

The Devil's Warriors and the Light of the Sun:
Contextualising *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*

Master's thesis in Celtic Studies

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Introduction:

A historical and contextual reading of a voyage tale

My first encounter with *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* was in Máire Ní Mhaonaigh's article "Literary Manifestations of 12th Century Reform"¹ where she highlights the theological agenda of reform that appears to be mirrored in the tale. Viewing texts in relation to their historical background may make them more meaningful as well as give us new perspectives on the time of their composition.

In his article "Subversion at Sea"², Clancy argues warmly for more historical and contextual readings of the *immrama* – as much of the works done on voyage literature has been focused on "peeling off" the layer of Christianity to unveil remnants of pagan beliefs. As Clancy points out, however, the later *immrama* carry every sign of being written by Christians, for Christians and about Christians. As a consequence they would appear to tell us more about the medieval authors' beliefs and thoughts of religion and society, which may be coloured by a milieu where certain traditions of ancient times formed part of their cultural memory, but still were Christian at the core.

Dating of the tale:

The earliest extant version is found in the Book of Fermoy, written in the 15th century³. The mention of the tale in a list found in Book of Leinster tells us a version of it existed by 1160, the year of the book's compilation⁴. Breatnach has pointed out the prominent role of Tuaim, which may be regarded as a Connacht church center in the tale. This would suggest the extant tale was composed post-1152, when Tuaim was granted the status of archbishopric of the

¹ In *Reform and Renewal: Ireland and Twelfth-century Reform* (2006)

² In *The Otherworld Voyage* (Wooding ed.) 2000

³ RIA MS 23 E 29 (1134) pp.169-78

⁴ McCana 1980:43

province⁵. Breatnach also suggests the extant tale is a reworking of an earlier narrative, in which the Uí Chorra were clerics – possibly the bishop, priest and deacon mentioned in the voyage part of the extant tale. The extant opening section, or frame story, he believes is a later addition.

I will relate my interpretation to the 12th century, as it appears the church reforms may have had an impact on the tale in its extant form.

The later *immrama*, *Immram Máel Dúin*, *Immram Snédgus 7 Mac Riagla* and *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* all seem to show great attention to place names. Clancy has demonstrated by his interpretation of *Immram Snédgus 7 Mac Riagla* that the later voyage tales may be literary fables of political and social situations and that the locations may give insight to the parties involved in these⁶. He has further demonstrated how the narrative may have been reworked and adjusted as the external situations changed – a phenomenon not unknown from hagiographical literature.

We may expect that similar interpretations could be made for other voyage tales with extensive name-dropping. In *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*, an extensive travel route is drawn up. Starting at a hostel in an unknown quarter of Connacht, the brothers travel to Tuaim. Their mother's father is at Clochar. After a visit there, the brothers journey to Clonard. On their first restoration tour they are back in Tuaim and travel through Connacht once more. After a return to in Clonard they go on a second restoration tour to Cenn Mara. They go on their voyage from Cenn Mara, and spend forty days at sea where they visit a number of islands. The voyage continues to Britain, Spain, Rome and arguably home to Ireland again. It is likely that the names must have had a particular significance to the authors and their contemporary audience.

In this thesis I will focus on the 12th century events, influences and agendas which may be connected to the tale, based on the assumption that though some themes may be of an early origin they are employed in order to say something about the authors' present.

⁵ "Transmission and Structure" p.107

⁶ "Subversion at Sea" pp 212-225

1. Preludes to a Voyage

1.1 The frame story of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*

The frame story of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* (ICUC), the introductory narrative explaining the background for the voyage may be summed up as following:

Conall Derg, a hosteller of Connacht and his wife Cáerderg have no heir, as all their children die immediately after birth. Sadness over this causes the couple to make communion with the Devil, in the hope he will give them a successor. Cáerderg thereafter gives birth to three sons. They are born during the night and are given the names Lochán, Énna and Silvester. They grow up and excel in many arts, but when they learn of their diabolical origin they decide to make war on the Church on behalf of their lord, the Devil. They bring great destruction to the churches of Connacht. Remembering that they have not yet killed their mother's father, who is the erenagh of the church of Clochar, they set out to perform this deed for their lord. They go to Clochar, where the erenagh, though suspecting their intentions, receives his grandsons with every kind of hospitality. The night of the intended murder, Lochán receives a vision where he is taken to see Hell and Heaven, which causes him to renounce the Devil. Hearing this, his brothers decide to follow his example. Reassured by the erenagh that God will accept their repentance, they go together to Clonard, where they spend a year in the tutelage of St Findén. Wishing to do penance for the destruction they wrought, Findén sends them on a restoration tour of Connacht. They return, having rebuilt everything but the church of Commán in Cenn Mara. Findén sends them out anew to Cenn Mara. Here they rebuild as well as build a church on their own heritage. Standing by the shore, the brothers are enticed by the sight of the sun setting in the ocean and decide to embark on a voyage.

The situation depicted here share several aspects with the frame story of *Immram Máel Dúin*, (IMD) which may be summed up as following⁷:

A warrior's brief encounter with a nun results in the birth of Máel Dúin. The nun sends her son to fosterage by the Queen, who is a friend of hers. The boy is raised with the queen's three sons as if he were a fourth. He grows up and excels in many arts, causing jealous peers to insult him by revealing he in fact is of unknown kin. Learning of his true parentage from the queen, Máel Dúin sets out to find his fatherland and estate. Upon reaching Thomond, he sees the scorched remains of the church that was burned upon the body of his father. A 'poisoned-tongued' man of the church community urges him to avenge his father's murder and in pursuit of this revenge, he sets out to sea.

The frame story of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* seem to be written in a similar environment as the one of *Immram Máel Dúin* with references to warfare and marauders and where we find the Church as the counterpoint to the violence. In both tales, evil appears to be likened to violence. Dual potential for good and evil is inherent within the lead characters. When they learn of their true origin, the conflict is set – the Uí Chorra and Máel Dúin, respectively, set out to bring destruction to the enemies of their recently introduced 'father figure'.

Seen in relation to each other, the tales could be seen as two points of view on the same situation, in the same society. Máel Dúin is at first a victim of the acts of the marauders, as a son bereaved of his father. The loss initiates further violence. In ICUC, however, we see the situation from the viewpoint of the marauders. Here the author explains the origin of the evil as a consequence of men once turning to the Devil for quick and easy solutions. Through this device, the violence takes on cosmic proportions. The marauders are actually fighting for the Devil, deliberately and forcefully. Violence is not just a sad consequence of mundane affairs and societal customs, when traced back to its origin we find the Devil as the true source.

1.2 Heathen ways

The importance of securing successor is emphasised by the hosteller using seemingly extreme methods in order to have children. The use of the heathen baptism indicates the couple are resorting to pre-Christian traditions. The petitioning of the Devil for an heir mixed with heathen baptism indicates that the author equals employment of a Pagan deity with devil

⁷ *Immram Máel Dúin* (Oskamp ed.) 1970:100-107

worship. In the early centuries of Christianity in Ireland, it seems likely that a gap between the Christian communities and those outside them was inevitable.

Using pagan rituals in order to produce heirs is known from *Cóir Anmann*⁸. Under the entry of Conall Cernach it is told that the wife of Amairgein Iargiunnach had difficulty conceiving and bore no children. A druid sold his help to her, and after spells and incantation over a well she became pregnant by drinking water from this well. The deal has a catch, however, which entails that the boy will be an enemy of his mother's people, i.e. the Connachta. After the birth, druids come to baptise the boy into paganism. They chant the ceremony over the boy wherein they foresay that he will kill more than half of the Connachta. As Stokes⁹ notes in connection to the heathen baptism, the narration of Conall Cernach's origin appears an obvious parallel to the baptism of the Uí Chorra brothers. Heathen or, in the eyes of the Church, ungodly circumstances surrounding the conception result in offspring who destroys the mother's kin. In the case of Conall Cernach's mother, this is Connacht, but in the case of Cáerderg, mother of the Uí Chorra, this could be seen as the Church. Being the daughter of an erenagh she could be perceived as a daughter of the Church.

The connection between pagan customs surrounding childbirth and destructive behaviour could stem from a time when there was a gap between the earliest Christian communities and those outside them.

1.3 The Devil's warriors

The Devil's warriors appear to have parallels in the real world of the early Irish church.

IMD refers to the murderers of Máel Dúin's father as *díbercaig*. The murder bears sign of being a ritual by the burning of a church upon the slain. In ICUC we find the same modus operandi employed by the Uí Chorra – the slaying of clerics and subsequent burning of the clerics' churches upon them. The destruction of both the church and its administrator may be a literary memory of the troubles of the early churches in pagan surroundings.

In relation to the Uí Chorra's parents petitioning the Devil for successors, Stokes mentions a group called *díberga*, known for their devotion to the Devil. Members of this group showed this devotion by putting certain marks on their heads¹⁰. Elaborating on the subject of *díberga*, Richard Sharpe writes that the mark signified a vow to kill. A passage from the *Vita prima S. Brigitae* tells how St Brigit encounters persons bearing such marks. She prays for them that they be free of the marks without causing harm to anyone and by a miracle this wish is

⁸ *Cóir Anmann* (Stokes ed.) in *Irische Texte* 3, vol.2 1987:393-395

⁹ *The Voyage of the Húi Corra* (Stokes ed.) footnote §4

¹⁰ Stokes (trans.) *The Voyage of the Hui Corra*, footnote §3 (*Revue Celtique* 14)

fulfilled. Sharpe, who highlights this episode, comments that the mark appear to be worn as an indication that the bearer was bound by a vow to kill someone, specified or unspecified¹¹. He further states that *díberg* clearly has pagan associations. The mention of a vow, wearing of fillets and men in groups of three or nine suggest ritualistic overtones. Sharpe adds, though, that the paganism is not always made clear. When the brigands are brought in contact with a saint, the tale often includes their subsequent penance, but not a christening. He assigns this to the motivation of the author, which was to depict the saint as able to bring a sinner to his senses and protect his church from violent brigands, not to elaborate on the pagan ‘outsiders’ and their motivations for threatening the Church¹².

Various sources describe severe penance for the committing of *díberg*, though the Old Irish table of penitential commutations includes it sins for which there can be no remission:

‘díberggae 7 druithdechta 7 cantechda’ (brigandages, druidries, satirising)¹³.

Though the concept of the *díberga* seems an obvious influence on the depiction of the Uí Chorra brothers, the situation of ICUC is in stark contrast to earlier literary treatments of brigands of this kind. Firstly, in ICUC they are clearly main characters, whom we follow through evils, conversion and new life. Though showing off victorious holy men of the Church probably was important to the author, creating an opportunity for that was clearly not the only function of the villainous brothers. Secondly, there is a remarkable contrast in the penitential’s non-tolerance towards brigands, however repenting they are, and the masses of goodwill that meets the Uí Chorra. Indeed there is no explicit description of a christening scene, but after the conversion, Lochán requests that a mass is said for them at Clochar, which could perhaps imply a christening. As I will return to, there is also an incident in the first stage of the voyage which may be interpreted as a sharing of sacrament.

McCone, likening the *díberga* with *fian*-members, points out that *díberg* may have been part of a youthful phase for many awaiting their inheritance and/or marriage. After entering such positions they would be readmitted into the Christian community, however grudgingly on part of the Church¹⁴. An episode from the *Vita Prima* of Brigit may illustrate the Church’s attitude to the troublesome noble youth: When St Brigit was petitioned to ask God for the

¹¹ Sharpe “Hiberno-Latin Laicus, Irish Láech and the Devil’s Men” in *Ériu* 30 p.84

¹² *Ibid*: 84-85

¹³ Binchy “The Old-Irish table of penitential commutations” *Ériu* 19 (1962) p.58-59

¹⁴ McCone 2000:226

queen to have a son, she was reluctant and named the sons of kings as serpents, sons of blood and sons of death¹⁵.

The memory of the *díberga* appears to have stayed with the scribes. Sharpe refers to the Annals of Connacht, where an excommunication is reported under the year of 1236 of '*meic mallachtan cin chadus do chill na do nemedaid*' (sons of evil without reverence for church or for sanctuaries)¹⁶.

1.4 Women

Concerning pilgrim traditions in Ireland, Harbison mentions a legend of St Patrick fighting the Devil's mother, known as the Caora or Caorthanach. On the second attempt the saint managed to kill her, in Lough Derg in Donegal¹⁷. There seems to be an obvious influence of Caora of Lough Derg and the voyage tale's Cáerderg on account of these names and the diabolical aspect of their motherhood.

Still, one might say that the mother of the Uí Chorra trio as well as the mother of Máel Dúin is depicted in a relatively positive light. They represent the potential for good in their sons.

Cáerderg is a passive instrument of the Church. In the parallelling diabolical conception found in *Cóir Anmann*, the woman is an active participant. More a victim of unfortunate circumstances, Cáerderg simply asks Conall Derg what he will do about their problem.

It seems a long stretch for an erenagh's daughter, who supposedly came to Conall Derg from a church community, to accept her husband's decision about procreating.

In a sense, the couple are exemplary in the sense of staying loyal to each other. To a 12th century audience, it might have come as a surprise that he wished to petition the Devil instead of what may have been a decision closer to the realities of the time, i.e. to abandon his wife for another. The importance of standing by the husband regardless of his decisions, may have been a minor point, both because of the Derg couple and a scene in the voyage part where the importance of a woman doing her husband's will and cleaving to lawful wedlock is spelled out directly.

In light of this view expressed by the author, Cáerderg may be understood as a woman with no preferable option than to agree to her husband's solution.

Faith that divine providence will come to the enduring. (Any presence of the Church will eventually be of help?)

¹⁵ *Vita Prima* Colgan ed. §64, Conolly trans. §62

¹⁶ AC 1236.16

¹⁷ Harbison 1995:67

1.5 Judgement

Violence is notably never committed by the representants for good, neither in IMD or ICUC. Despite of the villains' horrendous acts, they never get back 'in kind'. We may expect this is a deliberate device by the authors, stemming from their depiction of violence as evil. Paying evil with evil maintains the evil.

Is the voyage of the Uí Chorra a punishment? Judgement is mentioned in two instances. The brothers ask Findén to make a judgement for their evils during their stay in Clonard. The saint, however, is reluctant. Eventually he tells them to rebuild the churches they destroyed, but he helps by providing them with superhuman strength to do this. The three return with a nearly finished mission – they left out the church at Cenn Mara. Findén tells them to return to Connacht for the rebuilding of this church, during which monologue he also appears to announce a future judgement for the brothers by the erenagh of Cenn Mara. This character never makes an actual appearance, nor does anyone else meet the brothers with a judgement. Considering the announcement of Findén, the location of Cenn Mara by the sea and the brothers' embarkment into Galway Bay, one might, however, guess that a scene involving the erenagh sentencing the brothers to sea pilgrimage has been omitted. It seems as though it was important to the author to depict the decision of going to sea as the brothers' own. Perhaps the atonement was considered more laudable when the sinner took it upon himself. Perhaps, in the context of 12th century, rebuilding and moral renewal was more vital than dealing out punishment.

Sea voyages have, however, a history with associations to punishment. The voyage tale that seems to preserve this element the best is *Immram Snédgus 7 Mac Riagla* (ISM), which frame story may be summarised as following: The men of Ross suffer under the reign of their new, oppressive king Fiacha, and slay him. Fiacha's brother almost executes them for this, but in the last minute two men from Columbcille's community are called in as judges. These two, Snédgusa and MacRiagla, decides the men should be sent adrift on the sea, in small boats without oars. In this way the judgement will be left with God. Sixty couples of the men of Ross are given boats and sent off to sea. On their voyage home to Iona, the two clerics decides to follow the men adrift.

