for Red Hugh Ó Domhnaill during the Nine Years War (Slavin 1996:126). Later, in the seventeenth century, the Irish and the predominantly Catholic Norman-Irish felt threatened

by the protestant English and Scottish settlers. In order to protect themselves from an intolerant government they formed an alliance at Tara on December 7, 1641.

One of the most notable events surrounding Tara was the Battle of Tara in 1798. After the rebellion ended, many of the Irish rebels who were killed were buried at Tara (Slavin 1996:130). Several monuments have been erected in remembrance of their sacrifice including the *Lia Fáil*. Tara is now a symbol for Ireland in more ways than one; it is the mythical and historical seat of the High King which represents the power and sovereignty of Ireland, and it is also representative of the Irish struggle for independence from the British.

In most cases, archaeological sites that are important to nationalism are often associated with events and places. This is also true of Tara, but rather than being of archaeological interest because of an event that took place at the site, as is the case of Masada in Israel (Silberman 1990:87), the important events came later in the life of Tara. Tara was chosen for historical events like the Battle of Tara in 1798, because it was already significant to the Irish people (Slavin 1996:127-128). Tara was already a symbol of Ireland when the Battle of Tara took place. It was because of Tara's already existing significance that Tara became the scene for historical events.

According to Fekri Hassan (1998:201), "the past legitimates because of the aura of sanctity and power it is given by deep psychological processes" especially when rapid changes are occurring such as the rise of nationalism or new political regimes established. It is during times of political change that the past may be especially important, and it was during such times that Tara was used for political events. Tara as the seat of the High King was a symbol of sovereignty of Ireland and its use during the Irish struggle for freedom from English rule has

made it a symbol of Irish independence as well. The wide extent of Tara's significance in Ireland is perhaps what led Conor Newman (1996:10) to describe Tara as "all things to all people."

Tara's significance remains apparent through the use of the site for various events. The druids will often hold celebrations at Tara to mark the summer solstice (RTE.ie 2005). Others are welcome to the celebration of the summer solstice. In the past, Tara had been the center for druidism (Slavin 1996:36), and the activities of present-day druids keep the role of Tara as a ritual center alive in Irish *habitus*.

Various other, one time, events take place at Tara. One event to take place later this year (2013) in September is the Tara High Kings Festival (Tara High Kings Festival 2013). This will be the first time this festival has been held. During the course of the festival a "High King" will be crowned. The festival is meant to be a "family fun day" but has received some serious criticism from several sources. Those who object to the festival claim that the festival is making a "mockery" of their national heritage (The Gathering Ireland 2013). The critics of the Tara High Kings Festival feel that Tara is a sacred place and should be treated with respect.

Newgrange

Newgrange (location shown in Figures 18 and 19) is a megalithic passage tomb that, along with two other major tombs Knowth and Dowth (as well as several satellite tombs), make up the Bend of the Boyne passage grave cemetery (O'Kelly 1982:43, 46-48).



Figure 18: Satellite view of Newgrange (Courtesy of Google Earth)

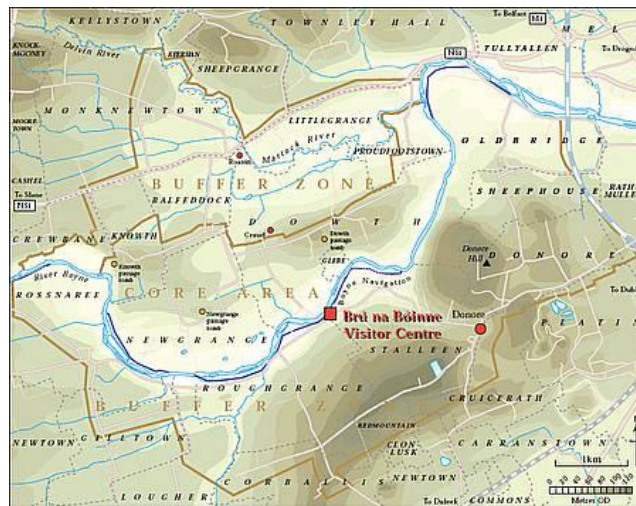


Figure 19: Map of the Boyne Vally (Courtesy of World Heritage Ireland)

The Bend of the Boyne has been equated with the mythological place, the *Brú na Bóinne*; both Newgrange and the *Brú na Bóinne* play a significant role in the mythology of Ireland, as well as in its history. Newgrange is the focal point of the Boyne passage grave cemetery (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:19; O'Kelly 1982:13). Newgrange is on the highest point of a long ridge

approximately 61 meters above sea level and one kilometer north of the River Boyne. The two other major tombs in the cemetery are known as Knowth and Dowth, and from each of these three tombs the other two are visible. Closer to Newgrange are three smaller passage tombs: K and L are to the west of Newgrange while Z is on the east. In this section I discuss the archaeology and mythology of Newgrange.

Early Research at Newgrange

Newgrange is in a part of Ireland that is known as the ‘English Pale’ which is the region in which British rule was most effective (O’Kelly 1982:43-45). The British were most interested in this region because the Boyne valley contains some of the richest land in the country. As a result of this British interest much of the knowledge regarding Gaelic tradition was lost. The last of the Irish annals are known as the *Annals of the Four Masters* which were written between 1632 and 1636; they preserve some of the ancient Irish history. The writers of the annals were a group of Franciscans in Donegal who collected the history of Ireland from available old manuscripts so that later people would read them and understand the lives of the ancient Irish. The *Annals of the Four Masters* is only one early source we have on the *Brú na Bóinne*. The earliest sources that record the *Brú na Bóinne* in its current form are from the late eleventh century, but scholars generally agree that these eleventh century sources derive most of their information from older written sources and even oral tradition.

The first person to study Newgrange was Edward Lhwyd in 1699 (ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1964:30-31, O’Kelly 1982:24). Lhwyd was a Welsh scholar and antiquary who travelled throughout the Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, Brittany, and the Isle of Man observing the

people, their language, antiquities, and environment. He went to Ireland in late August or early September of 1699 where he was welcomed by the members of the Philosophical Society in Dublin. During Lhwyd's time in Ireland he visited Newgrange and recorded what he saw very precisely. Lhwyd's writings on Newgrange are one of the earliest accounts of the site in antiquarian literature.

The second person to study Newgrange was the Irish doctor Sir Thomas Molyneux, Professor of Physick in the University of Dublin whose study of Newgrange was published in 1726 (ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1964:34; O'Kelly 1982:27, 44). At the time, the accepted theory was that the 'Danes' or Normans were responsible for every past achievement of the native Irish. Sir Molyneux was particularly fond of the Norman theory and wrote "A Discourse concerning the Danish Mounts, Forts, and Towers in Ireland" in which he demonstrated to his own and others' satisfaction that almost every above-ground monument, including Newgrange, in Ireland was Danish. He believed that the Danes had built Newgrange in honor of one specific powerful person.

It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Boyne barrows were identified as the *Brú na Bóinne* (ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1964:43). George Petrie was the first to examine Newgrange as an Irish construction rather than the work of the Normans (O'Kelly 1982:35). He criticized Molyneux and others for not giving the ancient Irish credit for their own creations. Petrie was also the one to show that Newgrange and the rest of the Bend of the Boyne resembled the descriptions of the mythological *Brú na Bóinne*. In 1962, Michael O'Kelly began excavating Newgrange with assistance from his wife, Claire (Renfrew 1982:7). Their excavation also included the restoration of the mound and the construction of the quartz façade.

Thanks to the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882, Newgrange and the other Boyne Valley tombs, Knowth and Dowth, were taken into state care (O’Kelly 1982:38, 109). The Board of Public Works became responsible for these sites and in 1890, repairs and conservation measures were taken and were based on archaeological findings and interpretations.

Archaeology of Newgrange

Newgrange is a roughly heart-shaped mound, 36 feet tall and 300 feet in diameter. The burial chamber of Newgrange is cruciform in shape consisting of a passage and chamber with three side chambers as shown in Figure 20 (ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1964:24; O’Kelly 1982:13, 21).