Highlighting social phenomena that may have contributed in the development of the *immram* genre, Clancy includes the earlier practice of casting adrift as a punishment for crime. He remarks that churchmen encouraged this punishment in cases where verdicts were difficult to

reach, thereby leaving the judgement to God¹⁸. ISM may exemplify this, as the men of Ross were subjects to an unjust king and committed the crime of regicide out of desperation. ICUC and ISM appear to share the structural feature of resolving the conflict within the frame story, leaving the voyage as a follow-up, which shows what waits on the other side of penance or repentance.

As Clancy says, the later *immrama* typically deal with the theme of violent crime, so as to demonstrate to the audience that if men like these can be saved, there is hope for all¹⁹. In the case of ICUC, the author may have sought to rekindle the worst kind of criminal the Irish church had known, thereby demonstrating to the violent men of the time the destructive path they were on and warn them of the diabolical origin of violence. The church appears carefully depicted as welcoming and accepting of any kind of criminal – provided that they are repenting criminals.

1.6 Mixed agendas

Three holy persons seem to be involved. The erenagh of Clochar is given an actual appearance where he excels in exemplary behaviour when encountering evil, but he is not credited with a name. Comán of Cenn Mara is honourably mentioned by name, but is given no appearance. The scarce information about these two who seemingly play important roles in the tale creates the impression that something is missing. One might imagine that they are deliberately downplayed. The prominent depiction of Findén indicates that Clonard was central in the composing of the extant tale.

We may expect the inclusion of the other two holy men fills a purpose in the Clonard scribe's agenda. The erenagh may be included in this way as a literary model for erenaghs in general. The function of Comán may be a reminder to hold this saint in reverence on account of friendly ties between the church in Cenn Mara and Clonard, or the author could have other reasons for bringing Cenn Mara to attention.

1.7 The *flaithbrugaid* of Connacht

The narrative starts out in the house of a *flaithbrugaid*, 'noble hospitaller'. The concept of a hosteller with a guest house overflowing with various resources is involved in several early narratives. Of the house of Conall Derg it is said that it is never without the *trí gáiri* (three cries); *gáir na scacadóiri oc scacad lenna 7 gáir na n-aithech ósna coirib oc luchtairicht*

¹⁸ Clancy 2000:200

¹⁹ Ibid:203

dona sluagaib 7 gáir na n-óclach ós cionn na fidchell oc breith cluiche fora chéle (the cry of the strainers straining ale, and the cry of the vassals over the cauldrons forking out to the hosts and the cry of the warriors at the fidchell boards winning games from each other)²⁰. The forking out of the cauldron is known from other texts such as *Scéla Muice Meic Da Thó*, where the guests are made to thrust a flesh-fork into one of the hostel's cauldrons and whatever he brings out of it is their portion.

The game of *fidchell* is frequently mentioned in Irish medieval literature. A prime example is found in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, where Mider and Eochu play for a number of stakes. Midir keeps losing and has to do great ground works, but he wins the last stake, which is Eochu's queen. *Táin Bó Cuailnge* states that the Ulster king Conchobair spends on third of his day playing *fidchell*. In the same tale the king Ailill initiates a game with the warrior Fergus after discovering his queen's infidelity with the warrior. *Aided Celtchair mac Uthechair* tells of Conchobair playing with Cú Chulainn. One might say that *fidchell* seems often employed in literary contexts as an accompanying factor when lords and warriors negotiate about property or services.

The distribution of food portions to '*sluag*', which could mean 'army', together with warriors playing *fidchell* and the description of the hosteller himself as a combative man, suggest that the house of Conall Derg is particularly serving men engaged with military agendas.

The hostel is never short of the *trí méich* (three sacks), which is *miach bracha fri fritháilem ndescad, miach cruithnehta fri fritháilem biata na n-óiged 7 miach salainn fri somblas cacha bíd* (a sack of malt for preparing yeast, a sack of wheat for preparing the refectation of the guests and a sack of salt to make every food taste well)²¹. This must be to say that the house lacks nothing with regards to the serving of guests. The three sacks seem to indicate that the hostel is well maintained, while the three cries seem to indicate that it is frequently visited. Guesthouses kept by a *briugu*, however, tends to be associated with kings. In *Esnada Tige Buchet*, a hosteller must part from a king who no longer can maintain the hostel, but the hostel is restored when it is attached to a new king who pays a certain price. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* tells of a distressed king who believes the hostel to be a safe haven for him due to the great gifts he has bestowed on it. In *Aided Celtchair mac Uthechair*, a threatened *briugu* immediately seeks help from the king. These examples suggest that it might have been expected of a king to support the *briugaid* and maintain a guest house.

²⁰ van Hamel (ed.) line 5-9 (Stokes trans. RQ 14)

²¹ Ibid. line 9-12 (Stokes trans.)

There is, however, no mention of a king connected to the house of Conall Derg. Great resources are bestowed on it, but we don't know by whom. Nor do we know who its guests are. Compared to the other voyage tales, ICUC stands out with the lack of a king or royal representant involved in the frame story.

The initial conflict of ICUC revolves around the great grief of the hosteller couple: The fact that they have no fitting heir. They are notably not childless or infertile, but their children won't live long enough to fulfill the visions of the hosteller couple.

As it seems to be the case in *Esnada Tige Buchet*, the author may have used familiar concepts to depict a political precarious situation. We may envision that the hostel is an image of a dynastic territory who has become tributary to a more powerful kingdom, which sustains it, but also uses it. The lack of a suitable heir in this respect may depict the lack of a prestigious king. We may expect that tributary territories nurtured visions of escaping their substatus, which may have materialised in literary fables about how to bring about this.

1.8 From *bruiden* to church

There seems to be subtle changes in point of view. The introductory sequence with the childless couple in the hostel of Connacht is followed by the brothers' war against the Church. From the vision of the elder brother onwards, the focus appears to be entirely on ecclesiastical concerns. Conall Derg and Cáerderg are never mentioned again. We are, however, informed that the brothers build a church '*fora ferann duthaig féin*', 'on their own inherited land'²², which may be an indication that their parents have passed away and the brothers have come into their heritage. The building of a church where there formerly was a building associated with pre-Christian traditions may have been a feature of christianisation in Ireland. Ó Cróinín writes that most outward and visible expressions of pre-Christian beliefs was disfigured, destroyed or absorbed into the new religion where they became unrecognisable. He suggests however, that bullauns or quern stones at monastic sites may be relics of the pagan past, as may the numerous holy wells around the Irish countryside²³. Several commentators have highlighted St Brigit's cult at Kildare as an example of a pagan cult developed into a Christian church²⁴, a development that is likely to have occurred other places as well.

Rekdal has recently pointed out there seems to be an opposition between the church and the *bruiden*. Highlighting the functions of the two buildings in the narratives *Aided Muirchertaig*

²² van Hameln (ed) *Immram Ua Corra* line 199-200

²³ Ó Cróinín 1995:31

²⁴ For instance by McCone in *Pagan past* 2000:164-165

meic Erca and *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill*, he notes they seem to be of equivalent importance, but of an antonymous manner where the *bruiden* represents the old pagan lifestyle and beliefs and the church represents the new and lasting²⁵. *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* seems to share this concept. The hostel of Conall Derg, explicitly the couple's marriage bed, is the place where the deal with the Devil is struck. The brothers are leaning on the side-rail of this bed in their parent's house when they learn of their origin and decide to wage war on the Church. When Lochán experiences his vision and the three are converted, they are notably staying at a church community. The victory of the Church is emphasised as the brothers, heirs of the *bruiden*, builds a church on the site of their heritage after converting to Christianity.

The frame story of ICUC seems to present an Irish society in the early days of Christianity, where the co-existence of Christian communities and pagan adherents was marked by conflict. Sharpe muses that *díberga* may have been the price the Church and society had to pay for driving overt paganism into outlawry, that perhaps it was the only option available to some of the dynastic groups displaced in the political changes of the 7th century²⁶.

The sequence with Findén shows the hagiographical feature of the heroic saint who faces the brigands without fear, subdues the evil, and keeps his community safe. The scene involving the ernenagh of Clochar appears a downplayed version of a similar saintly demonstration.

This may suggest that the sequence of Findén and the ernenagh represent the works of different scribal teams.

2. Saints and Villains

Immram Curaig Ua Corra seems to draw on hagiographical traditions. This is mainly seen in the prominent role of St Findén and the extensive use of names associated with early saint cults. Further, the voyage itself resounds with the tradition of sea pilgrimages, a practice whose martyrs are remembered by litanies written in the 8th/9th century.

The names of Leinster saints used for characters in a tale otherwise well rooted in Connacht may appear a mystery. In the frame story we find saints' names for villains as well as the heroes, a feature unusual for the secular voyage tales. We also find a holy man whose name is not disclosed and a mention of yet another holy man who never appears.

²⁵ Rekdal "From wine in a goblet to milk in a cowdung" p.257-259 in *The Northern World* volume 52, 2011

²⁶ Sharpe "Hiberno-Latin *laicus*" p.92

I will focus on the main characters appearing in the frame story.

2.1 Lochán and Énna

Two holy men, Lochán and Énna are commemorated in *Féilire Óengusso* on 31st of December, accompanied by the note: ‘Lochan ocus Enna, *Cill na manach I -Uib Dunchada itat duo isti, 7 i Cill meic Cathail i nHuib Bairrchi .i. I mBelach Gabráin*’.²⁷

The saints appear to have two churches, most likely a result of struggles over Leinster territories: The Uí Bhairrche were once serious claimants to the provincial kingship but was eventually ousted by the Uí Chennselaig, who took possession of the south of Leinster. The Uí Dhúnlainge, wherein is found the Uí Dhunchada sept mentioned in the martyrology, held the northern part²⁸. It seems the martyrology mentions the saints’ original church in Cell na Manach and one founded by the Uí Bhairrche in an other territory.

Another occurrence of Lochán and Énna of Cell na Manach is found in the Salamanca²⁹ Life of Cóemgen of Glendalough. In this Life they appear together with a third saint, Eogan. The three become Cóemgen’s first teachers.

In secular genealogies presented by Bhreathnach³⁰, Cóemgen, Lochán, Énna and a Éogan are listed as saints of Dál Messin Corb under the family of Uí Náir. Cóemgen’s church is at Glenn dá Locha, Lochán and Énna are still associated with Cell na Manach, but Éogan is found at Ard Sratha – the only church of the Uí Náir in Tyrone. This seems to suggest that one member of a triad of saints associated Cell na Manach is relocated.

According to Bhreathnach, the Uí Náir sept exercised power through ecclesiastical connections, especially through the claim of Cóemgen of Glenn dá Locha. The majority of the churches under Dál Messin Corb are located in the area around Dublin and Wicklow and remained under the authority of this population group up till the 9th century³¹. We may expect the supposed separation of Éoghan happened prior to this.

In Charles-Edwards’ paper on concituenices of saint’s cults, he uses the cult of St Damnat in Co. Monaghan to demonstrate the characteristics of local cults³²:

²⁷ Stokes (ed.) *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé* (1905:262)

²⁸ Ó Cróinín: 1995:54-55

²⁹ W.W. Heist (ed.). *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*. Brussels, 1965

³⁰ E. Bhreathnach: “The Genealogies of Leinster” in *Studies in Irish Hagiography*, Carey et al (ed.) 2001:258

³¹ *Ibid*:259

³² “Early Irish Saints’ Cults and Their Constituencies “ in *Ériu* 54, p.79

"It seems to be characteristic of these important but local saints that no Life survives, that they have a single church, or at most two or three in the same region, that the connections claimed for them by the genealogists of the saints are regional or provincial, and that the onomastic and physical evidence indicates how effective the impact of the cult was within its home district, which was likely to become a parish in the late-medieval period".³³

The cult of Lochán and Énna seems to a large degree to 'fit the bill' in this respect. No Lives survive, they have a single church and their earliest connection seems to be with the local Uí Bhairrche. When this dynasty was ousted from Leinster, and the remaining ruling dynasties had success with other cults, e.g. the cult of Comgán of Glenn dá Locha, the church of Lochán and Énna remained a minor local cult. The church later became a parish.

The cult of the once third Cell na Manach saint, Éogán, found in the north may seem slightly mysterious, but Ó Cróinín writes that there are several connections between Leinster and Ulster centering on the Uí Bairrche. He especially highlights Bangor as a pilgrim target, as Cormac mac Diarmata, who he names the most important Uí Bairrche king in the 6th and 7th centuries, died peacefully there. The same time, Columcille also left his native Leinster to join the monastery³⁴.

Éogán appearing as Éogán of Ardstraw in the north seem to demonstrate the Uí Náir's benefactor relationship to the Airgiallan dynasty of Uí Chremthainn. Relating how hagiography may personalize inter-church relations, McCone points out that the Lives of Tigernach of Clones and Éogán of Ardstraw show suspicious similarities. The latter seems to build upon the former as Tigernach is mentioned in Éogán's Life, while no Éogán figures in Tigernach's Life. They both completely ignore St Patrick, i.e. Armagh. This suggests they had found common political ground in resisting the aspirations of Armagh. The Life of Tigernach of Clones does mention St Brigit of Kildare as a great benefactor of Tigernach³⁵. It is to be noted that Bhreathnach's list includes two Uí Náir churches in Kildare, attributed respectively Moshenóc and Conláed³⁶. The Airgiallan allegiance to far-away churches may be explained by what McCone calls 'bolstering pressure': *'If a powerful church nearby is threatening your*

³³ Ibid: 81

³⁴ Ó Cróinín: *Early Medieval Ireland* (1995:54)

³⁵ McCone 2000:246

³⁶ Bhreathnach: "Genealogies of Lenster" in Carey (et al) 2001:258

*independence, protect yourself by submission to a powerful church further away whose control is likely to be less pervasive and irksome*³⁷.

The neighbouring church to Clones, Clochar was, however, pro-Armagh in the later 7th century³⁸. This makes it interesting that the characters Lochán and Énna of ICUC journey to their grandfather's church at a place called Clochar, where they convert. One might speculate that Leinster-based traditions partly influenced ICUC, but the heavy affiliation with Connacht that otherwise permeates the extant text, makes the basis for this seem weak.

2.2 Silvester

In ICUC, Lochán and Énna appear once more in a triad. The youngest brother is given the name of the Roman saint Silvester. Silvester is commemorated in *Félire Óengusso* on December 31st, as is Lochán and Énna. There seems to be nothing in this entry to say the three shared anything other than feast day. Silvester is described as following: "papa Romae et confessor"³⁹. The only pope by the name of Silvester by the time *Félire Óengusso* was written was Silvester I, who is recorded as Bishop of Rome from 314 until 335⁴⁰. As a contemporary of Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor, his office took place during a dramatic time of the Church. O'Malley remarks, however, that Silvester seem to have been passive through it, though his reputation was greatly embroidered in later legend⁴¹.

The identification of Silvester as 'pope and confessor' in *Félire Óengusso* does however indicate that Irish scribes foremostly associated the pope with the role of confessor, perhaps in relation to the emperor. The fact that Silvester held the See during the period in which Christianity became a dominant religion might have caused an image of this pope as a particularly persuasive, influential and exemplary one.