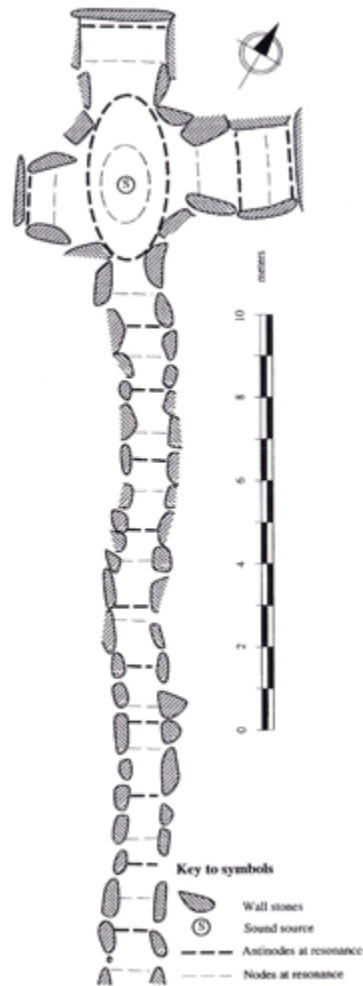


Figure 20: Newgrange Passage tomb layout (Courtesy of R. Jahn, P. Devereux, M. Ibison)

The walls and roof of Newgrange are made up of large slabs and without mortar as are other megalithic passage graves. The tomb is covered by a mound of large, circular, loose stones. The inside of the tomb is not completely level, but rather follows the rise of the hill it is built on; there is a two meter difference in the floor level between the entrance and the chamber. The East recess is the largest of the three and contains the most ornamentation. There are two basin stones in this recess (one placed inside the other) while the other two only have one.

There is also a large decorated stone in front of the entrance (Figure 21). Carbon dates from the site show that Newgrange was constructed in 3100 B.C. This date for constructions

suggests that Newgrange is 500 years older than the Egyptian pyramids and is one of the world's first great works of architecture.



Figure 21: Entrance Stone (Courtesy Knowth.com)

Around the tomb is a circle of standing stones (referred to as the Great Circle) (Figure 22) that is dated to approximately 2000 B.C., 1000 years after the mound of Newgrange was built (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:19; O'Kelly 1982:13, 21-22, 79). The Great Circle is made up of 12 standing stones which are irregularly spaced, except for the three opposite the tombs entrance.



Figure 22: Stones from the Standing Circle at Newgrange (Courtesy of Annaliese Moore)

A completed circle of regularly placed standing stones would consist of 35 to 38 stones. There is little evidence in regards to these missing stones, and the circle may never have been completed.

One of the most interesting features of Newgrange is a structure referred to as the roof-box which is an opening in the roof (Figure 23). O’Kelly (1982:123) proposes several theories as to the purpose this feature may have served.



Figure 23: Roof box; Newgrange (Courtesy of J. Demetrescu)

The roof-box may have originally been meant as an offering place where gifts were left for the spirits of the dead; however, there is no pottery present which is usually the case when offerings are made. The roof-box may have also been a soul-hole which allowed the spirits to travel back and forth when the blocks that covered the opening were removed. There are scratch marks on the floor of the roof-box which shows that the slit of the box had been opened and closed by the movement of the two quartz blocks that covered the entrance. This evidence of the opening and closing of the roof box indicates that the living must have returned to the tomb periodically.

It is through this box that the sun shines on the winter solstice as seen in Figure 24 (de Paor 1986:24; O’Brien and Harbison 1996:15; ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1982:19).



Figure 24: Winter solstice at Newgrange (Courtesy Newgrange.com)

This is, perhaps, the phenomenon for which Newgrange is best known. Just after the sun rises on the days a week before and after the midwinter solstice it shines through the roof-box and illuminates the passage and chamber for a quarter of an hour. The orientation of the tomb to create this effect was deliberate (O’Kelly 1982: 124-125). Visitors to the site might imagine that orienting Newgrange with the winter solstice was difficult, but in reality it did not require any special knowledge. Before the construction of the monument an observer would have to be on the proposed site for a period of time before the solstice to watch for the point of sunrise on the horizon and to make note of its path until it reached the point when the sun began to move back again (O’Kelly 1982:124-125). Once the southernmost point of the sunrise was known a series of pegs could have been placed in the ground to mark the line of the proposed passage and chamber.

The winter solstice is still an important event at Newgrange that thousands of people try every year to see. For each of the five days that the sun illuminates the inner chamber of Newgrange ten people are allowed into the tomb for a total of 50 people each year. Admission to the chamber is done by lottery with local school children choosing the names (Newgrange.com n.d.). In 2012, the total number of people who applied for a place in the

chamber totaled 29,750. This desire to be a part of the winter solstice at Newgrange demonstrates what is, for some people, a desire to fit into the landscape (Russell 2008:642).

There is also a competition for primary school children age ten and older. The winners of this competition are also granted admission to Newgrange on the winter solstice. The activity centered around the winter solstice at Newgrange heavily involves children. This is similar to what has been done in Spain regarding Saguntum and Numantia (Díaz-Andreu 1995:43-45). Children's literature and education are both excellent places to introduce nationalist concepts and narratives. The inclusion of children in the events at Newgrange is important because Newgrange makes up a part of Irish *habitus*. Newgrange aids in the Irish's perception of themselves as an old nation, something for which, according to Sørensen (1996:28) archaeology is commonly used by nationalists. Also, as will be discussed below, it is an example of the level of advancement and achievement of the ancient Irish and so is a source of pride for the Irish people.

Newgrange was discovered in 1699, when the landowner Charles Campbell needed stones; the workers found the entrance to the tomb while they were gathering the needed stones (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:19; O'Kelly 1982:24, 126). The closing stone was no longer in place over the entrance in 1699, but no other interments had been made beyond the original. People had lived around the edge of the collapsed mound during the Late Neolithic period hundreds of years after it had been built, but they left no evidence that they had ever been in the tomb. Michael O'Kelly (1982:126) asks if this apparent lack of interference demonstrates that the tomb's fame as a "House for the Dead" kept it from being violated. While there may be no evidence of burials or interference from later occupations in the tomb, there is evidence of visitors from 1699, onwards.

Mythology of Newgrange and the Brú na Bóinne

Landscapes may both shape and be shaped by the myths associated with them (Cosgrove 1993: 281). This is the case at the tomb of Newgrange and the other monuments along the River Boyne. In the *Brú na Bóinne*, the natural landscape is deeply embedded in mythological understandings of the past and older prehistoric monuments are associated with the supernatural world (O'Brien 2002:165). The supernatural association of these monuments is usually as the dwelling places of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* who legend says were the pre-Celtic race that retreated into the tombs and cairns of Ireland after they were defeated by the Celtic people (O'Brien 2002:165).

According to American journalist, James Roy (1996:230), the tombs along the River Boyne mark a line of time as well as space. They transcend the physical properties of rock, earth, artwork, and shape to become a passageway between humans and the Otherworld. Newgrange combines two of the most obvious metaphors that were incorporated into the mythology of early people – that of high places and the subterranean (Roy 1996:231). It was possible to reach the gods who lived in the heavens through the high places, and the gods of the spiritual world who resided underground could be accessed there.

The *Brú na Bóinne* plays a significant role in the mythology of Ireland, but the location of the *Brú na Bóinne* was not known until George Petrie demonstrated the similarity between the monuments of the *Brú na Bóinne* and the Boyne passage grave cemetery (O'Kelly 1982:43). Over time, there have been many tales, poems, and place lore accounts told that are based in the old oral traditions of the *Brú*. Often, when stories are told and retold they change. Despite the constant changing of the telling of stories in oral tradition the stories often keep a basic, ancient

theme which can be detected regardless of the date of telling. Two such themes are detectable in the stories of the *Brú na Bóinne* (O’Kelly 1982:45). The first of these two repeating concepts is that the *Brú* is the dwelling place of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, and the second being that the *Brú* is the burial place of the kings of Tara.