Jacobus de Voragine included in *Legenda Aurea* imaginative etymologies for saint's names, including Silvester, whose name was said to stem from *sile* or *sol* 'light' and *terra* 'earth' as 'the light of the earth' is the Church⁴². Granger Ryan writes that Voragine compiled the work from a range of medieval sources in the 1260s⁴³. Her further states that the etymologies belonged in a long tradition of medieval learning derived from Isidore of Seville's

³⁷ McCone 2000:246

³⁸ Ibid:247

³⁹ Stokes (ed.) *Félire Óengusso Céili Dé* 1905: 262

⁴⁰ O'Malley: *A History of Popes* 2009:31

⁴¹ Ibid:31-32

⁴² Caxton (ed.) *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints* (1900:88)

⁴³ W. Granger Ryan: *The Golden Legend*, introduction p.xi (2012)

*Etymologies*⁴⁴. Considering Irish scribes' fascination for Isidore's work, the etymology of Silvester included in *Legenda Aurea* may have been known. Silvester may have been added as the third Uí Chorra brother on account of the saint's reputed intermediary skills and the etymology of his name. As noted, in the frame story of ICUC, Silvester is born at the end of night, i.e. at sunrise, perhaps as a foreshadowing of the brothers' conversion after a long spiritual night.

2.3 Énna of Aran

As Breatnach has demonstrated, there are several similarities in the tradition surrounding St Énna of Aran and ICUC⁴⁵:

Énna initially leads a wicked life but devotes himself to God after a divine epiphany. Further, *Féilire Óengusso's* entry commemorating the saint states him as the son of a Conall Derg. Breatnach further writes that a Conall Derg with diabolical associations is known from other sources, and points to the Latin Life of Laisrén where Conall Derg is described as cruel, godless king who is driven by a diabolic spirit. In both the Latin and the Irish Lives, the saint Laisrén curses the king so that no one of his posterity will rule after him. As Breatnach notes, this could be an appropriate model for the Conall Derg of ICUC, whose children die early⁴⁶. Breatnach also suggests that the name Cáerderg, mother of the Uí Chorra brothers, is a modification of Cairech Dergain, sister of Énna of Aran.

As a saint whose sanctuary was foremostly associated with Aran Island in Galway Bay, Énna may have been a suitable model for the brothers, who embark on their voyage from a shore at Galway Bay. St Énna's church on Aran are visited multiple times in the *Navigatio Brendani*, a text which in turn appears to have had a certain influence on the voyage part of ICUC.

2.4 Findén

While other characters seem merely named after saints or saints who simply get a mention, Findén seems to be the only saint of the tale actually appearing as himself.

The Annals of Ulster reports the death of Findén in the year of 549⁴⁷. According to Hughes, almost 300 years passed until his cult was developed⁴⁸. The Irish Life, which she estimates to

⁴⁴ Ibid:xvii

⁴⁵ C.Breatnach: "The Transmission and Structure of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* in *Ériu* 53:91-107 (2003)

⁴⁶ C.Breatnach: "The Transmission and Structure" p.104

⁴⁷ AU 549.3

⁴⁸ K.Hughes 1987: III p.13

be written in the aftermath of the Danish wars, was compiled when Clonard was heading a *paruchia* trying to claim land in Connacht⁴⁹.

Looking at Findén's geographical associations, his influence appears to be scattered.

Summarising his Lives, Hughes notes he has connections to both the Uí Bhairche and the Uí Dhúnlainge, who supplied many abbots to Laiginian churches⁵⁰. As mentioned above, these two dynasties also had connections to Lochán and Énna. The Uí Bhairche and Uí Dhúnlainge appear to have cooperated for a while. Bhreathnach states that the Uí Dhúnlainge and Uí Bhairche formed a segment guised as the 'Uí Fhínáin'. This cooperative segment had connections to Cell Chorpnanan, a church possibly founded by a saint of the Uí Bhairche. The Uí Dhúnlainge, on their part, made many claims regarding Kildare⁵¹. Geographically, Cell Chorpnanan was close to Kildare, one might suppose that the 'Uí Fhínáin' attempted to make claims at Kildare due to Findén's alleged dealings with this church. The Uí Bhairche was, however, eventually ousted by the Uí Chennselaig⁵²

Adding to the mixture of claims to Findén, Bhreathnach tells us the saint was also in part claimed by the Uí Lúascán family, a part of the Dál Niad Cuirp, another Leinster dynasty. The family claimed to be the origin of three holy virgins, among these Findén's mother Tailech and sister Rígnach, the latter with her own community at Kilrainy (*Cill Rígnach*). These two links to Findén was the family's greatest claim to influence and several of Clonard's abbots were said to be sons of Rígnach⁵³.

Though at first being a church of primarily Laiginian interest, Clonard lay on the borders of Laigin, Meath and Brega, and Hughes notes that after Leinster kings freed themselves from overlordship of Tara in 8th century, Clonard appear to have been left in northern hands to become one of the leading monasteries of the northern half of Ireland, Leth Cuinn⁵⁴.

The Connacht lands claimed by Clonard in the Irish Life are all in the northern parts of the province (approx. Sligo) – Druim etir dá Loch in Tirerril, Corann in the district of Luigne and Coripre Mór⁵⁵. It is to be noted that the church of Comán in Cenn Mara is not anywhere near these areas.

⁴⁹ Ibid:14

⁵⁰ Ibid: 15-16

⁵¹ Bhreathnach: "Genealogies of Leinster" in Carey (et al) 2001:265

⁵² Ó Cróinín 1995:54

⁵³ Bhreathnach "Genealogies of Leinster" in Carey (et al) 2001:264

⁵⁴ Hughes 1987:III p.21

⁵⁵ *Lismore lives* (Stokes ed.) line 2696-2714

In ICUC, the founding saint of Clonard is referred to as *aite na hÉreann*, ‘foster-father/tutor of Ireland’⁵⁶. After the brothers’ vision and conversion at their grandfather’s church in Clochar, they subsequently go to Clonard for a year of education. Inbetween conversion and sea voyage, Findén acts as the brothers’ teacher and guide.

The legacy of Findén appears to be primarily connected to monastic learning. Hughes writes that Findén of Clonard and the contemporary Énna of Aran traditionally has been held as the first Irish saints to combine monastic life with good learning⁵⁷. Bowen repeats this, adding that the reason the development of monastic teaching was relatively late in Ireland may be due to suspicion among early Irish Christians towards ancient learning as they associated it with paganism. Ascribing the development to cultural fusion, Bowen says that the Eastern Mediterranean asceticism which until then had been the prime influence for the disciplined Irish Church met the classical learning venerated by the Western Church in Italy and Gaul. As a result, the Irish monasteries were marked by both religious discipline and good learning⁵⁸.

In the 630’s and 640’s, the debate about whether Easter should be celebrated after the Roman or the Celtic practice reached its height. The southern half of Ireland appear to have accepted the Roman ways, but in the north the old custom prevailed. Regarding Clonard as a leading church of Leth Cuinn, we find an interesting note in the Annals of Tigernach under the year 635: *Effugacio Carrthaig .i. mo Chuto, maic Fínd, o Raithin in diebus pasce*, (Carthach, Mochuda mac Find, expelled from Raithin during easter)⁵⁹. The Life of Mochuda states that the expulsion was made by a group led by Clonard clergy and that Mochuda thereafter went to found the monastery of Lismore⁶⁰, in the area pioneering the Roman easter. The episode reflects Clonard as a bastion of traditionalism. As I will get back to in Chpt.5, the church of Findén may have retained this attitude in later questions of Roman conformity.

The Annals of the Four Masters reports under the year of 1162 that a synod with the coarb of Patrick was held at Cloenad. One decree made at the synod gets special mention: ‘*as don chur-sin ro chinnset clérigh Ereann na badh fer leighinn i c-cill i n-Erinn an fer na badh dalta Arda Macha cédu*s’ (‘On this occasion the clergy of Ireland determined that no one

⁵⁶ van Hameln *Immrama* 1941:98 (101)

⁵⁷ K.Hughes 1987:III p.24

⁵⁸ E.G.Bowen 1969:136

⁵⁹ Stokes (ed.) AT 635

⁶⁰ Power (ed.): *Lives of Ss Declan and Mochuda* 2006:58-60

should be a *fer léiginn* of a church in Ireland unless he were an alumnus of Armagh')⁶¹. According to Kenney, Connacht ruler Ruaidhrí Ua Conchobair was supportive of this and gave an annual gift of kine to the *fer léiginn* of Armagh, for the education of the students of Ireland and Scotland⁶². It seems highly unlikely that the coarb of Findén applauded this decree, as Clonard was maintaining what may be regarded as the cradle of monastic learning in Ireland. The Clonmacnoise-based Annals of Tigernach mentions a synod in 1162, but nothing is said of this particular decree. Could this imply an aversion to accept the decision? This provides us with a situation which might have sparked the composing of a tale in which Findén was reinforced as the grand old man of monastic teaching. In the voyage part of ICUC, we find a section of islands and visions strikingly similar to a section of IMD. The section includes a direct reference to Máel Dúin, the hero of IMD, but the venerations of Armagh, which IMD displays, are removed. This could be seen in connection with the supposed opposition at Clonard towards Armagh and the decree securing a Patrician “school monopoly”.

2.5 Moderated saints

The frame story of ICUC includes two saintly characters who appear strangely diffuse. The erenagh of Clochar is depicted with exemplary conduct and represents the immediate link between the Uí Chorra and the Church. We are not, however, provided insight as to what his name is. We are introduced to his daughter, but her name, Cáerderg, seems more likely to be a reflection of her husband's name, Conall Derg, and gives no insight to the identity of her kin. The introduction to Comán, erenagh of Cenn Mara, is given by St Findén himself. The brothers are told to fulfill every judgement laid upon them by Comán of Cenn Mara, though upon reaching the site, there is no mention of Comán or a judgement.

The erenagh's role in the conversion of the Uí Chorra and the envisaged judgement by Comán could create the impression that these two, or even just one of them, might have filled the role of Findén. One might say that the section involving St Findén could appear as an insertion in an already existing text. Signs of this may be found immediately before and after the Findén section.

Firstly, the brothers' abrupt decision to go to Clonard could be seen as the intervention of a Clonard-based scribe⁶³: In Clochar, the Uí Chorra are conversing with the erenagh who

⁶¹ FM 1162.9

⁶² Kenney 1966:11

⁶³ *Immram Ua Corra* (van Hamel ed.) line 100

assures them that God will accept their repentance. The elder brother subsequently states that they wish to have a mass said for them and that they will make stacks of their spearshafts – and, that they will go to Findén, whom he additionally names *aite na hÉrenn*, ‘the fosterfather of Ireland’. While the *erenagh* was introduced early in the tale, no mention of Findén appears until the brothers decide to go there.

Secondly, there is a continuity problem as the scene changes from Clonard to Cenn Mara and Findén announces a cleric who does not appear.

This may suggest that the *erenagh* and Comán are deliberately toned down in order to leave the center stage to the saint of Clonard, though they may have been left in for a symbolic significance: In the previous chapter, I pointed out a feature indicating the ritualised nature of the *díberga*, namely that these brigands often operated in groups of three or nine. It might have been of significance that the three villains were countered by three holy men.

2.6 Sea pilgrimages

In the endeavour to distinguish certain elements in the social background of the *immrama*, Clancy highlights one of them as the self-inflicted martyrdom of sea pilgrimages. This practice, called being *i n-ailithre*, ‘in another country’, was taken on by monks in the 6th and 7th century⁶⁴. Memories of the monks who set out to sea are preserved in a litany printed and published by Plummer as *Litany of Irish Saints –II*⁶⁵, of which Hughes distinguishes the second part as a *Litany of Pilgrim Saints*⁶⁶ and which she dates to after late 8th century, but pre-Viking era⁶⁷. In this *Litany of Pilgrim Saints* we find an entry ‘*tri hÚi Chorra cona morfessiur*’, (‘three Uí Chorra with their seven’)⁶⁸ following ‘*Da fher déc lotar la Ailbe dochum néca*’, (‘twelve men who went with Ailbe to death’)⁶⁹.

Regarding monastic attitudes to sea pilgrimage, Hughes writes they changed with reforms of later 8th and 9th centuries⁷⁰. Peter Harbison adds that after the banishment of Irish bishops from the Carolingian empire at a council in 813 resulted in less pilgrimage abroad⁷¹.

Additionally, the *Rule of Ailbe*⁷² promotes steadfastness. Hughes notes that though Máelruain of Tallaght discouraged pilgrimage overseas, many clerics of the Céli Dé seem to have moved

⁶⁴ Clancy: “Subversion at Sea” p.199 in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*. Wooding ed. 2000

⁶⁵ Plummer 1925:60-67

⁶⁶ Hughes 1987:XIII p.306

⁶⁷ Ibid:313

⁶⁸ Plummer (ed.) *Irish Litanies II*/ Hughes 1987:XIII p.327 §44

⁶⁹ Ibid §43

⁷⁰ Hughes 1987:XIV p.147

⁷¹ Harbison “Pilgrimage” in Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Ireland* 2005:374

⁷² “The Rule of Ailbe of Emly.” ed. Joseph O Neill, *Ériu* 3 (1907); 92-115; trans.

about a good deal among the monasteries of their own order⁷³. Hughes writes that by 9th century even pilgrimage to Rome was bringing disappointments⁷⁴. It appears then, that as the trend of pilgrimages to foreign lands decreased, the journeys surfaced in literary fables of the scriptoria where they became a part of the great traditions associated with the early Church. The scribes may additionally have realised how versatile allegorical islands could prove themselves in expressing various views.

The history of the saints encountered in ICUC appear to confirm an impression that the early cults surrounding saints were marked by the changing circumstances of kin, politics and territory. The development of monastic schools appears to make the picture somewhat less fragmented.

Lochán, Énna, Findén and ‘three Uí Chorra’ appear all in texts originating within Céili Dé, as do Ailbe of Emly who appears in the voyage part of ICUC. We may expect that the author of ICUC was familiar with *Féilire Óengusso* and the *Litany of Pilgrim Saints* and perhaps used the martyrology, to some degree, in the creation of the voyage tale’s characters. It seems likely that what brought the Leinster saints together with the Roman saint was a shared commemoration date. Perhaps the date, 31st of December, had some significance. The brothers’ remark on the wonder that the lakes were covered with ice while the sea was not⁷⁵ indicates that the voyage occurred during winter.

Even in a tale that involves conversion and repentance, it seems harsh to employ saints’ names for young, devil worshipping brigands of Connacht, committers of sins once held as unredeemable. The authors may have wished to demonstrate that ‘every saint has a past and every sinner a future’, but it seems like the cult of the Cell na Manach saints mattered little to the scribal team of the extant frame story. We may note that Silvester is only mentioned by name in connection to the birth. When explicitly mentioned, words and actions are assigned Lochán and Énna, perhaps to avoid a too direct connection to Silvester and brigandage.

3. The Uí Chorra and the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne

⁷³ Hughes 1987:XIV p.147

⁷⁴ Ibid p.148

⁷⁵ *Immram Ua Corra* (van Hamel ed.) line165-166

Immram Curaig ua Corra appears like a patchwork of a text where we find earlier and newer elements pieced together and sometimes overlapping each other. As mentioned above, Breatnach has theorised that the opening section of ICUC may be a later addition to an earlier voyage, and that the episode relating to Cenn Mara may be seen as the link between the two⁷⁶. Cenn Mara lies within the territory of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne in the south of Connacht, famed for its greatness in the 7th century under the rule of king Guaire Aidne. Legends and traditions surrounding this kingdom and its ruler seem to be mirrored in several textual elements of ICUC.

3.1 Hospitality and belligerence

The first connection to Guaire is found in the *flaithbrugaid* of ICUC, the princely hosteller of Connacht. Breatnach has earlier pointed out the similarities with this character and the Conall Derg found in the Life of St. Enda⁷⁷. While Enda's father Conall Derg seems an obvious influence for the hosteller of ICUC, this may be but one of the sources used in the creation of the hybrid character Conall Derg.

In most texts that include a prominent hosteller, he is used as a character in a significant relationship with the king, involved in both the making of a king⁷⁸ as well as the deposition of him.⁷⁹ There appears to have been a mutual support agreement between a king and his hosteller⁸⁰. Conall Derg is, however, presented without a king.

In Chpt.1 I suggested the description of the hostel could indicate that the house represents a tributary kingdom in need of a 'fitting heir'. The narrative's lack of a fitting heir could translate to the territory's lack of a fitting king. However, traits so widely associated with Guaire Aidne seem preserved in the hosteller's character. He is described as a '*fer sona saidbir sárchonaig*' ('happy man, wealthy, exceedingly prosperous')⁸¹, followed by a description of the magnificent wealth and generosity of his house. One could say that the wealthy and hospitable sides of Conall Derg are paralleled in Guaire Aidne. The court of Guaire was situated in Gort (*Gort Inse Guaire*), located close to Carn Chonaill⁸². Guaire became the prime example of what a good king should be, displaying generosity and hospitality in every situation. Particularly good kings are compared to Guaire Aidne. In the

⁷⁶ "The Structure and Transmission" p.105

⁷⁷ Ibid p.103-104

⁷⁸ *Esnada Tige Buchet*

⁷⁹ *Togail Bruidne Da Derga, Bruiden Da Choca*

⁸⁰ Especially seen in *Esnada Tige Buchet* and *Bruiden Da Choca*

⁸¹ Ibid line 4-5

⁸² Today Ballyconnell in the district of Kilbecanty, cf. O'Donovan *Four Masters I*

12th century we find an example of this in the Annals of the Four Masters, which reports in 1137 the death of Domhnall mac Murchad Ua Maelsechlainn, heir of Tara, who is described as ‘*Domhnall, mac Murchadha Uí Mhaoileachlainn, ríogh-dhamhna Ereann, & ri Temhra frí ré, aon-Ghuaire Ereann ina aimsir ar eineach*’, (‘the only Guaire Aidne of Ireland in his time for his hospitality’)⁸³.

The parallel between Guaire Aidne and Conall Derg could imply that the traits, or spirit of the legendary king is still present, but only in the form of a host who receives foreign guests.

The hosteller is also described as *céthach comramach* (‘hundreded and combative’)⁸⁴, traits which could have connection to a different legend of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne. ICUCs frame story seem to share several features with the the legend associated with the Conall who has given name to Carn Chonaill which also lies within the territory of Guaire’s kingdom. A glossary of *Sanas Cormaic*⁸⁵ relates the story of the five sons of the warrior Conall. The sons attack the sídh of Grian at Cnoc Gréine, whereupon she by magical means causes their death. When the news reaches Conall, he battles with her, but when Grian discovers his true identity, she sprinkles a magic dust on him upon which he wanders off and dies at the place thereafter called Carn Chonaill. This story parallels key points in the frame story of ICUC. The father, Conall Derg, initially described as a combative man, parallels the warrior Conall. The sons of Conall Derg attacking the Church are comparable to the sons of Conall attacking a sídh. The end of the destruction comes, in both cases, through supernatural influence.

3.2 The will of God

The downfall of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne is recounted in the 11th century tale *Cath Cairn Chonaill*⁸⁶, where Guaire loses a battle with the Sí nÁedo Sláine of Meath at the place called Carn Chonaill. However, the aftermath of the battle contains an unexpected turn where Guaire emerges as the moral victor on account of his humility and generosity towards the sick and the poor. Both Guaire and the opposing king, Diarmait mac Áedo Sláine, are benefactors of Clonmacnoise and buried there.

Diarmait wins with an army inferior to Guaire’s. In Stoke’s edition of *Cath Cairn Chonaill*

⁸³ FM 1137.9

⁸⁴ *Immram Ua Corra* (van Hamel ed.) line 2

⁸⁵ Translation by Stokes in *Three Irish Glossaries* 1862:xlii-xliv

⁸⁶ Earliest preserved version found in *Lebor na hUidre*, edited by Stokes in ZCP 3 (1901)

(CCC) he mentions a scene included in one of the rescentions⁸⁷ of the tale depicting how Guaire sent Cúmmene Fhota to ask for a day's truce from Diarmait because of the superiority of his army. Diarmait declines, saying to Cúmmene: *'Nach fetruidh-si, a chlerigh, nach ar lin na cruth brister cath, acht amail is ail ra Dia?'* ('Knowest thou no, O cleric, that a battle is gained neither by number nor outward form, but according to the will of God?') A similar line is laid in the mouth of a cleric accompanying the Uí Chorra on their voyage. During the final vision in what I argue is a 'warfare section' of the voyage⁸⁸, the boat enters a fiery sea. An abundance of men's heads is dashing against each other in the sea and worms pierces their boat. At this the cleric says: *'Ná tabrad i sním sin'*, and further *'Is tualaing Dia ar n-anacul cid isin óenchodail bem 7 mas ed as áil dó ar n-aided leó sút, ní fétar tuidecht i n-agaid a thoile'*. ('Let not that trouble you' - 'God is able to save us though we be in only the one hide; and even though yon worms desire to destroy us, they cannot go against His will'.)

Where CCC shows an impossible victory in an actual battle, ICUC shows a similarly unrealistic survival on a symbolic battlefield. As I will get back to⁸⁹, the curragh staying afloat with two of its hides pierced, is a practical impossibility.

Both the *Lebor na hUidre* version of the tale and the Annals of Tigernach record that the battle of Carn Chonaill happened on Whit Sunday in 649. The actions that may be understood as war-related in the voyage part of ICUC, are punished because they were performed on a Sunday.

3.3 Jesters

Despite his excellency in generosity, Guaire dismisses a jester that approaches him after the battle. The Uí Chorra brothers show the same attitude when they are approached by the jester before setting out to sea. He casts off his jester's attire and begs to come with them, but the brothers initially reproach him. When he asks them for God's sake, he is allowed onboard. The brothers' change of heart may reflect a change of attitude among scribes from the time of the earliest CCC to ICUC. Interestingly, an anecdote called 'Guaire's last deed of bounty' is added to the 11th century text of CCC, in which the jester years later approaches Guaire's grave and finally gets his reward – Guaire's skeletal hand reaches out of the grave and flings him a handful of dust that transforms into gold⁹⁰.

⁸⁷ found in ff.59b-61a of Egerton 1782

⁸⁸ Chpt.7 "Visions at Sea"

⁸⁹ Chpt.6 "Boat and Crew"

⁹⁰ Cath Carn Chonaill §37 - ZCP 3 (1901)

3.4 Home of the Uí Chorra?

The territory of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne shrunk considerably from the 7th century to the 12th, but Cenn Mara was still located within it, by the southern shore of Galway Bay. Close by Cenn Mara lies Dún Guaire (‘Guaire’s castle’), though built in 1520, is said to lie on the site of a 7th century fortification attributed to Guaire⁹¹. The site is significant in ICUC as the church of Comán at Cenn Mara is the target of the repenting brothers’ second rebuilding tour. Additionally, they embark on the voyage from the shores of Cenn Mara. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this coastal town or a nearby area could be the home of the Uí Chorra:

- Before setting out to sea from Cenn Mara, they built a church on their own heritage. Their heritage is obviously the land (and hostel) of their father. It seems logical that this site is close to Cenn Mara as the church building takes place between their reaching of the site and embarkment to sea.
- The brothers are likely to come from a coastal land. In their upbringing they are said to be trained and become swift and strong on sea as well as on land⁹². Additionally, they know a shipwright in the country, who builds their boat.
- On their first rebuilding tour, the brothers avoid Cenn Mara. St Findén remarks that this should have been the first place they returned to. It would seem Cenn Mara has a special significance to the brothers. Do they dread going home?

3.5 Comán

It appears a mystery that no saint named Comán seems to be associated with Cenn Mara or nearby areas other than in ICUC. There is a Comán that might be associated with Uí Fhiachrach Aidne, namely the saint of Ros Comáin. Cormac Ua Cillín, whose obit in *Chronicon Scotorum* reads, provides the connection:

‘Cormac hUa. Cillin do Uib Fhiacrach Aidhne comorba Ciaráin 7 Comain 7 comurba Tuama Gréne, et as aige do ronadh tempul mor Tuama Grene et a claihtec, sapiens et senex et episcopus quieuit in Christo’. (Cormac ua Cillín, of the Uí Fhiachrach of Aidne, comarb of Ciarán and Comán and comarb of Tuaim Gréne, and by him was built the great church of Tuaim Gréne, and its bell-tower, a sage and an old man and a bishop, rested in Christ.)⁹³

The church of Ciarán, that is to say Clonmacnoise, and Ros Comáin (Roscommon) had joint abbacy for a long time. That these great communities had a comarb from the Uí Fhiachrach

⁹¹ *Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (MacKillop 200)

⁹² van Hamel (ed.) line 33-34

⁹³ CS 966

Aidne indicates that the families of the old kingdom of Aidne exercised some power through ecclesiastical connections. Tuaim Gréine is a different name for Cnoc Gréine⁹⁴ mentioned above (the sídh of Grian) and had traditional affiliations to the kingdom of Guaire. We have, then, a Comán with connections to at least one Aidnean family, but it does not explain how he could be credited with a church at Cenn Mara.

During the 12th century reforming synods, a diocese corresponding with the territory of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne was established and named Kilmacduagh. A local saint, Colmán mac Duach was the source for this name. He had familiar relations with Guaire⁹⁵. As the diocese corresponds with Aidnean territory, Colmán is likely to have had a church near Cenn Mara, but there is of course a problem that the name does not match entirely.

Byrne mentions that there were legends about Guaire's relation with Mac-dá-Cherda, who may be identical with a Comgán, abbot of Emly⁹⁶. Again the location doesn't fit with Cenn Mara, though it would have been interesting if it were an abbot of Emly who were left with the judgement of the Uí Chorra. As I will return to, Clonard and Emly may have had common cause in the reform process, as both were communities who lost much ground on account of the restructuring of ecclesiastical power centres.

A fourth saint with a possible connection to the UFA territory is Cáimmín of Inis Celtra in Lough Derg. In CCC, Cáimmín is the cleric cursing Guaire and thus unabling him to win the battle. His judge-like appearance in CCC may fit with the supposed judge in ICUC. We also recognise the name of the lough, *Derg* that are included in the names of the Uí Chorra brothers' parents Conall Derg and Cáerderg. Lough Derg lies not, however, in a close vicinity of Cenn Mara, which makes also this saint a problematic conclusion.

Among the three saints or holy men appearing in the frame story of ICUC - Comán, Findén and the erenagh of Clochar - it is Findén of Clonard who shines the brightest and, not least, is provided with the clearest identity. As we have seen earlier, the status of a saint was closely connected to the status of the dynasty promoting them. A local saint of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne would presumably not be of large influence in the 12th century as the once great kingdom was greatly reduced by then. As seen above, ecclesiastical families of the territory appear to have made success in other, greater churches.

⁹⁴ J. O'Brien: *Focaloir Gaoidhilge-Sax-Bearha* (1768)

⁹⁵ Byrne 2001:242

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Nothing is left of Comán but a brief mention. Supposing the extant tale is a reworking of an earlier tale, obscuring the saint of Cenn Mara could be seen as an intentional move to promote the saint of Clonard. The third saintly person of the frame story, the nameless erenagh of Clochar appears to have a diminished role as well. Though he is an instrument for the brothers' conversion he doesn't stay in the tale for more than sending them off to Findén, who thereafter takes on the role as leading authority.

3.6 Attacks on Tuaim

The Tuaim ravaged by the Uí Chorra brothers in ICUC has been assumed to be the town Toirdelbhach Ua Conchobhair made his church capital in the 12th century⁹⁷. In the 12th century text it seems logical that the brothers start their war on the Church with the prime church of the province. However, nothing in the text makes this a certainty. As mentioned above, Tuaim Gréine have also been called Cnoc Gréine⁹⁸, the site attacked by the sons of the ancient warrior Conall of Carn Chonaill. There is a likely possibility that the earlier scenario of an attack on Tuaim by the sons of Conall might have been revised into a 12th century context, where it once more is relevant. Herbert points out the technique of recycling older tales to make a statement about the present in her article "The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca: A Twelfth-Century Tale"⁹⁹, where she argues the legendary king Muirchertach and his choices are analogous to the contemporary Muirchertach mac Lochlainn.

The Uí Chorra brothers make their decision of going to sea as they are standing at the shores of Cenn Mara. Looking at the ocean they say to each other: *'cia leith i téit in grian ó théit fon fairge?'* ('In what direction goes the sun when it goes under the sea?') It is tempting to view the line as a reference to the story of Grian. Grian transformed Conall's sons into badgers, in which form they were hunted and killed. In a christianised setting, the Uí Chorra brothers went through a transformation of a spiritual kind and are "dead" from their earlier, evil lives.

3.7 Uí Fhiachrach Aidne in the 12th century

What significance could a literary fable of an Aidnean hostel have in the 12th century? Little of Guaire's kingdom remained in the hands of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne into the 12th century. The 8th century decline made room for the Dál Cais kingdom of Thomond¹⁰⁰. Additionally, the expanding Uí Briúin was pushing the borders from the north. Uí Maine

⁹⁷ Breatnach "Transmission and Structure" p.107

⁹⁸ J. O'Brien: *Focaloir Gaoidhilge-Sax-Bearha* (1768)

⁹⁹ in Proceedings of the 4th Symposium of SCN (1997)

¹⁰⁰ Byrne 2001:218

pushed the Uí Briúin southwards and westwards as they themselves were under attack from Uí Briúin Aí in the north¹⁰¹. Aidne, which used to be the largest kingdom of Connacht, became a diminutive territory surrounded by powerful neighbours. In the 12th century these appear to have been the Uí Bhriain of Munster and the Uí Chonchobair of Connacht. Máelruanaid Ua hEidhin, king of Aidne, died while fighting for Brian Boromha in the Battle of Clontarf in 1014¹⁰². Under 1092, the Annals of Tigernach report that Aodh Ua Conchobair was taken prisoner by Brian [sic] and the kingship of Síol Muiredaig was given to Giolla na Naomh Ua hEidhin¹⁰³. The Annals of the Four Masters gives Giolla na Naomh another family name, Ua Conchobair¹⁰⁴. Perhaps he was perceived as a Conchobair upon entering the kingship, or perhaps the UFA families were primarily identified with their neighbours. In 1100, however, this king died and, as we may expect he was buried at Clonmacnoise¹⁰⁵.

The extent of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne's independence seem to be subject to different points of view. Two reports of the same event, found in the Annals of Tigernach and the Annals of the Four Masters, bear testimony of this. Clonmacnoise-based AT reports under the year of 1055 that '*Domnall rí O Fiachrach Aidhne tre tang[n]acht adbath*. (Domhnall king of the Uí Fhiachrach of Aidne perished through treachery¹⁰⁶.) The source of FM, on the other hand, does not seem to perceive Domhnall as the king of Aidne: *Domhnal Ruadh ua Briain do mharbhadh do h-Ua Eidhin do tigherna Ua Fiachrach Aidhne*. (Domhnall Ruadh Ua Briain was slain by Ua h-Eidhin, lord of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne.) If Byrne is correct in his assertion that FM too was derived from Clonmacnoise-based material¹⁰⁷, there seems to be a difference of opinion in the same milieu. At any rate the two reports seem to demonstrate that the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne territory was recognised with some level of independence by some - notably by the contributors of the Annals of Tigernach - while others perceived it merely as a territory subordinate the Uí Bhriain of Munster.