The themes of the mythological stories about the *Brú na Bóinne* show that the *Brú na Bóinne* was not just a burial place, but also a living space that could be entered and exited at will (O’Kelly 1982:45-46). The myths make it very clear that those who lived in the *Brú na Bóinne* were of the supernatural order. The idea that the *Brú na Bóinne* was considered by the ancient Irish to be a dwelling place is also seen in its name which comes from the Old Irish *Brug* and means ‘abode, hall, mansion, or castle.’ Newgrange in particular was thought to be the dwelling place of the gods having long been associated with the Dagda, the chief of the pre-Celtic gods, and his son Oengus (O’Kelly 1982:25, 123, 127). Irish names for Newgrange are *AnBrug*, *Brug*, *Oengusa*, *Sid in Broga*, and others which all refer to the place as the mansion of Oengus.

In addition to the mythological stories associated with Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne, there are also stories with historical context associated with the site. There is some historical value to the legend of Tara’s kings being buried at Newgrange before the arrival of Christianity in the fifth century A.D (O’Kelly 1982:46). Before being buried at Newgrange, the kings of Tara were buried at *Cruachin*, the royal site in the west of Ireland; but, according to legend, the wife of one of the kings of Tara was of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and she wanted to be buried at the *Brú*. O’Kelly (1982:46) views this story as a rewriting of old tradition by Uí Néill ‘historians’ to further legitimize the Uí Néill, the then ruling dynasty at Tara. The rewriting of the history of Newgrange would make the Uí Néill dynasty seem greater and more powerful.

Significance of Newgrange

O’Kelly (1982:47) argues that the tombs may have been built to demonstrate respect for the gods as well as to house the dead. There is no archaeological evidence to suggest that this is not the case. O’Kelly (1982:126) argues that the orientation of Newgrange towards the rising sun of the winter solstice suggests that it represents yearly visits by the Dagda who is traditionally a sun-god. He also writes that further proof that Newgrange was considered to be a House for the dead and not just a burial place is the effort the builders went to keep the inside dry (O’Kelly 1982:126). A house for the dead would need to be long lasting, and so Newgrange was built of stones so that it would last forever. The importance of the permanence of Newgrange is also evident in the lack of evidence for houses of the living nearby (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:15).

Analysis of Newgrange

In Irish mythology, Newgrange is the home of the Irish gods. While it is common for nationalist archaeology to focus on sites that are the setting for the myths of the nation, the archaeological work at Newgrange does not focus on the mythology of the site the way it does at Tara and Navan Fort, because the mythology of Newgrange is not the primary reason for the tomb’s importance today. Today Newgrange’s importance lies more in its archaeology and what the tomb represents in terms of the achievements of the ancient Irish people.

As discussed earlier, one of the trends for the nationalist use of archaeology is to create a link between the past and the present. Modern nations do this by placing the emphasis on the people, their history, and cultural achievements (Wicker 1997:29). Newgrange is the focal point

of the *Brú na Bóinne* (O’Kelly 1982:13) and one of Ireland’s (and Europe’s) most well-known prehistoric monuments (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:15). Newgrange is one Ireland’s cultural achievements and representative of the whole country (Howard 2011:143-145). It is through propaganda and tourist information that the modern importance of Newgrange can be determined.

As stated previously, carbon dating at Newgrange suggests that the site is older than the pyramids in Egypt (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:19). O’Brien and Harbison (1996:18) also compare Newgrange to the Egyptian pyramids by writing that both are man-made mounds with a passage leading to a burial chamber; however, the pyramids are made for one person while Newgrange was a communal tomb. The comparison of Newgrange to the pyramids is an indication of the cultural importance of Newgrange. By Comparing Newgrange with one of the most well-known architectural achievements of the ancient world, Newgrange is now associated with the pyramids. People learning about Newgrange and the ancient Irish now think of them in the same terms of ancient achievements as the Egyptians.

Comparing the pyramids to Newgrange is a way of demonstrating the age of Newgrange and thus the age of the Irish nation. I have discussed earlier that the past is used to make the nation appear ancient (Sørensen 1996:28). As can be seen from the example of Newgrange and the Egyptian pyramids that past does not always have to be a nation’s own past; they may use another nation’s past as comparison. This example also demonstrates the lengths nations will go to in order to appear old (Eriksen 1993:71).

Many people, such as tourists, experience the past through interpretations given by visitors’ centers and museums (McManus 1997:93). Sandra Scham (2010:96) argues that the

purpose of biblical archaeology in Israel that is sponsored by the government and institutions is to create and own pilgrimage sites which lead to profit and prestige. There are comparisons to be made here with Ireland: Newgrange is one of Ireland's premier tourist attractions (Cooney 2006:706), and tourism means profits. Newgrange is well-known for its orientation towards the mid-winter solstice (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:15), for its megalithic art (O'Riordáin and Daniel 1964:51) and for its white quartz façade (Cooney 2006:706). These all make Newgrange a desirable tourist location which brings money and tourists to Ireland.

Memory is an important part of Newgrange, as well. Memory stresses continuity in landscapes, often through re-use, reinterpretation, or restoration and reconstruction (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14). The reconstruction of Newgrange was done by the Office of Public Works in Ireland and was based on archaeological finds and interpretations (O'Kelly 1982:109).

One of the theories regarding the original construction of Newgrange is that it was covered in white quartz (Figure 25), much like the pyramids of Egypt (ÓRíordáin and Daniel 1964:19). When Newgrange was reconstructed it was done so with a quartz façade.

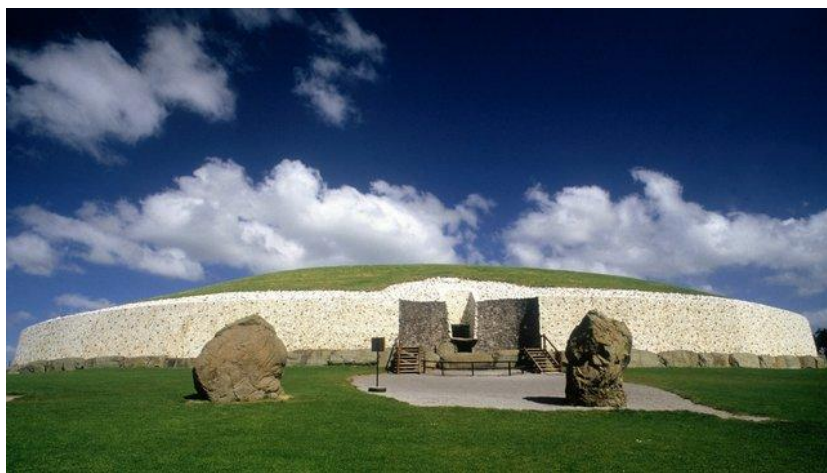


Figure 25: View of façade at Newgrange (Courtesy Richard Dowling)

There is some doubt as to whether the quartz really acted as a façade on the face of the mound (Cooney 2006:704). There is some archaeological evidence for the quartz as a façade, but there is also support for the quartz as a platform on the ground near the tomb entrance. It seems unlikely that the quartz would have been able to stay long on a vertical wall before the settling of the mound caused it to fall from the wall (Meighan et. al 2002:34). It is possible that the quartz was put up as a short term display and not meant to be a permanent feature (Cooney 2006:704). The façade is well known internationally as evidenced by the fact that Newgrange is Ireland's premier tourist attraction and the establishment of the *Brú na Bóinne* as an international heritage site in 1993.

As Cooney (2006:706) writes: the striking characteristic of the façade means that it stands out in photos and is iconic in itself. It is the exterior and permanently accessible counterpart of the lighting of the inside of the tomb at midwinter. The quartz façade is also partially responsible for Newgrange's international fame and status as a 'must-see' in Ireland as well as the *Brú na Bóinne's* listing as a World Heritage Site. Whatever doubts may exist about whether or not the quartz façade is an original feature, the reconstruction is not likely to be changed. The façade is the most visible feature of the monument and has resulted in tourists and money for Ireland.

The Irish people who had seen Newgrange before the reconstruction was done did not like it afterwards (O'Kelly 1982:115); they said that it looked too new and modern, and that before the reconstruction it had looked 'so romantic.' The issue here, I believe, is memory. Landscape plays a major role in creating a sense of memory (Tilley 1994:67) and the monuments that are built within the landscape act as mnemonic devices (Bradley 1998:162). The 'new' Newgrange looked 'younger,' the reconstruction of the tomb felt to those who had seen it before,

as though the past was being erased. The older and more worn version of Newgrange had been there for as long as anyone could remember, it reminded people that it was old and had been there since long before they were born. The reconstructed version felt like a new construction, one that had not existed before in their lifetimes but did now.

Newgrange is used by the Irish to claim ‘bragging rights’ in terms of cultural achievement. By taking pride in Newgrange, the Irish people are taking pride in their ancestors. According to Silberman (1990:2) taking pride in the ancestors is equivalent to taking pride in the nation. During the semester I spent in Ireland as an undergraduate I heard many of my Irish friends refer to the tomb as the ‘Irish Stonehenge.’ Newgrange is proof that the ancient Irish were a well-developed culture that was capable of building massive monuments that would last for thousands of years and stand tall in a crowded world of civilized ancients.

Navan Fort

Early Irish literature has been used to identify major centers of political or religious power from the Iron Age including Navan Fort which has been identified as the mythical regional capital of Ulster in the north of Ireland as shown in Figure 26 (Mallory 1984:68). While Navan Fort is considered to be the location of *Emain Macha* there is evidence that *Emain Macha* comprised a greater area than Navan Fort.



Figure 26: Location of Navan Fort (Courtesy of Saints and Stones)

The name Navan Fort is also somewhat misleading – the site was most likely constructed for ritual purposes rather than as a defensive fort (Lynn, Flanagan, and Waterman 1997:1). I present the evidence for Navan Fort as a religious center later in this chapter.

Location and Date of Navan Fort

There has been little debate as to whether or not Navan Fort is the *Emain Macha* of legend; the correlation between the two has not come under question due in part to the similarities between the Irish and Anglicized forms of the name, *Emain* and Navan, respectively (Wailes 1982:8). The location of *Emain Macha* is not specified in literature, but descriptions of *Emain Macha* match Navan Fort. For example, *Emain Macha* is located near Armagh, or where Armagh would later be established (Figures 27) (Lynn, Flanagan, and Waterman:1997:7-8).

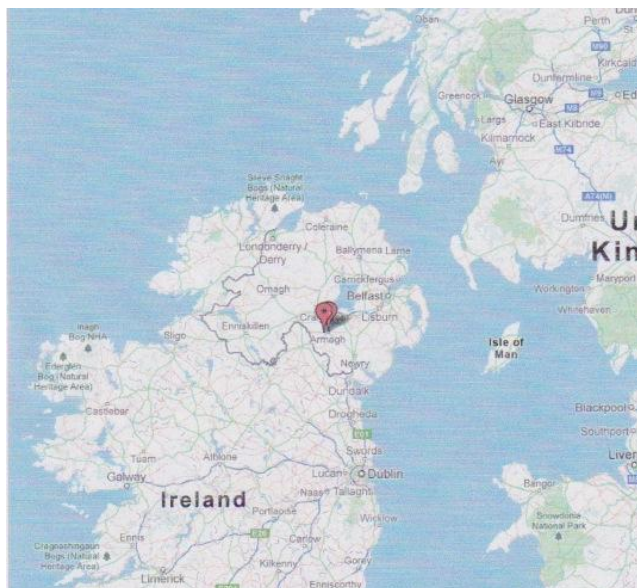


Figure 27: Location of Navan Fort and Armagh City (Courtesy of Google Maps)

In the tale of *Bricriu's Feast*, from the *Ulster Cycle*, CúChulainn traveled southeast from *Emain Macha* to *Ard Macha*. The *Annals of Innisfallen*, also give evidence that *Emain Macha* is close to Armagh City in County Armagh in Northern Ireland (Figure 27). The annals record in the year A.D. 1005 that Brian Boru went to *Ard Macha* (Armagh) and camped at *Emain Macha*. The *Táin* also supports the claim that Navan Fort is *Emain Macha* with a passage in which CúChulainn brags about swimming in the River Callan in *Emain* which is a river between Navan Fort and Armagh.

While literary tradition has managed to be at least consistent, if not precise, on the location of *Emain Macha*, it is inconsistent on the subject of the date of occupation of *Emain Macha* (Mallory 1997:199-200). The *Annals of the Four Masters* put the date of the founding of *Emain Macha* at approximately 668 B.C. The *Annals of Clonmacnoise* records the founding at 450 B.C., and the *Annals of Tigernach* lists it as 307 B.C. There are also annals which place the founding of *Emain Macha* in the fourth century B.C. in order to synchronize the founding of *Emain Macha* with the establishment of Alexander's empire. Archaeologists date activity at the

location of Navan Fort as ranging between the Neolithic (Wailes 1982:9) and the first century B.C. (Lynn 1997:210).

Archaeology and History

Navan Fort was excavated in the years between 1961 and 1971, by Irish archaeologist, Dudley Waterman (Lynn 1997:v). The site of Navan Fort (Figure 28) is a circular bank enclosure around 4.9 ha of hilltop.



Figure 28: View of Navan Fort (Courtesy of Northern Ireland Tourist Board)

It should be noted that the bank is on the outside of the ditch; this is an unusual arrangement since most hillforts have the bank on the inside of the ditch (Wailes 1982:8). Inside the enclosure are two earthworks: Site A and Site B as shown in Figure 29.



Figure 29: Aerial view of Navan Fort. Site B is the mound inside the large enclosure. Site A is located above Site B in the photograph. (Courtesy of Christopher Lynn)

Site A is a ring-fort approximately 19.5 meters in diameter that was occupied during the Early Iron Age and the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. (Lynn 1997:144). Site B is unusual and has thus been of greater interest to archaeologists (Wailes 1982:9) and will be discussed in greater detail below.

The annals set the foundation of *Emain Macha* earlier than that of Tara (Mallory 1997:197). Archaeologically, the site of Navan Fort indicates considerable continuity between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age; evidence shows that a series of round houses were built on the same spot over a period of 600 years (Mallory 1984:67; O'Brien and Harbison 1996:36). There has been other activity at Navan Fort (Lynn 1997:209-210; Wailes 1982:9-10); during the Neolithic period, plowing took place at Site B. The plowing preceded the first residential period at the site during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age. The original settlement consisted of a series of round-houses enclosed by a shallow ditch within which was a ring of timber uprights. Later, once the original defenses had disappeared, each house had its own fenced enclosure. The residential phase of the site was replaced by what is known as the "Forty Meter Structure." This

building was made up of five concentric circles of timber posts broken by a passage leading to the middle from the outside. At the center of the building stood a single, large post. Evidence suggests that once this final period of occupation at Site B ended that the only other activity at Navan Fort was a second period of occupation at Site A.

Bernard Wailes (1982:20-21) argues that this lack of activity is evidence that *Emain Macha* was not actually a major royal center. Wailes further argues that the identification of *Emain Macha* as a royal residence may be the result of later misunderstandings of the original purpose of the site. He writes that there is no evidence of high-status residential use of the site that is contemporary with the pagan religion, and that the most impressive phase of Navan Fort appears to have been entirely ritual in purpose.

In contrast to Bernard Wailes, both Christopher Lynn (1997) and J.P. Mallory (1997) argue that there is evidence for high status residence at *Emain Macha*. Lynn (1997:211) cites the discovery of the skull and mandible of a Barbary ape dating from the second century B.C. as evidence that the occupants of *Emain Macha* were of high status and that there could have been contact between *Emain Macha* and the Mediterranean region. Mallory (1997:201) writes that the fact the Ulaidh, the people of Ulster, lived in this area by the second century B.C. and that many of the physical features of *Emain Macha* are paralleled only at other royal sites such as Tara and Knockaulin adds up to the reasonable conclusion that *Emain Macha* was a regional capital during the Iron Age. Lynn (1997) and Mallory (1997) both offer interpretations of the site that are compatible with common understanding of the place. This common understanding of Navan Fort is closely tied to the role the site plays in Irish identity. Mallory and McNeil (1986:22) write that Navan Fort is the Irish Camelot. The mythology of *Emain Macha* is ingrained in

Irish understanding of Navan Fort to such an extent, that one would expect “evidence” to be “found” to support the myth.