The mythic concept of the sovereignty woman accompanying the favoured king appears to be reflected in the fate of Cailleach Dé ní hEidhin. Céitinn writes in *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*: '*Cailleach Dhé inghean Uí Éidhne máthair Mhuirheartaigh Uí Bhriain agus máthair Ruaidhrí Uí Chonchubhair*', (Cailleach Dhé daughter of Uí hEidhin was the mother of

¹⁰¹ Byrne 2001:237

¹⁰² FM 1014.2

¹⁰³ AT 1092.5

¹⁰⁴ FM 1092.17

¹⁰⁵ AT 1100.4

¹⁰⁶ AT 1055.11

¹⁰⁷ Byrne 2001:237

Muirchertach Uí Bhriain and the mother of Ruaidhrí Uí Chonchobair)¹⁰⁸. This indicates that she first must have been a wife of Toirdealbhach Ua Briain, king of Munster. The son of this union, Muirchertach Ua Briain, would succeed his father and be one of the main benefactors of the church reform in the 12th century. Further, Cailleach Dé must thereafter have entered a union with Toirdelbhach Ua Conchobair of Connacht, nephew and rival of Muirchertach Ua Briain. This marriage produced a son, Ruaidhrí, and a daughter, Mór¹⁰⁹. Ruaidhrí would eventually succeed his father as king of Connacht. The marriage affairs of Cailleach Dé may demonstrate the tricky balancing act the Ua hEidhin lords of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne had to perform in relation to its two powerful neighbours. Additionally, it may illustrate the political significance of marriage alliances.

Ruaidhrí Ua Conchobair would eventually succeed his father as king of Connacht, though Ruaidhrí's early revolt and Toirdelbach's long imprisonment of his son shows that the relationship between the two was strained.

In 1114, the year of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair's first great uprising against Muirchertach Ua Briain, he appears to take some liberties with the territory of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne as well: '*Síl Muiredhaigh do dul í n-Aidhniu do chaithem a feoír 7 a h-arba*', (Síl Muiredaig invades Aidne to consume its grass and corn)¹¹⁰.

In 1121 Aedh Ua hEidhin, variously titled lord or king of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne, was killed while following Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair on a raid into Munster. Munster-based Annals of Inisfallen praises the Desmumu for thus avenging a plundering of Lismore, before the plunder could take place.

It seems then, that the Aidnean lords were under much pressure from their powerful neighbours Uí Bhriain and Uí Chonchobair, and that attempts in achieving some of their former greatness fell short.

If the king of Connacht treated the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne with suspicion while Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair filled the position, this seems to have changed when his son from the marriage with Cailleach Dé ní hEidhin came into his heritage. In 1166 it is reported that hostages from Bréifne to Ruaidhrí Ua Conchobair is sent to Tír Fhiachrach Aidne¹¹¹, not to Síl Muiredaig. Trusting hostages with his mother's kin seems to be a sign of a confident relationship.

¹⁰⁸ *Foras Feasa* part XXVII

¹⁰⁹ *Dictionary of Irish Biography* p.572

¹¹⁰ AT 1114.10

¹¹¹ FM 1166.16

3.8 A hypothetical parable

An experimental reading of the frame story as a fable over the 12th century situation of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne, may give the following result:

Uí Fhiachrach Aidne: Diminished, tributary kingdom between Munster and Connacht.	The kingdom's future is threatened because there is no heir able of restoring the greatness of the past.	Problem is solved by striking a deal with an 'enemy' lord. Cailleach Dé is wed to Ua Conchobair and carries him a son.	Plan backfires, as Ruaidhri's attempt to seize the kingship is unsuccessful. Toirdelbach imprisons him.	Ruaidhrí eventually succeeds Toirdelbach, to the benefit of his mother's kin.
<i>Immram Curaig Ua Corra:</i> A hostel, maintained and used, but without a king.	The hostel's future is threatened because no heir lives long enough to succeed Conall Derg.	Striking a deal with the Devil solves the problem, after which Cáerderg carries three sons.	Plan backfires because of the sons' relationship to the Devil, who holds sway over them.	The sons withdraw their loyalty from the Devil and enter the Church through their mother's kin.

As an additional detail, we may note how Cailleach Dé's name appears to associate the lady with the Church, due to its meaning 'nun/woman of God'. Her presumed literary parallel Cáerderg, similarly has a connection to the Church as the daughter of an erenagh.

3.9 The moral legacy of Guaire

It must however also be emphasised that dynastic struggles is neither the only nor necessarily the main subject of the extant ICUC. An incident during the voyage involving arguably a 'sovereignty woman' may indeed indicate the voyagers accepting that sovereignty is not for them¹¹².

As a Christian text in a Christian context, the action of the characters are directed towards an afterlife and in this respect the legendary king of Aidne may have been an inspirational source on account of his humility, hospitality and righteous conduct.

During the voyage, the Uí Chorra encounter the Mill of Niggardliness. An enormous, black and hideous miller throws every kind of jewels, treasures and kind into the mill. When the boat's crew ask him what he is doing, he replies that *'cach ní ara ndéntar cessacht isin domun, (...) is é sin doberimse I mbél in muilinn si'*, ('everything to which niggardliness has been shown in the world, that is what I cast into the mouth of this mill')¹¹³. Guaire and his wish in CCC, to be granted a church's fill of gold and silver, may have been the model for the ICUC take on the Mill. Guaire, though, desires these riches not for worldly greed, but bestow it on the saints and the poor.¹¹⁴

In the 9th century poem 'King and hermit'¹¹⁵, we find a dialogue between Guaire and the hermit Marbán wherein the final stanza Guaire expresses a wish to abandon his royal duty and live a life like the holy man. The longest and perhaps most prominent plot line of ICUC is the brothers' way from a secular life with destructive habits and short term goals to a more holy life with prospects for eternity. After a year in pastoral care at Clonard, they set out with a newfound curiosity about the options they now have. They even appear to contemplate anchorism, a choice that is discouraged during their voyage.

Reading the text with the traditions of the Uí Fhiachradh Aidne in mind gives the impression that one of the layers in the text is of 'Aidnean' origin. The toned down saint of Cenn Mara, a site within Aidnean borders, may have belonged to this 'layer', as Cenn Mara lay within UFA

¹¹² Chpt 7 (vision 10)

¹¹³ van Hamel (ed.) line 378-379

¹¹⁴ Cath Carn Chonaill §13 - ZCP 3 (1901)

¹¹⁵ Murphy 1962:11

territory. The fact that this saint is toned down in favour of another saint may suggest that the extant ICUC received a new layer of processing on top of the Aidnean text.

The best preserved memory of Aidne throughout the extant text as a whole appears to be the moral qualities associated with Guaire – that moral victory should be more praiseworthy than earthly glory.

4. Influences in Church and Society Prior to the 12th Century

Synods

The 12th century was a time of great changes in social structures. Brian Boru's attempt to achieve the legendary high-kingship of Ireland was largely successful and set the scene for intense struggles. The social situation may be what sparked the composing of *immrama*. IMD and ICUC appear to belong to the same period – the latter make references to the other. What events and clima led to the church reform? Was there a growing secularisation and deterioration of spirituality that led to the reform efforts of the 12th century, similarly to the situation that earlier sparked the Céli Dé? This chapter is an attempt to describe elements in the build-up to the reforms of the 12th century, which may have contributed to the clima in which *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* was composed.

4.1 The Irish Church and Learning

Ireland appears to have been a fragmented society in the first centuries after the introduction of Christianity, with a disorderly conglomerate of dynastic segments and monastic units. Hughes states that some churches were erected on earlier pagan grounds¹¹⁶. Several commentators have highlighted St Brigit's cult at Kildare as an example of a pagan cult developed into a Christian church¹¹⁷, a development that is likely to have occurred other places as well.

Untouched by the Roman Empire, the church in Ireland had not an administrative structure resembling the one elsewhere in the western church through which papal governance might have been easier channeled. The ecclesiastical system in Ireland may be easier to make out

¹¹⁶ Hughes "Church in Irish Society 4-800" p.313

¹¹⁷ For instance by McCone in *Pagan past* 2000:164-165

after the monastic schools wins ground, in effect from middle and second half of the 7th century when Findén and Ciarán were founding houses¹¹⁸.

Communities attached to a saint called *paruchia* were private foundations on family land. At the core of every ecclesiastical unit was a monastic community, sometimes with smaller churches nearby dependent on it. Kenney also mentions the occasional solitary church, held by a hermit priest leading a life of asceticism. A church like this might develop into a larger monastery.

Presiding over the monastic community was the abbot. He was regarded as the heir, or *coarb* of the founding saint. The coarb was chosen from the saint's blood relations, or, if no qualified candidate thereof was to be found, from the family who owned the land granted to the monastery.

Among the inhabitants of the monastery were the *manaig*, which Hughes divides into two types: Some were 'choir monks'; those who performed the *opus dei*, manned the *scriptoria* and provided monastic officials. The others were married laymen living on monastic lands. They paid tithes and were under ecclesiastical discipline, and they also had a number of rights, including education for sons. Hughes says there's evidence an abbot may be provided from them. Regarding how *paruchiae* came to be, she suggests that families might have agreed to turn themselves and their property to a monastery.¹¹⁹

Learning was of monumental importance in the time prior to reforms. While in the 6th century there appear to have been a void between the cleric and the *filid*, but by the 11th century the void seems to be gone.¹²⁰ The monasteries maintained *scriptoriae* and schools, there was much prestige in these and literary production was encouraged. She states that voyages and visions had a flowering in the period after 800 – of which the early voyage tale *Navigatio Brendani* is a prime example. Laymen may have been impressed by asceticism and admired Brendan setting out on a sea pilgrimage in the mercy of the 'Lord of the Elements', though it was not for them.¹²¹

4.2 Céli Dé

The Céli Dé movement was evidently a reaction to what was perceived as worldliness in the church. Peter O'Dwyer and Kathleen Hughes have called it a reform movement, though later commentators such as Colman Etchingham, who ascribes the phenomenon to continuity, have

¹¹⁸ Hughes "Church in Irish Society 4-800" p.311-312

¹¹⁹ Hughes 1987:IX-30

¹²⁰ Hughes "The Irish Church 800-1050"

¹²¹ Hughes 1987:IX-32

contested this sentiment ¹²². It might merely have constituted an Irish take on asceticism, not a reaction to a system, as the system still lacked uniformity.

Byrne estimates the impact of the movement primarily affecting a triangle in southeast Ireland: From Dublin-Shannon (Lough Derg), down the Barrow valley and transversely through eastern Munster.¹²³ The movement was influential from at least the 8th century – the end of which saw an increase in violent contentions involving dynasties and monasteries, noticeably in the area of Céli Dé influence. The Annals of Ulster reports in 774 a ‘disturbance of the fair by Donnchad’, king of Leinster. In the following year several violent incidents occur in Leinster: Kildare is burned, so is Glendalough. Donnchad also attacks Clonard. In secular law the relationship between a *manach* and abbot was treated similarly to the one between a *céle*, ‘client’ and lord. Byrne suggests members of the movement may have styled themselves *Céli Dé* as a rebuke towards this ‘lordship’. ¹²⁴ The movement may have primarily promoted spiritual purification of men already *in* religious orders, emphasising the importance of canonical hours, private prayer, martyrologies, learning, and sabbatarianism.

The Céli Dé communities had their golden age alongside the coming of the Vikings and suffered greatly from the nearby viking settlements. Hughes accentuates the lack of administration as a cause for the deterioration of the reform movement when the initial enthusiasm faded¹²⁵. The spirit of the movement, the evangelical piety left a lasting impression. Byrne points to early versions of high crosses, influenced by Carolingian art and ideals about Christian kingship. Further have the devotional texts of Céli Dé exercised great influence, among these the martyrologies – most famously the Martyrology of Óengus and the text it is based on, the Martyrology of Tallaght. The Martyrology of Óengus is, as we have seen earlier, the first extant text in which the trio of Lochán, Énna and Silvester is found together. Lochán and Énna may have been venerated by the culdees in Tallaght as the church of those two, Kilnamanagh, is located in the same area south of Dublin.

The Céli Dé asserted themselves on the political stage by mediating between Uí Néill and the Laigin. Byrne tells an abbot of Céli Dé house in Finglas presided over a synod in 780 from which the two kings appear to have come to an agreement. A more peaceful Leinster province would also be of great benefit to the Céli Dé houses. Intervening in conflicts and negotiating

¹²² Etchingham 1999:361

¹²³ Byrne 2001:157-158

¹²⁴ Byrne 2001:157

¹²⁵ Hughes 1987:IX-32

between secular rulers would however become an imperative role of the head clerics in 12th century.

The Céli Dé continued to exist after the ideal of asceticism in the church faded. According to Dorothy Africa, groups of the Céli Dé are reported to have remained at the large monasteries. As far as up until the 16th century there were Culdees at Armagh.

Peter O'Dwyer includes in his work about the Céli Dé¹²⁶ pilgrimage as an ideal within monastic life from the close of 6th century. Pilgrimage was encouraged for two reasons: Firstly, parting from home and friends for the love of Christ was beneficial to the pilgrim's self-purification process. Secondly, it gave opportunities to preach to people 'in darkness'. O'Dwyer writes that pilgrimage could also be employed as a form of punishment: A monk stealing bread could be sent away to serve under the 'yoke of a strange abbot'.

The attitude towards longer pilgrimages appears to have changed. In the 7th century they were criticised as useless wanderings, also by Maelruain of Tallaght, who writes that the elders generally agreed that anyone who journeyed outside Ireland was a denier of Patrick in heaven and of the faith in Erin¹²⁷.

4.3 Rome

While Rome and Ireland may have been two very different worlds in many ways, the papal capital appears to have had an increasing appeal also to lay rulers in the time before the church reforms. Gwynn¹²⁸ reports that in 11th century there was practically a procession of royal pilgrimages to Rome. Knut, king of Denmark and England, secured a guarantee of safe passage for pilgrims from the north that also Irish pilgrims would benefit from. King Sitric of Dublin went with the king of Brega, Flanducan Ua Cellaig in 1028. Sitric returned to Dublin the same year. Flanducan seems to have abdicated his kingship as he died a pilgrim in 1060 and Brega had a new king in 1029.

While the safe passage might have been a welcome and encouraging advantage, Irish pilgrimages to Rome began before this, and continued after Knut's death. This activity shows there was a high level of devotion towards Rome in all of Ireland¹²⁹.

¹²⁶ O'Dwyer *Céli Dé: Spiritual Reform in Ireland 750-900* (1981:111)

¹²⁷ Proc. RIA 29 C (1911) 133 (O'Dwyer 1981:112)

¹²⁸ Gwynn 1992:85

¹²⁹ Ibid

Outside of Ireland, the 11th century was marked by reform efforts by Pope Gregory VII. One of the first effects in Ireland of the church ideals spreading on the continent may be seen in a Munster king ending his days in Roman exile:

Donnchad mac Brian Boromha assumed the kingship of Brian Boromha, king of Munster and high-king of Ireland, when his older brother Tadhg was murdered. While it was rumored that Donnchad had instigated this murder, there is no proof thereof. However, Donnchad made serious efforts to conduct moral and ecclesiastical reforms during his reign. The Annals of Inisfallen recounts under the year of 1040 that Donnchad enacted a law to the effect that none should dare to steal, do feats of arms on Sunday, or go out on Sunday carrying any load. In 1050 same source reports that Brian's son enacted a great law. The Annals of the Four Masters elaborates this law of 1050: '*Doinend mhór do thiachtain h-i t-tír Ereann, co rucc ith, 7 bliocht, 7 mess, 7 iascc ó dhaoibh, co ro fhás eisionnracus h-i cach, co ná h-aincedh ceall na dún na cairdes Criost na comluighe, go ro tionólsat cléirigh Mumhan, 7 a laoich, 7 a rioghraidh im Donnchadh mac Briain .i. mac righ Ereann, 7 im Céle mac Donnacáin, im cenn crabhaidh Ereann co Cill Da Lua, co ro ordaighsiot cáin 7 coscc gach indlighidh o bhiucc co mór. Tucc Dia síth & soinenn for sliocht na cána-sin*'. (Much inclement weather happened in the land of Ireland, which carried away corn, milk, fruit, and fish, from the people, so that there grew up dishonesty among all, that no protection was extended to church or fortress, gossiped or mutual oath, until the clergy and laity of Munster assembled, with their chieftains, under Donnchadh, son of Brian, i.e. the son of the King of Ireland, at Cill-Dalua, where they enacted a law and a restraint upon every injustice, from small to great. God gave peace and favourable weather in consequence of this law)¹³⁰. Laws against 'every injustice' were enacted and in consequence God gave peace and favourable weather. Gwynn sees these efforts as an attempt by Donnchad to revive the ancient Irish law of Sunday, *Cáin Domnaig*, last revisited in the 9th century. Gwynn further points out that the events that unfolded on the continent must have influenced Ireland greatly, as the efforts of establishing *Pax Dei* paralleled the acts of Donnchad¹³¹.

When Toirdelbach, the son of Donnchad's brother Tadhg, came of age, he reclaimed the throne of Munster. Aided by his protector Diarmaid mac Mael na mBó he was successful with this. The dethroned Donnchad leaves Ireland to go on a pilgrimage to Rome. Gwynn writes that English propagandists' version of the lost Annals of Clonmacnoise later put it upon Donnchad to have brought the crown of Ireland with him on this pilgrimage, and presented it

¹³⁰ FM 1050.16

¹³¹ Gwynn 1992:88

to the pope, who then again gave it to Henry II – an absurd claim as the concept of crowning was not known in Ireland as it was in Britain and France.

What is true of the pilgrimage, however, is that Echmarcach, the former king of Man, joined the former king of Munster. Both exiles died in Rome, Donnchad in 1064. This year seems to mark a sudden cessation in pilgrimages to the papal capital. The next pilgrimage to be recorded is in 1134. Gwynn explains this with William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066 and a firm control of Irish pilgrims. Additionally, Lanfranc of Canterbury is likely to have taken any opportunity to extend the jurisdiction of his archbishopric and act as intermediary between Rome and Ireland.

The voyage part of ICUC includes an emphasis on sabbatarianism. Hellish visions of people performing specific chores on Sundays are shown to the travellers, which could be a reflection of the acts banned by Donnchad in 1040: stealing, doing feats of arms and carrying loads on Sundays. Additionally, in the final sequence of ICUC there is talk of pilgrimage to Rome. The efforts of Donnchad would presumably be valued by a majority of ecclesiastics, but this entry from the Annals of the Four Masters in the year 1044 may show he was extraordinary diplomatic in his affairs with Clonmacnoise, perhaps securing a lasting reputation with the community of Cíaran: "*Cluain-mic-Nois was plundered by the Munstermen, in the absence of Donnchadh, son of Brian. Donnchadh afterwards gave satisfaction to the church, to wit, perfect freedom of the church to God and to Ciaran till the day of judgment, and forty cows to be given by him immediately; and he gave a curse to any one of the Munstermen that should ever inflict any injury upon the clergy of Ciaran.*"¹³²

4.4 Vikings

The Viking attacks and eventual settlements appear to have deeply affected Irish society, though it is disputed to what extent it affected the institutions. Unlike in England, the Vikings did not take over entire kingdoms and O Corráin notes that the major monasteries in Ireland continued as before. As to Vikings causing the passing of the 'old order', he remarks that the 'old order' if ever there was one had passed away long before the Vikings' arrival¹³³.

Violence, even intermonastic violence was not new in Ireland, judging by the annals. The Vikings attacks may, however, have had more severe results. O Corráin notes that Vikings were after plunder, captives, and food – all of which could be found in monastic cities¹³⁴.

¹³² FM 1044.11

¹³³ O Corráin "Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland" in Foster (ed.) 1989:34-35

¹³⁴ Ibid:35

Attacks with the purpose of robbing the place of material values and random people may have been felt more frightening and violent. Hughes claims that in comparison to Viking attacks, the Irish attacks on monastic communities could be regarded as a ‘sport for the aristocracy’ where raths were not burned down, common people got out of the way, the victor took the cattle and went home¹³⁵.

Hughes further remarks that the many annalistic records of ‘saints’ laws’ seem to cease at the same time Viking settlements appear in Ireland and suggests this could be a sign of resignation – what was the point of legislating against violence to non-combatants, damage to ecclesiastical property or cattle lifting when Vikings were killing wantonly, shipping Irish women to slave markets in Norway and seizing monastic treasures¹³⁶?

Violated sanctuaries secured compensation or cursed the offender. One of the many annalistic references to saints avenging their sanctuaries is found in the Annals of the Four Masters under the year 1044: ‘*Cluain Mic Nóis do orgain do Chonmhaicnibh, & do-rad Dia & Ciarán móir-dhioghail forra ind*’, (Cluain-mic-Nois was plundered by the Conmhaicni, and God and Ciaran wreaked great vengeance upon them for it (...))¹³⁷. As to invocations of divine revenge, the Vikings were ready to kill clerics, seize valuables, and burn churches without care for anyone’s rights or fear for supernatural vengeance¹³⁸.

Gwynn states, however, that the worst period of Viking raids ended with the battle of Clontarf in 1014.¹³⁹ The Viking settlements became more involved with the dynastic struggles so characteristic for Irish society. Diarmait mac Máel na mBó captured Dublin in 1052 and controlled thereafter the Viking towns of Dublin, Waterford and Wexford. As Diarmait was an ally of the last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold Godwinsson, his court became a center of resistance against Normans. Additionally, Diarmait’s son Muirchad made Isle of Man tributary to his father’s kingship in 1061¹⁴⁰. Commenting on William the Conqueror’s approach on the British Isles, Hudson holds the worry of an Irish, Danish and Anglo-Saxon alliance as the main reason the Normans at first maintained a friendly relationship with Ireland.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Hughes “The Irish Church 800-1050” p.663 in Ó Cróinín (ed.)

¹³⁶ Hughes 1987:VIII p.112

¹³⁷ FM 1044.12

¹³⁸ Introduction by Hughes, Otwen-Ruthway (1968:26)

¹³⁹ Gwynn 1992:41

¹⁴⁰ Hudson 2006:110

¹⁴¹ Ibid:111

Muirchertach Ua Briain, son of Toirdelbach, appear to have intervened in a Scandinavian venture. Annalistic sources claim the Norse king Maghnus attempted to conquer Ireland. A truce was, however, accomplished between him and Muirchertach, which was sealed in 1102 with marriage between Muirchertach's daughter and Maghnus' son. Maghnus was shortly after killed in Ulster and the truce was over, as was the marriage. This episode depicts Muirchertach Ua Briain as a progressive and visionary ruler, open to diplomatic agreements with foreign lords, a feature seemingly characteristic for him. Additionally, it demonstrates the use of marriage in connection to political alliances - and, not least, how fragile such unions could be. Ireland would be criticised for maintaining an attitude towards marriage that commentators on the continent felt was incompatible with Christian marriage values.

In literature, the Vikings, or, 'foreigners' remained associated with mindless violence, even after the Scandinavian settlers were relatively well integrated in society, i.e. 11th and 12th century¹⁴². In the context of ICUC, the Uí Chorra brothers' violent rampage through Connacht could be inspired by experiences with Viking attacks. Additionally, the attacks by heathen enemies with no regard for the sanctity of the churches might have awoken memories of the *díberga*, heathen brigands attacking the churches in earlier days. Perhaps, when the author endeavoured to describe the worst evil he knew of in the acts of the Uí Chorra, the phenomena of *díberga* and Viking attacks came first to mind.

Kenney remarks that the ultimate effect of the Viking attacks seems to have been stimulating. Those two centuries of alternate disaster and triumph resulted in rejuvenation in literature and scholarship¹⁴³.

4.5 Canterbury

The aspirations of Britain's archbishopric Canterbury to include Ireland under its jurisdiction is evident in archbishop Lanfranc's intervention with the affairs of the Irish Church. The Hiberno-Norse bishops of Dublin and Waterford were trained in England and consecrated by the Archbishop in Canterbury.

Diarmait mac Máel na mBó perished on the battlefield in 1072, fighting the Maelsechlainn king of Tara. Diarmait's puppet king in Dublin died the same year, as did Dúnán, the first bishop of Dublin. Diarmait's protegee (foster-son), the Munster king Toirdelbach Ua Briain

¹⁴² E.g. in the 11th century narrative *Cogadh Gáedel re Gallaibh*

¹⁴³ Kenney 1966:12

appear to have resumed some of Diarmait's offices in the aftermath of his death. That is, in the period 1070-72 Toirdelbach Ua Briain invaded Leinster on Diarmait's behalf to restore order, and after Diarmait's death he kept it¹⁴⁴. Many replacements happened at the same time and Hudson¹⁴⁵ notes that the year 1072 marked a change in Hiberno-English affairs.

Toirdelbach Ua Briain joined the new Norse king Godfrey of Dublin in an application to Lanfranc of Canterbury in which they asked him to consecrate Dúnán's successor, the Irish monk Gillpatrick. In response, Lanfranc wrote a short reply to Godfrey and an elaborate to Toirdelbach where he praised him as the *magnifico Hiberniae regi Terdelbach* – flattery appreciated by a king contending for high-kingship.

Simmes notes that Dublin, along with the other Norse seaports, became subject to Canterbury¹⁴⁶. The contact established between Toirdelbach Ua Briain and Lanfranc, however, seems to have been at least one of the elements spurring the church reform. The Gillpatrick passed on letters from Lanfranc to the king of Dublin and Toirdelbach Ua Briain, concerning eradicating what was seen as "evil customs" in Ireland. The early stages of the reform started thus as a co-operation between Ua Briain, certain Irish bishops and Canterbury. Hudson relates that Toirdelbach's son Muirchertach, who assumed kingship in 1086, continued the friendly relations with Canterbury.

In the 12th century, however, the general attitude towards Canterbury would change.

4.7 Secularisation?

Regarding secularisation of the Irish society supposedly leading to the church reform of the 12th century, several elements speak against this.

Firstly, the end of the 11th century was apparently marked by a heightened fear of Judgement Day. According to Hudson, scholarly considerations of the Last Things gave this result: The notion of living in the Final Age was not new; it surfaces in texts associated with Patrick in the 5th century and Gildas in the 6th. However, Hudson holds that eschatological speculation had been immersed in the Irish culture and resulted in specific ideas about what would happen to Ireland in the End. One of the more frightening ideas was that an ill fate awaited the Irish people because a Gaelic druid, Mog Roth, supposedly had been the executioner of John the Baptist. The panic culminating in 1096 was connected to the Feast of John the Baptist. The violence and struggles within both secular and ecclesiastical Ireland made matters worse. The

¹⁴⁴ Hudson 2006:113

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Simms "The Norman invasion and the Gaelic recovery" p.54 in Foster (ed.)

saints of Ireland were thought to be mediators on behalf of the people. Fears arose regarding patron saints refusing to revisit their sanctuaries because of repeated destruction. Hudson points to the ‘second’ Vision of Adomnán, which includes complaints about the destruction of holy places as an evil of the time. The text also lists ungodly teachers, impious kings and morally lax as particularly wicked individuals¹⁴⁷.

Hudson holds voyage tales and visions as literary effects of the apocalypticism, concerned as they are with spiritual purification and renewal. Rebuilding of churches was another important theme, as ICUC is an example of.

The Annals of Ulster and the Annals of the Four Masters describe both the panic at the feast of St. John in 1096, here quoting the latter: *Feil Eóin for Aoine isin m-bliadhain-si. Ro ghabh imeagla mhór Fíora Ereann reimpi, conadh i comhairle ar-riacht lá cleirchibh Ereann im comarba Phátraicc dia n-imdhiden ar an tedhmain ro tircanadh dóibh ó chéin a forchongra for chach a c-coitchinne tredhenos ó Chedaoin go Domhnach do dénamh gacha mís, & troscadh gach laoi go cenn m-bliadhna, cenmotát domhnaighe, & sollamna, & aird-fheile, & dan do-ratsat almsana, & edbarta iomdha do Dhia. Tuccadh dan feranna iomdha do eccailsibh, & chléircibh, ó ríoghaibh, & taoisechaibh, & ro saortha Fir Ereann an tucht sin ar téine na díoghla.* (The festival of John fell on Friday this year; the men of Ireland were seized with great fear in consequence, and the resolution adopted by the clergy of Ireland, with the successor of Patrick at their head, to protect them against the pestilence which had been predicted to them at a remote period, was, to command all in general to observe abstinence, from Wednesday till Sunday, every month, and to fast on one meal every day till the end of a year, except on Sundays, solemnities, and great festivals; and they also made alms and many offerings to God; and many lands were granted to churches and clergymen by kings and chieftains; and the men of Ireland were saved for that time from the fire of vengeance)¹⁴⁸

It is notable that it is the coarb of Patrick who leads the efforts here. In 1096 this would be a coarb of the Uí Sínaich dynasty, a branch of the Uí Ehdach of Airgialla. In the view of vigorous reformers on the continent, the Uí Sínaich may have represented practically everything that was wrong in Ireland. Coarbs of Patrick had been supplied from the Sínaich from the late 8th century and from at least 965 until 1134 it was a hereditary office, held for the most part by married laymen. As Hughes argues, however, this system might be regarded

¹⁴⁷ Hudson 2000:116 in Bynum et al (ed.)

¹⁴⁸ FM 1096.9

as merely old-fashioned, and not necessarily a sign of secularisation, as married clergy was a common phenomenon elsewhere before the 4th century¹⁴⁹.

The last abbot of the Uí Sinaíoch, Cellach, broke the tradition and turned against the interests of his family by taking ecclesiastical orders and appointing a successor outside of the family. This successor was Máel Mádóc Ua Morgair, a reform-minded cleric from Armagh. In the *Life of Malachy*, written by his continental supporter Bernard of Clairvaux, the Sínaich abbots are harshly described as a 'viperous brood' and 'an evil and adulterous generation', which probably is a reflection of how the continental church saw the hereditary system in Ireland. We can probably expect it did not make the matters better in the eyes of Bernard that the Sínaich were protesting Malachy as a successor for the very reason that the office was disinherited.

The way the coarb of Patrick attended to his office bears no witness of moral laxity. As seen earlier, the dread of the Apocalypse appears to have been prevalent also in Armagh. Hughes maintains that the vices of Ireland largely could be summed up as being old-fashioned. She states that pre-Christian society was polygamous and before the 4th century, married clergy was common elsewhere. However, Brehon law being upheld in the matter of marriage practices prior to the 12th century may have looked alien and immoral in continental eyes, as could the hereditary system. What she does point out as the "special" secular evil of Ireland, however, were the violent conflicts, not only between lay rulers, but also between monasteries and indeed within the monasteries themselves¹⁵⁰.