The Forty Meter Structure

There were several periods of occupation and construction at Navan Fort, but perhaps the best known is that of the Forty Meter Structure (Figure 30).



Figure 30: Artist's rendering of the Forty Meter Structure

The Forty Meter Structure was built after the end of the residential period of the site sometime around the first century B.C. and appears to have been used for ritual purposes (Wailes 1982:9). Dendrochronology dates the center post of the structure as having last grown in 95 B.C. Shortly after its construction the structure was destroyed by fire and then covered with a mound (Wailes 1982:9; Lynn 1997:210).

Lynn offers several possible explanations as to the purpose of this building: including being a palace, a meeting-house, a temple for congregational worship, or a place of

entertainment but he (Lynn 1997:224) argues that none of these are likely and writes that there is no 'practical' explanation of the Forty Meter Structure. This latest structure at Site B appears to have been only ritual; even without excavation, this enclosure was interpreted as a prehistoric earth-work built for ritual purpose (Lynn, Flanagan, and Waterman 1997:1; Wailes 1982:9-10). This interpretation is consistent with early literary tradition which associated pre-Christian events and personalities with Navan Fort.

It is likely that the Forty Meter Structure had a very brief life; archaeological evidence shows no significant difference between the construction and destruction of the building (Lynn 1997:211-224). Further evidence in the construction of this building indicates that it was not intended for long-term use: as the primary uprights began to sink into the ground with the weight of the structure a second set up uprights were inserted beside each one of the first set. This secondary set of uprights was augmented using the exact same technique as the first suggesting that initial construction and reinforcement were done at the same time. Other evidence that the building was intended to be temporary is the leveling of the floor, in that there are no signs that there was any attempt to level the floor. Lynn (1997:225) argues that the lack of levelling suggests that the Forty Meter Structure was not intended for internal use. Lynn (1997:225) supports his theory by noting that no activity ever took place in the interior of the building.

Shortly after the Forty Meter Structure was built it was deliberately burnt in what was, presumably, a ritual destruction (Lynn 1997; Wailes 1982:9). The stories in the Ulster Cycle do not satisfactory account for why the site was destroyed (Mallory 1997:206); there are several different versions as to why the site was burnt and these will be discussed later.

Historical Interpretations of Navan Fort

As has been mentioned previously, the site of Navan Fort (*Emain Macha*) has long been identified as the headquarters of the Ulaidh, the group of people believed to have dominated northern Ireland in the later part of the prehistoric period (Lynn, Flanagan, and Waterman 1997:1). *Emain Macha* is represented in both genealogical and annalistic material as the capital of the Ulaidh, but the dates and events recorded in these sources are more from pseudo-history or legend. Mallory (1997:199-200) points out that it is questionable whether or not *Emain Macha* has the royal history mythology records. Some of this doubt comes from the fact that none of the early Ulster kings can be demonstrated to be actual historical figures. Nevertheless, the belief that the kings of Ulster ruled from *Emain Macha* is, and was, widespread. In 819, the Ulaid attempted to regain control in the vicinity of what they considered to be their former capital. Regardless of whether or not *Emain Macha* was the physical capital of Ulster, it was at least perceived as such by the Ulaid of the Early Christian period of Ireland.

Even if *Emain Macha* was not the ruling center of the Ulaidh, it is possible that it functioned as a royal inauguration site and that it retained its symbolic connection with the validation of sovereignty (Lynn 1997:211). The retaining of symbolic value even after *Emain Macha* had ceased to function as a royal site is suggested by visits from figures such as Brian Boru, king of Tara, in 1005, and Muichertach ua Brian in 1103 (Lynn 1997:211).

Whether there is any historical basis for the legends of *Emain Macha* or not, the legends have been used for political purposes. In the eleventh century, it was thought that *Emain Macha* did not fall until A.D. 450. This later date of abandonment was used to support the idea that Armagh was chosen to be St. Patrick's ecclesiastical center in order to be close to a powerful location (de Paor 1986:56; Mallory 1997:200). Much of the evidence, both literary and

archaeological, as presented in this section suggests that *Emain Macha* was no longer a center of power at the time of St. Patrick's founding of the church. Evidence of the real date of abandonment of *Emain Macha*, Wailes (1982:21) writes greatly weakens the theory that the power of *Emain Macha* was the reason St. Patrick selected Armagh as his ecclesiastical center. In 1374, Niall Ó Néill attempted to further his political standing by building a house at *Emain Macha* and associating himself with the ancient capital of Ulster (Ó hUiginn 1992:30). Navan Fort has seen other, more recent, political use which is discussed later.

Mythology of *Emain Macha*

The mythology of Navan Fort is contained in what is known as the *Ulster Cycle*. The *Ulster Cycle* dominates early Irish literary tradition (Ó hUiginn 1992:29) and is made up of approximately 80 tales that were written down between the seventh and fourteenth centuries and is set in the period between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50. The *Ulster Cycle* describes a heroic society, and most of the tales focus on the Ulstermen who in the Middle Ages were held up as the paragons of military virtue (Mallory 1997:202, O'Brien and Harbison 1996:37).

The *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, or *The Cattle Raid of Cooley* is a centerpiece of the *Ulster Cycle* (Ó hUiginn 1992:29). The *Táin* is supposedly set in the prehistoric period, but it reflects the politics and propaganda of early historic Ireland (Cooney 1999:61). The *Táin* and the rest of the *Ulster Cycle* takes place at *Emain Macha*, which is also the seat of Coner MacNesa, the legendary king of the Ulstermen (de Paor 1986:42; O'Brien and Harbison 1996:38).

Kelly (1992:76) writes that *tána* or *Táin* types of stories are a reflection of the social practices of the Irish, Celtic, and Indo-European peoples, and that these types of stories are found

among cattle-raising people in other parts of the world as well. For the Irish a successful cattle raid was an assertion of the integrity of the tribal community and proof of a leader's claim over his people. While the *Táin* and other stories of the Ulster Cycle may not be a record of actual historical events or people, most scholars do agree that they contain a genuine representation of the type of warfare that led to the downfall of Ulster and the destruction of *Emain Macha* (Ó hUiginn 1992: 33).

Archaeology versus Mythology at Navan Fort

There have been several authors such as Mallory and Ruairí Ó hUiginn who have specifically written about the relationship between mythology and archaeology at Navan Fort. One of the main goals of archaeological excavation at Navan Fort was to see if and to what extent the archaeological results were compatible with the common perception of the place as a regional capital during the Iron Age (Lynn, Flanagan, and Waterman 1997:1). This goal was somewhat difficult as most of the descriptions of *Emain Macha* are too vague to be matched with archaeological evidence or are unlikely to be archaeologically visible (Mallory 1992:121), but Navan Fort is so deeply associated with *Emain Macha* that the comparison was considered important.

Mallory (1997:197) argues that medieval references and literature on *Emain Macha* sometimes they seem to offer “implausibly accurate correlations” (Mallory 1997:197). One instance of ‘archaeological’ reality not quite matching literature relates to the size of the multi-ring structure: evidence shows that the structure is forty meters in diameter but one of the Ulster ‘heroic’ tales describes a structure that is the size of ‘nine score and 15 feet’ or, 59 meters.

Mallory (1997:64) argues that details such as the size of the large building at Navan Fort relate to the medieval period when they were written down rather than the pagan period which they describe. Mallory advocates that the Forty Meter Structure and the one described as (nine score and 15 feet) are the same building. His argument is that the people of the medieval period misremembered the details regarding *Emain Macha*. This seems highly unlikely since there is no evidence of the building ever being used for anything other than ritual purposes and that it only stood for a short period of time. The comparison between the Forty Meter Structure and the house from legend seems to be an attempt to further link Navan Fort and *Emain Macha*; the evidence linking these two structures is flimsy at best.

Sometimes literature and archaeology describe the same artifacts but attribute these artifacts to different time periods. In regards to the *Táin*, where literary description corresponds to archaeological evidence, the artifacts are almost always from the Early Medieval period despite the fact that the *Táin* supposedly describes prehistoric Ireland. Mallory (1992:151) writes that as far as the archaeologist is concerned the primary question is whether the ‘world’ described in the *Táin* reflects the Iron Age that it claims to have recorded or whether it reflects the Early Medieval period during which it was written. Ó hUiginn (1992:53) writes that this apparent time disparity means the archaeological evidence in support of the *Táin* is highly suspect.

Two of the problems with evidence for the historical validity of the *Táin* are the time period and the function of the site (Ó hUiginn 1992:53). As mentioned above, the material evidence belongs to the seventh through tenth centuries rather than the Iron Age when the *Táin* supposedly takes place. Functionally, in the *Táin*, *Emain Macha* is the location of the court of

the Conchobar, the king of Ulster, but appears it to have been a religious center rather than a royal one.

Analysis of Navan Fort

It is possible that the interpretation of Navan Fort as a royal residence is merely the result of a misunderstanding of the original use of the site; it is also possible that the residential areas may have been outside the enclosure (Wailes 1982:21). What is more likely is that Navan Fort is a prehistoric monument that had its current meaning and value attached to it later to “further socio-political aspirations and legitimate authority” (Mallory 1997:200). There is no denying that Navan Fort is an impressive monument and it is entirely possible that a greater significance was given to it than it originally had in order to further the political standing of one group or person over another. It is also possible that Navan Fort was used as an inauguration site for the Ulstermen and that it simply maintained its symbolic connection with the validation of sovereignty (Lynn 1997:211). Later, medieval kings may have used prehistoric sites as their own inauguration sites to create a legitimate association with ancestral territorial markers and to give the appearance of sustaining the role of the divine in kingship (Newman 1998:130).

Even though there is no definitive proof that the kings of Ulster actually existed the power of the legend of Ulster is strong (Mallory 1997:199-200). In 819, the Ulaids, who had previously lost their power, tried to reclaim their position by regaining control of *Emain Macha*. Whether or not *Emain Macha* was, in fact, the physical capital of Ulster, it was perceived to be so by the Ulaids of the early Christian period. The persistence of the legends of *Emain Macha* demonstrates a desire of the people to fit into the landscape even if that relationship is imagined.

Memory and imagination play important roles in the connection of people to the landscapes they inhabit (Russell 2008:642). Stories such as those in the *Ulster Cycle* provide the people of Ireland with memories of ancient Ireland with which they can identify. The site of Navan Fort is a physical location to that provides authentication for the stories.

Legends and narratives, such as the Ulster Cycle, are important to identity because they describe the world, and the history of that world, in which people live (Tilley 1994:32). The myths of *Emain Macha* make up part of the Irish *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). The myths of *Emain Macha* are part of Irish history and, if people have a historical link to the landscape they are more likely to want to protect that landscape, and the Irish people do want to protect Navan Fort. Navan Fort serves as an *aide-mémoire* for the history of Ireland (Bradley 1998:162). The site of Navan Fort is a vital part of Irish identity because, like Troy, it is viewed as evidence that there is some element of truth to the ancient legends (Silberman 1990:31).

Evidence of the importance of *Emain Macha* can be seen in the planning of an event to take place on May 6, 2013 (Armagh.co.uk n.d.). The Spring Festival will be a “family fun” type of event. The purpose of the Spring Festival is to teach attendees about the Beltane Festival and the Mythology of Spring. Other events will include watching traditional food making, playing ancient sports, and the reading of stories from the *Ulster Cycle* by bards. The Spring Festival will close with purification fires and closing celebrations. While the Spring Festival is an income opportunity for the site of Navan Fort, it does demonstrate the importance of the site in Irish heritage. Events in the Spring Festival are meant to demonstrate the lives of the ancient Irish and to connect with the ancient Irish religion by celebrating the Beltane Festival and learning the beliefs behind the festival. This festival demonstrates the role Navan Fort plays in Irish *habitus* and Irish memory. The Irish consider themselves to be a “Celtic” people (de Paor

1986:37) and by recreating on the festivals the Irish “Celts” would have celebrated they are reconnecting with their “Celtic” past.

I would argue that it is also important due to its location in Northern Ireland, an area that is part of the United Kingdom. Navan Fort is an Irish site which provides United Kingdom-controlled land with an Irish identity. Navan Fort was the capital of Ulster in mythology, which is important in present day because the north of Ireland is still referred to as Ulster. Navan Fort provides a tangible link to the ancient past and the present for Northern Ireland following one of the themes for the nationalist use of archaeology. It is a distinctly Irish site in an area where people’s identity is split between British and Irish. Bender (2003:2) writes that context is important when interpreting landscape. The memory Navan Fort provides also serves as a reminder of when Northern Ireland was united and not divided up along political and religious boundaries. The division of Northern Ireland will be discussed in further detail below.

Despite the inability of archeologists to provide definitive proof that Navan Fort is *Emain Macha*, the assumption that Navan Fort is *Emain Macha* has never been questioned (Wailes 1982:8). This assumption is potentially problematic in that it demonstrates that the interest is to prove the myth rather than take an unbiased approach to one of Ireland’s largest prehistoric monuments. This interest in myth brings to mind Silberman’s (1990:32) idea that archaeology acts as the “delivery boy of myth.” People are looking to the archaeology of Navan Fort to confirm their mythology. They have already decided upon the results and are now looking for the evidence to authenticate those results.

Part of the interest in using different literary sources to find Iron Age sites in Ireland is because they are difficult to identify otherwise (Lynn 1997:220). There are a few sites from the

Iron Age that were centers of regional and religious importance that are mentioned in written texts, and it is these sites that have been excavated. The appeal of Navan Fort to the Irish people is the “discovery” of the “truth” of the legends and stories of ancient Ireland rather than the archaeology itself much as the case with Troy (Silberman 1990:31). When Troy was discovered, the Turkish people were not as interested in the Trojan War as they were in physical proof that the Trojan War had happened in a similar way as described in the *Illiad* (Silberman 1990:31). The interest in both Troy and Navan Fort is their roles as the settings of the stories associated with them. The appeal lies in the proof of what we think we know rather than in new information.

Politically, Navan Fort is somewhat unique among the three sites discussed in this thesis. It is not only a source of Irish identity but of Northern Irish identity. According to Mallory and McNeill (1986:22), Navan Fort is the focus of a distinct Ulster identity, and it is for this reason that the site was used for a festival in 1985, that promoted the creation of a common identity in Northern Ireland.

According to Gür (2010:76), “Archaeology, because of its integral relationship to both land and culture, plays a special role in bridging the national territory and the imagined past of the nation.” Groups of people will often share a vision of how the world should be structured in terms of names, metaphors, and symbols (Mulk and Bayliss-Smith 1999:369). Those that do so share a cultural identity. When considering identity, one must keep in mind that identity is made primarily with reference to the “Other;” that every ‘We’ generates a ‘They’ (Wicker 1997:22; Robertson and Hall 2007:34). These ideas of identity are important when considering Northern Ireland in terms of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as Protestants and Catholics. Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom while the rest of the island makes

up the Republic of Ireland. Religious beliefs follow a similar division. Unionists, those who wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom, tend to be protestant, while Nationalists, those who support a united Ireland, tend to be Catholic. Another important concept is that of borders. Borders divide people both in terms of territory owned by nations or by communities (Wicker 1997:22). Borders may physically exist or they may only be in people's minds. In the past, new cultures have entered Ireland from the north making the north of Ireland a distinct region of group of regions.

On occasion, Navan Fort has helped to bring the different groups of Northern Ireland together in support of a common cause. One such occasion occurred in 1985, when a company that was to guide the development of the *Emain Macha*/Navan Fort complex was criticized when a prepared location for a visitors' center was next to an archaeologically sensitive area. There was wide-spread media coverage of the controversy about interpretive centers and the importance of Ireland's heritage and how it should be managed (McManus 1997:95).

Another incident occurred in 1985, when large-scale quarrying caused devastating effects on Navan Fort (Figure 31) (Mallory and McNeill 1986:22).