The life of the reclusive ascetic was of course unattainable for the majority. Dorothy Africa writes that a consequence of idealising this life was neglect of pastoral care and instruction of laity¹⁵¹. Criticism against this shortcoming seems to have struck a note with ecclesiastical authors. Narratives about voyages to sea demonstrate a change of focus from the heroic saint to lay characters with arguably relatable situations, i.e. the vengeance theme of *Immram Máel Dúin* and the anti-violence theme and optimistic message of salvation permeating *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*.

We may expect that many in both lay and ecclesiastical circles felt the need for renewal within the church and a larger focus on pastoral care, though not everyone may have been entirely supportive of all the features the reforming process brought.

¹⁴⁹ Hughes 1987:IX p.29

¹⁵⁰ Hughes 1987:IX p.34

¹⁵¹ "Church Reform" p.90 in *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture* (Donnelly 2004)

Hughes points out that the hereditary system did not have a negative effect on learning, as monasteries were rather proud of their schools.¹⁵² The works composed in the *scriptoria* appear to be spiritually vibrant – Hudson recognises an imaginative genius in literature up until the reform.¹⁵³ This is an aspect that may have been underplayed by the reformers.

5. Immram Curaig Ua Corra and the 12th Century

This chapter will concern the events and debates that may have shaped the extant *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* in the century of the synods. Elements of particular interest is the Connacht setting and the church at Tuaim, which is the first to be destroyed and the first to be rebuilt by the Uí Chorra. The prominent position of Tuaim seems likely to be connected to the accomplishments of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair and the creation of an archbishopric at Tuaim da Gualann. Breatnach has suggested the extant tale is written in a *terminus post quem* of 1152, when Tuaim dá Gualann attained archiepiscopal status at the synod of Kells-Mellifont.

The employment of Findén of Clonard is likely to have a connection to the 12th century. Findén emerging as the dominant saint among the holy persons figuring in the text creates the impression that the extant text got its ‘finishing touch’ by promoters of Clonard.

In the voyage part of the text, a certain enmity towards Armagh may be detected. A sequence appears borrowed from and refers directly to *Immram Máel Dúin*, but the honoring of the Patrician capital, which appears in IMD, seems deliberately removed in ICUC. This may be explained by contemporary circumstances.

Clochar, the home of the Uí Chorra brothers’ erenagh grandfather, seems to have some significance, as may Emly, which is represented in the voyage part by an island community populated by the crew of ‘Ailbe’s second boat’.

5.1 Internal enemies

A point worth noticing is that ICUC speaks of no enemy from the outside. There is no foreign threat or presence in the shape of Vikings or Normans. The enemy comes from within. The goodwill and efforts of primarily Clochar and Clonard, along with divine providence, convert the wild, young men of Connacht into useful members of the Church. Connacht

¹⁵² Hughes 1987:IX p.31

¹⁵³ Hudson 2000:118 in Bynum et al (ed.)

before the rise of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair is described by Francic J. Byrne as ‘*a backwater whose affairs impinged little on the main course of Irish history*’¹⁵⁴. Literary villains of Connacht surfacing coincidingly with a king of Connacht taking a high seat in major politics seems an unlikely coincidence.

5.2 Kingship and church politics

In Ireland, the 12th century was marked by struggles for high-kingship in which church politics came to play a significant part. Before the arrival of the Normans in 1170, the ecclesiastical system was restructured from one based on monastic units to a diocesan system. A cleanup of moral standards was another important part of the reform.

Topics addressed in the Gregorian reform on the continent primarily concerned investiture of ecclesiastics, simony, and clerical marriage. The initial reform efforts in Ireland seem to reflect this. The initiative to make changes in the Irish Church came at first from Rome by way of Canterbury. So it appears from Archbishop Lanfranc’s correspondence with the most influential king in mid-11th century Ireland, Toirdelbach Ua Briain, in which he complains about certain abuses in ecclesiastical ranks. Toirdelbach, grandson of Brian Boromha and nephew of the earlier reform promoter Donnchad, whom he succeeded, was positive towards the wishes of Canterbury. This resulted in the first of the great synods, which was held at Cashel in 1101.

5.3 Reformers

During the first synod Muirchertach Ua Briain, king of Munster, famously gave the royal city of Cashel as an offering to St Patrick and the Lord. The actual significance of this has been debated. Ó Cróinín suggests this shows that the act had more psychological than political significance¹⁵⁵. Cashel was an ancient kingship-associated capital to which several dynasties made claims. To the rivals of the Uí Briain the act may have appeared outrageous. The Annals of Ulster, Loch Cé and Chronicon Scotorum reports that Cashel was burned in 1102 by a rivaling family who were one of the ancient claimants of the site, the Munster dynasty Éile. Muirchertach may have presented Cashel to the Church as both a display of power and a way to ingratiate himself with the Church. The act showed a will to break free from Canterbury dominance. Apparently the Uí Briain envisioned a central role for Cashel in a new Church of

¹⁵⁴ Byrne 2004:230

¹⁵⁵ Ó Cróinín 1995:282

Ireland. Hughes has suggested that Cashel is the city that once received the first Christian bishop in Ireland, Palladius. In that circumstance the offering might have been thought of as a 'second beginning' of the Church¹⁵⁶.

Hudson¹⁵⁷ notes that the reform movement further consisted of an important, though unrecognised group of pro-continental aristocracy, first and foremost ruling Munster dynasties, Ua Briain and the Mac Carthaigh. On the other side of the Irish Sea King David of Scotland was a keen supporter of the continental reform as well as 'everything Norman'. David's sister Mathilda, duchess of Normandy and Queen of England and his other sister Mary, countess of Blois were likeminded.

Muirchertach Ua Briain marrying off his daughters to foreigners illustrates him as an outward-looking visionary. One daughter was married to Sigurd the Crusader, an other to the Norman knight Arnulf of Montgomery.

On the continent, Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian order would become supporters of reform in Ireland, due to Bernard's friendship with Malachy of Armagh.

The papal legate at the first synod seems to have been Máel Muire Ua Dunáin, a bishop of Meath who, according to Dorothy Africa, may have begun his career at Clonard¹⁵⁸.

Africa writes that some of the reformers came from families historically associated with powerful monasteries and thus had an 'insider status' giving them the social and political access they needed to effect changes¹⁵⁹.

Gilbert, bishop of Limerick, was the papal legate of the synod at Rath Breasail. His wish to uniform Ireland with Europe came forward in his tract, *'De Statu Ecclesiae'* in which he laid out an organisational structure for the western Church, from layman to pope.

Limerick was the town of Ua Briain's headquarter and it is likely the ruling dynasty was involved in the appointment of Gilbert to the Hiberno-Norse bishopric in Limerick. Like the bishops of Dublin and Waterford, Gilbert had been a monk in a Benedictine abbey in England, but unlike them he was not sent to Canterbury for consecration. Irish reformists appear highly influenced by the continent, but keen to establish an independent Irish Church.

5.4 Succession at Armagh

¹⁵⁶ Hughes "The Church in Irish Society 4-800" p.303 (Ó Cróinín ed.)

¹⁵⁷ Hudson 2006:221

¹⁵⁸ Africa "Church Reform" p.90 in Donnelly (ed.)

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p.91

While Cashel was to become the primatial see for the southern half of Ireland, Armagh became the ecclesiastical center of the north. The ruling dynasty at Armagh, the Uí Sinaich, was divided as to which parts of the reform they embraced. The appointment of comarbs in the first half of the 12th century demonstrates the situation: Cellach was appointed comarb of Patrick in 1105. Against tradition, but in line with reform ideals, he assumed ecclesiastical orders. The major controversy was who would succeed Cellach. The comarb himself had appointed the likewise reform-minded Malachy, who had no affiliation with the Sinaich. (1129). As Gwynn points out, a dying prelate nominating the successor on his deathbed was not in line with the regular process. The testament of Cellach was dismissed and a Muirchertach son of Domnall was instituted as coarb of Patrick, in line with Irish dynastic law. It appears Muirchertach had the full support of the northern Uí Lochlainn king¹⁶⁰, who had no rival in the north, a fact perhaps explaining his satisfaction with the traditional system. In 1134, however, the Annals of the Four Masters registers Muirchertach's death. A new abbot from the Sinaich is subsequently instituted, Niall son of Aed. Niall's office appear to have been a short one, as the Annals of the Four Masters already the same year reports: *'Caemhchludh abbadh i n-Ard Macha .i. Mael M'Aedhocc Ua Morgair i n-ionad Néill'*. (A change of abbots at Ard-Macha, i.e. Maelmaedhog Ua Morgair (Malachy) in the place of Niall.)¹⁶¹

In 1135, the Annals of Ulster also records the death of the bishop of Clochar. The recording of the death of another bishop of Clochar in 1138 reveals that the office was given to Malachy's brother Gillacrist Ua Morgair. As Etchingham¹⁶² points out, it is ironic that reformers allowed themselves to omit canonical procedure when appointing favoured clerics to higher offices – especially in the case of Malachy who appears to have appointed his own relative. Conduct such as this could be perceived as hypocrisy from parties opposing the reformers' opinions of how succession should be arranged.

5.5 Erenaghs and marriage

The decrees of the Irish reforms appear to be influenced by reform ideals from the continent, though with some special adjustments to fit in with the conditions in Ireland, for instance the decrees that concern the erenaghs and families. Relevant here are those concerning marriage issues, the erenagh system and criminal offenders.

¹⁶⁰ Gwynn 1992:210

¹⁶¹ FM1134.16

¹⁶² "The 'reform' of the Irish" p.226

The decrees made in Cashel 1101 have been preserved in *Senchas Síil Bhriain*¹⁶³.

An important subject encountered is the one regarding marriage. The marriage practices in Ireland was a source for concern and remained so during the century, due to the Irish adhering to traditional law in the matter. Regarding this, Lanfranc wrote to Toirdelbach Ua Briain: ¹⁶⁴ (...) *in your kingdom every man abandons his lawfully wedded wife at his own will, without the occasion of any canonical cause; and, with a boldness that must be punished, takes to himself some other wife who may be of his own kin or of the kindred of the wife he has abandoned, or whom another has abandoned with like wickedness according to a law of marriage that is rather a law of fornication.*

The outcome of the marriage debate in Cashel 1101 was this decree: *'Gan ben a athar ná a senathar ná a siur ná a ingen do beith ina mnaoi ag fer nEirinn ná ben a derbrathar ná ben ar bith chom fogus sin i ngaol'* ('That in Ireland none should have to wife either his father's wife or his grandfather's, either his sister or his (-her?) daughter, or his brother's wife, or any woman at all thus near akin).

Gwynn¹⁶⁵ remarks that in European law marriage was prohibited within seventh degree of kinship, a fact which makes this Irish decree reflect a very remote reality - especially considering the decree seems to show a need to prohibit men from marrying their sisters or daughters.

There does not seem to be recorded any marriages between full blood siblings or parents and children, but there is sufficient evidence to state that marriages within close kin was far from uncommon. Two of the wives of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair were sisters from the Maelsechnaill dynasty of Tara. The same Toirdelbach had two children with his uncle Muirchetach Ua Briain's mother, Caillech Dé Ní hEidhin¹⁶⁶ - in effect his grandfather's wife. Mór, daughter of Caillech Dé and Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, was further married to the nephew of her half brother Muirchertach. One suggestion that may explain the decree is that in addition to marriages between close kin it prohibits marriage between step relatives. We know that kings married or entered unions with several women, usually as a part of or result of political operations. With the changing relationships between ruling families of same kin and marriages used as a means to cement these, it seems likely that the political effect might sometimes have overruled considerations of propriety.

¹⁶³ Here quoted as they are rendered by Gwynn 1992:156-168

¹⁶⁴ Gwynn 1992:175

¹⁶⁵ Gwynn 1992:168

¹⁶⁶ *Dictionary of Irish Biography* p.572

Explaining *Banshenchas*, record of aristocratic marriages in the 12th century, Flanagan suggests that “*the volatility of aristocratic marriages and the resulting complexities of familial relations had actually increased during the twelfth century as a consequence of intensified warfare, which called forth an even greater demand for the use of marriage as a strategy for sustaining political alliances*”¹⁶⁷. The marriages within the Uí Conchobair family referred to above illustrate a remote reality from the marriages with continental lords arranged for the daughters of Muirchertach Ua Briain. This may create a suspicion that specific families were the targets of this decree and that the ruling family of Connacht was one of them.

The obit of Donnchad Ua Cerbaill, king of the Airgialla 1140-70 reflects a reform-minded ruler with regards to his services to the church: ‘*By him the church throughout the land of Airgialla was reformed, and a regular bishopric was made and the church was placed under the jurisdiction of the bishop. In his time tithes were received and marriage were assented to and churches were founded and temples and bell-houses were made...*’¹⁶⁸

Gwynn points out that this shows marriage customs were part of the reform wherever it was carried out¹⁶⁹. Assenting to marriages appears to a larger degree to have fallen into the remit of the church. Presumably, this gave the church better opportunity to prevent marriages perceived of as immoral.

The decree seems to have had a slow effect on the society as a whole. Not all communities may have been represented at Cashel in 1101, or everybody present may not necessarily have been in favour of abandoning the traditional marriage practices. According to Binchy¹⁷⁰, some were justifying the tradition by comparing them to the marriage practices found in the Old Testament. Several decades later, the question still appears to have been controversial. In 1172 Pope Alexander III sent a letter to Henry II regarding grievances about ‘men marrying their stepmothers and having children by them, men living with a brother’s wife despite the brother being still alive, men living in concubinage with two sisters and men putting away mothers to live with their daughters’. These incidents were allegedly reported to the pope by Irish archbishops and bishops, in particular Christian of Lismore, and this adds credibility to the reality of them. We may expect that the subject of marriage and, not least, commitment in

¹⁶⁷ Flanagan 2010:194

¹⁶⁸ Full text in Petrie *Round towers of Ireland* p.389, Stokes trans. In *Martyrology of Gorman* p.20,

¹⁶⁹ Gwynn 1992:177

¹⁷⁰ Binchy “The Linguistic and Historical Value of the Irish Law Tracts” p.28 in Proceedings of the BA XXIX

marriage was an important subject to 12th century intellectuals. As I will get back to, 12th century ICUC addresses issues regarding marriage both in frame story and voyage part.

At least one *erenagh* is present in the frame story of ICUC. Comán of Cenn Mara is referred to as a ‘holy *erenagh*’ in Stokes’ translation¹⁷¹, though the transcription of van Hamel reads *senóra naíb* ‘holy old man’. The grandfather of the Uí Chorra, several places referred to as an *airchinnig* ‘*erenagh*’, aids the brothers during their conversion.

Several decrees of the church reform concern what an *erenagh* should be and do. In the 1101 decrees concerning marriage, we find: ‘*gan tuatadha do beith ina noirchinnechaib innte*’ (‘That no layman should be an *erenagh* in Ireland’) and ‘*gan ben do beith ag airchinnech cille ann*’ (‘That no *erenagh* of a church in Ireland should have a wife/woman’).

What exactly is intended here has been subject to debate. Indeed, the precise status of an *erenagh* has been subject to different views. Gwynn argues that the titles of *erenagh*, abbot, and *comarb* were more or less interchangeable titles in the period before 11th century¹⁷².

Etchingham points out that the decree does not state that the headship of churches must be restricted to clergy in major orders, and that reformists such as Gilbert of Limerick allowed some minor orders to be married. Arguing that the decree had novel intent, Etchingham provides two suggestions¹⁷³: The decree could refer to the practice of concubinage, unions not classifiable as lawful marriage. Alternatively it is possible the reformers intended superiors to be celibate henceforth due to their legal status. A superior not in orders enjoyed the legal status of the clerical order pertaining to his church. The reformers may have intended that on account of the eminence of their offices, future *erenaghs* should be celibate.