Figure 31: Quarry at Navan Fort 1969 (Courtesy of Christopher Lynn)

There had been a functional limestone quarry near Navan Fort for over 150 years. The quarry expanded in the 1970s, and tried to expand again in 1985 (Lynn 2003: 64). In order to prevent the further destruction of Navan Fort, the people of Ireland came together in a campaign to help preserve the site (Mallory and McNeill 1986:22). What made this campaign so special was that it brought together the Catholics and the Protestants, two groups between which there are typically tensions. In an effort to prevent any further damage to Navan Fort, these two groups were able to recognize a common cultural heritage and work together to save that heritage. In May 1986, the Minister for the Environment, Richard Weedham, announced that the Department for the Environment had denied the application to expand the quarry (Lynn 2003:64).

According to John Agnew (2011:37), national identities are based on the creation of ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1991). The people in these communities will not know most of their co-members, but the idea that they are all part of the same community brings them together. One way in which these ‘imagined communities’ are brought together is through a common heritage which is a sense of inheritance from the past. Navan Fort is a physical

representation of the common heritage of Northern Ireland and it has served to bring the people of Northern Ireland together.

V: CONCLUSION

Archaeology and the interpretation, as well as manipulation, of monuments has played a key role in the creation of national identities across the world. Ireland is an excellent place to carry out a study on the interplay between of archaeology and identity due to its mythological landscapes and mythical traditions. In my thesis I examine the archaeology and mythology of three archaeological sites: Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. The role of mythology in Irish identity means that certain mythological sites, such as Tara and Navan Fort, have been used for political events. The mythology of Ireland plays a key role in Irish *habitus*, so it was unsurprising that the archaeological evidence from the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort would be used in some way to “prove” the mythology. It is my goal in this thesis to determine to what extent this is happening for each site. Below I give a summary of the conclusions to which I have arrived in the course of writing this thesis.

Summary

Each nation state has to create its own identity, but, like matter, tradition cannot be created out of thin air (Kohl 1998:223-233). New cultural traditions have to come from old cultural traditions, or new interpretations of past traditions. The various sources for tradition can include material remains from earlier cultures or ancient texts. The process of creating new

traditions and myth-making is crucial to cultural identity heritage; myths tell stories of the world around us (Selby 2010: 42).

Myth and Landscape

All nations have myths. These myths affect the lives of the members of the nation, and do most so during times of crisis or conflict (Moody 1999:71) such as during the Gaelic Revival in Ireland. Myths can have a variety of affects on societies; they can encourage development or discrimination. The Trojan War was referred to as the first great war waged by the Greeks as a nation; this interpretation of the war was an early source of Greek patriotism (Silberman 1990:32).

Myth-making is important to the creation of cultural heritage (Selby 2010:42). Landscape is useful to this endeavor because embedded within the landscape is a mythological interpretation of the past and prehistoric monuments will come to be associated with the supernatural (O'Brien 2002:165). Landscape and myth are intertwined; myths both shape and are shaped by the landscape (Cosgrove 1993:281). The myths of the nation may also be shaped by the landscape (Cosgrove 1993:281). Landscape plays a major role in myths and history due to the perceived presence of ancestral entities and also because the landscape is the setting for many of the stories and events that take place in mythology and in the past (Tilley 1994:67). The landscape is the most accessible and shared *aide-mémoire* of a culture's past, present due simply to the fact that people live within the landscape (Küchler 1993:85). Landscape is particularly important in Ireland because, as the Irish nationalists have argued since the nineteenth century,

Irish identity is rooted in the Irish landscape (O’Sullivan 2001:87). The Irish sense of place is seen as strong and timeless, drawn from a tradition of landscape appreciation and lore.

Stories are created about the landscape because people want to fit into their landscape, even if that relationship is imaginary (Russell 2008:642). In order to preserve the memory of the landscape; people maintain certain places that have ritual, symbolic, or ceremonial meaning or importance (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:14-15). These maintained locations help to create and express cultural identity.

Memory and History

One of the ways in which people preserve memory in the land is to build monuments. The presence of monuments in the landscape preserves the connections between people and the land (Tilley 1994:67, 202-204). Monuments also keep myths and rituals from being forgotten as well as stabilizing cultural memory of the place in which they were built. History is about memory, but memory is more than history (O’Keefe 2007:5). Memory encompasses myth which is sometimes told in narrative form like the *Táin*. The use of narrative is a means of understanding and describing the world in which people live; it links together places, people, and events (Tilley 1994:32). Myths describe the “Celts” as a heroic society ruled by chiefs (de Paor 1986:33). It is myths that originally told the stories of the three sites under study in this thesis.

The integration of ancient history and modern political concerns conveys the message that the remnants of an ancient civilization are still alive in the modern nation; the current citizens are direct descendents of those who came before (Berhardsson 2010:61). The purpose of the past is to make the nation seem very old and timeless (Sørensen 1996:28). This use of the

past plays on the concept of the nation as being a natural phenomenon meaning that the nation appears to occur naturally rather than being the conscious creation of the members of the nation.

A history that is suitable for nationalist purposes will make use of anything symbolic or with a mythical meaning for maximum impact (Smiles 1996:6). The symbols most suitable for nationalist use will be important to the people of the nation; those who work to further the nationalist agenda will argue that these symbols represent the nation as a whole (Eriksen 1993:107). Nationalist symbols will be understood by many people and will be participants in the daily life of the groups which the symbols aim to represent (Sørensen 1996:41).

Archaeology and Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort

The nation should be seen as having existed for a large portion of recorded history, but should also be seen as having existed outside of history meaning that it should seem eternal and unaffected by time. Myths may not come with dates attached, but material finds in archaeology can be dated. It is in this way that archaeology is the “delivery boy of myth” (Silberman 1990:32). Myths are used to create national identities and myths of national origin come from a variety of sources including material sources. It is therefore no surprise that archaeological evidence is often used to “authenticate the narrative of historical drama” (Dietler 1998:74). Also, considering that the state controls most means of production for archaeological research that archaeology will support a nation’s national mythologies of identity (Dietler 1994:597).

Tara is more famous due to its mythological (and historical) role as the seat of the High King of Ireland than as its role as an archaeological site (Eogan 1997:ix; Newman 1997:xi). The “Roll of Kings” in the *Book of Leinster* and *Book of Ballymote* is thought to be mostly legend,

but there are kings that are thought to have actually existed, Diarmaid being the first (Slavin 1997:69,72,95).

There is some archaeological evidence to suggest that those who built Newgrange thought of it as the home of the gods (O’Kelly 1982:47). One example of such evidence is the roof box. There are several interpretations for the roof box and one of them is that the roof box lets in the sun at midwinter for the yearly visit of the sun gods at the *Brú na Bóinne*. O’Kelly (1982:47) writes that the fact that the roof box lets in the sun could be in reference to the fact that the Dagda is traditional a sun-god.

For mythological sites archaeologists often seek to determine if the site matches people’s perceptions of it (Lynn, Flanagan, Waterman 1997:1). Such is the case with Navan Fort. The *Táin* supposedly has a prehistoric setting, but it appears to depict the political life of early historic Ireland (Cooney 1999:61). Despite all these differences between archaeological reality and mythology, the identification of Navan Fort as *Emain Macha* has never been questioned (Wailes 1982:8). Various explanations have been given for these incongruities. Wailes (1982:21) writes that the interpretation of *Emain Macha* as a royal site may just be a misunderstanding of the site’s original purpose. Mallory (1997:200) writes that a possible reality of *Emain Macha* is that of a site that was given its significance later in attempt by a person or a group attempting to further their political standing at a later point in time; medieval kings may have used *Emain Macha* and other prehistoric sites as inauguration sites to add a sense of legitimacy to their rule and to associate themselves with ancestral territorial markers (Newman 1998:130).

Discussion

In the end, archaeological evidence is not always the most important thing when it comes to modern perceptions of archaeological sites. The appeal of sites with mythological stories associated with them is their mythological status. Just as the appeal of Troy is not the war but the discovery of the truth of ancient legends (Silberman 1990:31-32), the appeal of *Emain Macha* is the story of the *Táin* and the appeal of Tara is its role as the seat of the High King. This is in keeping with the trends of nationalist archaeology as discussed in chapter 2. For many sites with mythological meaning attached to them, archaeology is a stage for the stories that took place there. The use of archaeology as a backdrop to mythology can have some drawbacks. Finds may be taken as evidence of the proof of the legend just because they are from the same time period as the legend's supposed setting or because they were found in the right place. The mere presence of artifacts may be interpreted as meaning that the legends happened without taking into consideration the analysis of the artifacts found. There are benefits as well. For those who do not specialize in archaeology or other related fields, the archaeology adds a sense of authenticity to the site and their stories (Dietler 1994:598). This feeling is often impervious to the criticism of scholars.

The three examined sites are representative of Ireland to citizens and foreigners alike (Howard 2011:143). As discussed, these sites all have important roles in the mythology of Ireland. All nations have myths (Moody 1999:71), and the already existing myths of Ireland helped to create modern Irish identity, a process that was vital during the Gaelic Revival. When the Irish began to create their own identity they, like other nations, based their identity in history and the mythology was part of the history that they used.

During the nineteenth century a sense of national identity began to spread across Ireland, the Irish began to desire political freedom from British rule. At this time the Irish began to see themselves as ethnically different from the English (Sheehy 1980:7) and began to describe themselves as Celts (Dietler 1994:585). Claiming “Celtic” identity was their way of creating an ethnic identity in opposition to the English ethnicity (Lucy 2005:95).

The nineteenth century was a time to restore Ireland’s self-respect by emphasizing the great achievement of the ancient past (Sheehy 1980:7). Ancient achievements include the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort. These are all sites that have great stories told about them and are seen as places of power: Tara was the seat of the High King (Newman 1997:xi), Newgrange was the home of the Dagda (O’Kelly 1982:25) and one of the world’s first great architectural feats (O’Brien and Harbison 1996:19); Navan Fort was the capital of Ulster (Mallory 1984:68).

Sørensen (1996:29) writes, “The past is commonly assigned the ability to characterize or represent the nation and national identities.” Archaeology is often used to help accomplish this (Kohl 1998:226). In order to preserve identities founded in the past, people will attempt to conserve the material environments of the past (Claval 2007:87). This has been the case of the site of Navan Fort in Northern Ireland. Navan Fort and *Emain Macha* is, as had been said some, including Mallory and McNeill (1986:22), the Camelot of Ireland – it is the stage of some of the most famous mythological stories of Ireland (Ó hUiginn 1992:29). Due to the status and fame of Navan Fort the site has been used to unite the different political and religious groups in Northern Ireland whether on purpose such as the cultural festival in 1985, or by accident such as the events that led to the protests to prevent the destruction of the site through quarrying.

Tara has also been used to preserve the national identity of Ireland. The most recent political use to which Tara and the symbols associated with it have been put is placing the harp on government documents and uniforms (Sheehy 1980:12). In the past Tara was used as the site for rebellions (Slavin 1997:128) and peaceful political rallies (Slavin 1997:132). The above discussed examples are ways that Tara is used to link the past to the present in Ireland.

Newgrange is political important to Ireland in a slightly different way than the sites of Tara and Navan Fort. Unlike the other two sites, the mythology of Newgrange is not that important today. Rather, the age and architectural features of the tomb are what have the greatest significance. The tomb is very old, even older than the pyramids (O'Brien and Harbison 1996:19) and so the construction of the tomb is considered to be one of the great cultural achievements of the ancient Irish. The age of the tomb as well as the orientation of Newgrange towards the winter solstice and the quartz façade have made Newgrange a tourist destination which brings money into Ireland. Newgrange is a commodity for Ireland as well as a tie to the nation's ancient past.

These three sites make up part of Irish *habitus*. The Irish identify themselves as a "Celtic" people (de Paor 1986:37) which they reaffirm through events at the sites. Every year, Druids celebrate the summer solstice at Tara (RTE.ie 2005). This event is not just for the druids; anyone may attend. Also, every year thousands of people compete for a place in the chamber of Newgrange to watch the rising of the sun of the winter solstice (Newgrange.com 2013). These yearly events as well as others once-occurring events reconnect the Irish people with their "Celtic" past and further illustrate the importance of the myths of places like Tara and Navan Fort in Irish identity.

Future Research

There are several directions that future research in relation to the work presented in this thesis could take. The first of these is the addition of ethnographic research. One of the main topics dealt with in this thesis is modern Irish identity. In her work in Spain, Díaz-Andreu (1995), writes of places important to Spanish national memory being included in children's literature. I would like to review children's literature in Ireland to see if and how the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort are represented. I think that it would also be beneficial to examine school curriculums to see how the history of these three sites is taught to children.

In keeping with ethnographic research I would also like to talk with foreign tourists in Ireland who visit the three sites discussed in this thesis. I refer several times to Howard's (2011:143) ideas of 'golden places,' that is, sites that serve to represent the nation to both natives and foreigners. I believe it would be beneficial to the understanding of foreigners' perceptions of Ireland and Irish archaeology. Information to include in a study like this would include how the tourists heard about the sites and why they chose to visit them.

Earlier in chapter two I discussed the controversial topic of "Celtic" identity. As mentioned above, it has typically been the English who have opposed "Celtic" identity in English language literature. There are people who consider themselves to be "Celtic," and, according to the Megaws (1997:117), to deny the existence of a group that exists in present day is comparable to genocide. Further research into the topic of Irish identity should perhaps include how the English perceive modern Irish identity and how the English have interpreted

Irish monuments. This work could be carried further into the examination of Scottish and Welsh identities.

Closing Thoughts

While writing this thesis, I was able to determine the level of significance the mythology of the three sites have today, or do not have today as the case may be. I was further able to examine how mythology and archaeology were linked together and how mythology and archaeology have been used for political purposes. While the site of Newgrange does play a significant role in the mythology of Ireland, the mythology of Newgrange is not so important today. Rather, Newgrange is important for archaeological reasons and what Newgrange means in terms of tourism and income for Ireland. The mythology of Tara and Navan Fort is still significant today and it is the significance of the mythology that has led to the sites' use for political purpose.

While the three sites examined here have been subject to extensive study in the past they have not been examined in terms of national use of the mythology and archaeology of these sites to construct Irish identity. The purpose of this thesis has not been to add to the existing archaeological knowledge of these sites but to rather examine the interpretation of them. It adds to the local knowledge of the areas where these sites are located, as well as to the overall understanding of the construction of Irish identity. On a much larger scale this thesis is an additional case study on the relationship between nationalism and archaeology across the world. The work presented here is an addition to an already existing body of knowledge. What has been done here further strengthens that previous work.

As illustrated by previous case studies, and has been reaffirmed by this study of Ireland, nationalist archaeology links the past to the present and often focuses on sites that are the settings for the myths and stories of the nation. Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort provide a connection of Ireland's "Celtic" past through the celebrations of pagan festivals such as the winter (Newgrange.com 2013) and summer (RTE.ie 2005) solstices and events focusing on the shared identity of the Irish people through festivals like the ones that have been held at Navan Fort (Mallory and McNeil 1986: 22). The myths of Tara and Navan Fort are still greatly important today as demonstrated through festivals at both these locations focusing on the mythological stories. Two such events will take place after the completion of this thesis (Armagh.co.uk n.d.; Tara High Kings Festival 2013). Another common focus of national archaeology is locations where important events took place or places associated with important people. Tara demonstrates that the already existing significance of a place may be the reason important events happen in such a location. This is the case of the Battle of Tara in 1798. The Battle of Tara is an important event in the Irish's struggle to gain freedom from the English. The Battle occurred at Tara because, among other reasons, Tara was supposedly the seat of the High King (Slavin 1996:127-128).

In the course of writing this thesis I have discovered that while the Irish respect their archaeological history, the myths and legends associated with the sites of Tara, Newgrange, and Navan Fort are just as important, if not more so, in the creation of Irish identity. Archaeological sites and monuments act as the setting for history and myth; they also provide evidence of the achievements of early ancestral cultures. While it is fun to look at archaeological data to see if that data in any way corroborates mythology, those who do so must be careful not to let the stories overcome the facts.

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