Gwynn also draws attention to the 9th century ‘Rule of the Céli Dé’, in which it is stated that a church which does not provide ‘services for the faithful’ - baptism, communion, intercessory prayer, study for boys and sacrifice of the Body of Christ on every altar - has no claim to tithes or other compensation due to a church. The scribe denounces such a church as a ‘den of thieves’. An appendix to the Rule includes an invocation of God’s vengeance against wicked, arrogant *erenaghs* and greedy, wicked kings who violate the church and ‘buy and sell’ her. Gwynn further shows that it was the obligation of nobles and *erenaghs* to provide monastic tenants with the services mentioned above. He concludes that the two decrees therefore met

¹⁷¹ RC 14

¹⁷² Gwynn 1992:163

¹⁷³ Etchingham “The ‘reform’ of the Irish Church” p.229 in *Studia Hibernica* 37

an urgent need in the church if the actual monastic rulers were married laymen, as this might have been the cause of many major and minor abuses in the church.

It seems so that the decree concerns the conduct of an *erenagh* once the office is entered. The texts referred to by Gwynn shows much criticism directed towards how *erenaghs* provided pastoral care towards monastic tenants. If *erenagh* families accepting tithes and other income from tenants while neglecting their duties towards them was a widespread problem, a wish to “de-laicise” the office is understandable.

What direction the *erenagh* office developed towards in the centuries after the reforms may be glimpsed in 17th century sources in which English inquisitors attempted to gain an understanding of this system. At this time the *erenaghs* appear to be lay administrators of church lands which are owned by a *coarb* and on which the *erenagh* has duties that include hospitality.

In all, the reformers seemed to have great changes in store for the *erenaghs* of Ireland.

Assuming not everyone agreed to a restructuring of the church, opposing parties may have promoted a renewal of the existing system. The one *erenagh* that makes an actual appearance in ICUC are exemplary in his actions. He is pious and hospitable and his grandsons get their education at one of the most venerable learning institutions in Ireland – Clonard.

5.6 Violent crime

One of the decrees made at Cashel concerned what role the monastic communities should take regarding violent crimes. Gwynn explains that in Europe, monasteries could give sanctuary to persons guilty of murder in order to protect them from vengeance from the victim’s kin. In Ireland, however, the monasteries themselves were heavily involved in dynastic conflicts. Hughes refer to the monastic violence as one of Irelands ’own special evils of secularity’¹⁷⁴, in contrast to simony which caused the greatest concern on the continent. It seems likely that the rule of sanctuary for that reason could lead to prolonged and greater conflicts.

The decree appears to discourage monasteries from giving sanctuary to persons guilty of especially heinous crimes: *’Gan chomairce do beith ag in tí dogénfadh fell na fínghal’*. While *fínghal* refers to murder comitted within one’s own *fine*, Gwynn suggests *fell*, ‘treachery’ in this context refers to a treacherous murder, for instance murder by which the law of hospitality or safe-conduct was violated¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁴ Hughes 1987:IX-34

¹⁷⁵ Gwynn 1992:167

The Uí Chorra brothers' conversion prevents the scenario depicted in the decree. They go to Clochar with the very intention of committing the crimes described – murdering their mother's father while enjoying his hospitality. Subsequently after the happy ending at Clochar, they are received at Clonard, where Findén rehabilitates the repentants.

In the new diocesan system, peace negotiations in secular conflicts became one of the prime duties of prominent clergy, especially the archbishops¹⁷⁶. A gathering of clerics, including the archbishop of Armagh, intervened with Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair when he imprisoned his son Ruaidhrí who had been under the protection of Tuaim clergy. A 'conference of peace' was also arranged with laity and clergy to secure peace between Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair and Toirdelbach Ua Briain in 1144.

While Tuaim plays a significant role in the frame story, as the church town that is first destroyed and first restored, the absence of Connacht clergy or archbishops at all is striking. There is no intervention against the brothers until they ask for it themselves and the one who saves the day is not a reformist hero, but Findén – a representant for the foundation of the Irish Church. We seem to be shown the pre-reform system as it could be at its most idealistic.

5.7 Archbishoprics and dioceses

A complete reorganisation into archbishoprics and dioceses was an issue already in the correspondance between Lanfranc of Canterbury and Toirdelbhach Ua Briain. Concerns described by the archbishop included¹⁷⁷:

- a) Bishops in Ireland are consecrated by a single bishop, a practice in which it is difficult to distinguish between a bishop and a priest.
- b) Most bishops are ordained to vills or towns.
- c) Suspicions that bishops confer holy orders for money.
- d) Suspicion that infants are baptised without use of consecrated chrism.

Toirdelbach's son Muirchertach continued a friendly relationship with the successor of Lanfranc, Anselm. The latter repeated the wish of Canterbury, that there should be an episcopal system in Ireland. Aligning Ireland with the structure of the continental church was furthered after the synod of Rath Breasail in 1111, during which the dioceses were outlined. The division may be coloured by the fact that there, according to Gwynn¹⁷⁸, was a

¹⁷⁶ Flanagan 2010:173

¹⁷⁷ Gwynn 1992:168

¹⁷⁸ Ibid: p.180

predominance of Munster clergy present at the synod. Keating¹⁷⁹ writes that the system was based on the one used in Britain, which was twelve dioceses in the north and twelve in the south. Additionally, two dioceses were given to Meath.

The synod of Rath Breasail appointed two metropolitan sees, Cashel for Leth Moga and Armagh for Leth Cuinn. By the time of the next synod in 1152, sees would be acknowledged also for Dublin and the city of Tuaim in Connacht.

The establishment of an archbishopric of Connacht and final division of dioceses in the province must be seen in connection with the exploits of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair.

The Annals of Tigernach records Toirdelbhach Ua Conchobhair coming into kingship in 1106, after the Connachtmen's disposal of his brother Donnchadh. Ó Corráin states his uncle, Munster king Muirchertach Ua Briain, had a governing hand in this act¹⁸⁰. Having helped Toirdelbach into kingship, Muirchertach could also hinder the new Connacht king rising to any greater power.¹⁸¹

Toirdelbach was present at the 1111 synod of Rath Breasail, where the province of Connacht was included in the archbishopric of Armagh. In 1114, however, Ua Briain's authority began to collapse and Toirdelbhach laid the foundations for Uí Chonchobhair dominance, first in Connacht and eventually on a wider scale. The proceedings of the synods may have shown him the importance of a provincial archbishopric and he did much for the promotion of Tuaim as the ecclesiastical capital of Connacht. In 1127, Toirdelbach gave an offering of land to the Church 'in perpetuity'. Half of the grant was for 'every good cleric' of his own sept, the Síl Muiredaig, who should dwell in Tuaim, the other half for the guesthouse of Tuaim, in the hands of the prior. It would appear Toirdelbach attempted to copy the act Muirchertach Ua Briain did in 1101 by presenting Cashel to the Church.

A relic of the True Cross was on circuit in Ireland in 1123, an event described in the Annals of Tigernach as following: '*Croch Crist a n-Erinn isin bliadain-sin, co tucadh mor-chuairt di la rí g n-Erenn .i. la Tairrdelbach h-Úa Concobair, 7 cor' chuindigh ni di d' fhadadh a n-Erinn, 7 ro leced do, 7 do cumdaighedh laís h-í a Ros Coman*'. ('Christ's Cross in Ireland this year, and a great tribute was given to it by the king of Ireland, Toirdhealbhach Ó Conchobhair, and he asked for some of it to keep in Ireland, and it was granted to him, and it

¹⁷⁹ *Foras Feasa* part XXVIII

¹⁸⁰ Ó Corráin 1972:150

¹⁸¹ Muirchertach could have been following a tactic he knew well, as he himself was helped to the kingship of Munster by his foster-father, Leinster king Diarmait mac Máel na mBó.

was enshrined by him at Roscommon.)¹⁸². This act shows there were ties between Clonmacnoise and the ruling sept in Connacht as Roscommon seems to have been a daughter church of Clonmacnoise¹⁸³. (In the Life of Ciarán, founder of Clonmacnoise, it is told the saint was born in the area later known as Rocommon¹⁸⁴.) There is annalistic references also to gifts bestowed to the Clonmacnoise by Toirdelbach. When the monastery was robbed in 1129, three treasures given by Toirdelbach is among the lost treasures: *'bledhi argid 7 copan airgid 7 cros oir tairis, 7 corn co n-ór'* ('a goblet of silver, and a cup of silver with a golden cross over it, and a drinking-horn inlaid with gold')¹⁸⁵.

On a different note, the report of this theft gives insight to the strict justice inflicted upon robbers of holy sites as the annalist further recounts that the perpetrator was caught and executed at the grounds of Clonmacnoise¹⁸⁶. As a harsh contrast to the treatment of the Uí Chorra brothers, this may depict the great distance, in some respects, between scriptorium and reality.

Barbarious Connacht?

Was Connacht viewed as particularly barbarous? How did it earn a portrayal as the home of devil worshippers and church wreckers?

The provincial kingship of Connacht was founded when a Muirgius mac Tommaltaig from the Síl Muiredaig sept secured the superiority of Uí Briúin Aí territory in Connacht.¹⁸⁷

Muirgius' reign, sustained on active occupation of land, appears to have been marked by heavy aggression towards the subject tribes of the province. Cormac, son of Muirgius, was imposed as abbot on Baslick, a church of the tribe of Ciarraige Aí near their capital Cruachu. He was slain in 805 and in revenge, Muirgius laid the lands of the Ciarraige waste. Five years later two more sons were slain, and similar retribution was inflicted on other territories in Connacht. In 812, the south of Connacht was ravaged by the Síl Muiredaig. Inbetween the revenge raids, however, Muirgius found time to seek favour of the church, and in 811 the abbot of Armagh visited Connacht with relics of Patrick and his Law. With respect to the incident in ICUC where the three Connacht brothers are ordered by Findén of Clonard to subject themselves to the judgement of St. Comán, it may be interesting that the Annals of Ulster records for the year of 793 that the Law of St. Comán was imposed on 'the Three

¹⁸² AT 1123.1

¹⁸³ Byrne 2001:252

¹⁸⁴ Betha Ciarain 3989 in Lismore lives (Stokes ed.)

¹⁸⁵ AT 1129.2

¹⁸⁶ AT 1130.4

¹⁸⁷ Byrne 2004:251

Connachta' by Muirgius and Aildobur, abbot of Roscommon. It appears that the bond between Síl Muiredaig rulers of Connacht and Clonmacnoise goes back several centuries. With an interruption by the Uí Briúin Bréifne in the 10th century (Ó Corráin), Síl Muiredaig remained the ruling sept of Connacht. During the reign of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, history repeated itself, though on a wider scale. In 1143, Toirdelbach imposed his son Conchobair as deputy king in the occupied territory of Meath. This son was slain the next year, and Toirdelbach took his revenge out on Meath in the same manner as his ancestor, with a slaughter the annals describe as 'like judgement day'. This happening may, together with knowledge of the past, have given the Connachta a reputation for unusually bloody warfare. Clonard might, as church center in Meath, have felt the revenge of 1144.

Gwynn believes that the synod delegates of Rath Breasail must have expected difficulties with the restructuring process in Connacht¹⁸⁸. The synod set the province up with a quadrilateral plan with Clonfert in the south, Killala in the north, and Cong in the central west and Tuaim in the central east. A fifth diocese was set up in Ardcarne/Ardagh, covering much of Bréifne. At the time they were all suffragans of the northern metropolitan see Armagh. The clergy of Connacht were permitted to rearrange this setup as they wished, as long as the number of dioceses remained five. By the synod in 1152 however, the division was changed. Bréifne's diocese was redistributed to Armagh and Connacht, which was then an archbishopric on its own with a primatial see at Tuaim, had appointed three new small dioceses in Achonry, Mayo, and Kilmacduagh. The latter represented the territory of the ancient, though reduced kingdom of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne. We may expect several dioceses were corresponding with dynastic territories.

5.9 Locations in *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*

• 5.9.1 Tuaim

Tuaim is a name used in several names or compound names, a fact that has caused puzzlement as to which Tuaim the reformers of 1111 were speaking of. Tuaim dá Gualainn lies within the territory assigned by Rath Breasail to the diocese of Cong. Yet Tuaim is the name given to the diocese that later became the diocese of Elphin, which was the center of the Síol Muiredaig (mod. Roscommon). The boundaries of both are clearly defined. The boundary between Cong

¹⁸⁸ Gwynn 1992:183

and Tuaim is Áth an Tearmainn, the traditional site for proclaiming each new chief of Síol Muiredaig – in all probability Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair was proclaimed there in 1106.

It has been suggested that the Tuaim named in the decree as centre of Elphin was not Tuaim dá Gualainn, but Tuaim Uí Conchobair (Tuaim O’Connor), a village in Kilgefin parish, five miles NNE of near Roscommon. Gwynn¹⁸⁹ is sceptical to the idea that a small, obscure site thirty miles outside the western boundary of Tuaim diocese, so close to the great church of Roscommon should be the new seat of a bishopric. And, as he points out, Keating appears to have no doubt that the site in question is Tuaim dá Gualainn.

Gwynn theorises that a line was dropped from Céitinn’s source. Tuaim might have been the first of two names defining one of the boundaries of the diocese, as seen in other dioceses set up by the synod. The boundaries of Tuaim diocese defined by Rath Breasail were the future boundaries of the diocese of Elphin, with the addition of St.Jarlath’s Tuaim territory.

Within forty years, Tuaim dá Gualainn was accepted as archbishopric whose territory included the churches of Cong. Elphin became episcopal centre of the Síl Muiredaig diocese.

I have earlier put forward the theory that ICUC may be influenced by traditions from the territory of Aidne and that the Tuaim in this respect may be a reference to Tuaim na Gréine. However, the versatility of the name Tuaim due to its frequent employment may have been useful to the 12th century scribes. A name that in earlier sources had one reference could be employed for a different reference in the 12th century setting. ICUC gains a problem by presenting a saint named Comán in an area where no saint by that exact name is known. If we suppose the authors “moved” the protagonists from ancient Aidne to 12th century Tuaim, this opens for the possibility that the Comán of ICUC could be a reference to the saint of Ros Comáin.

- 5.9.2 Clochar:

Commentators have identified the home of the Uí Chorra brothers’ grandfather, Clochar, as Clochar mac Daimhene (Clogher) in Tyrone. This appears slightly problematic in the 12th century text.

In 1135, the Annals of the Four Masters records the death of the bishop of Clochar, Cinaeth Ua Baeighill. He is described as a noble bishop and the chief senior of the North of Ireland. This was the year following Malachy’s acquisition of the primatial seat in Armagh. The recording of the death of another bishop of Clochar in 1138 reveals that the office was given

¹⁸⁹ Gwynn 1992:190

to Malachy's brother Gillacrist Ua Morgair. As pointed out above, there seems to be a gap between living and learning in this appointment of a close relative by a reformer who opposed this tradition.

The diocese of Clochar corresponds to the territory of Uí Chremthainn, which had ties to Armagh. During Malachy's office at Armagh, he transferred the see of Clochar to Louth, where the center of the Airgiallan king Donnchad Ua Cherbaill lay. Louth had previously belonged to the see of Armagh. Malachy agreed to this presumably to gain the support of Uí Cherbaill to the reform movement, which he got at least as long as Donnchad Ua Cherbaill was alive.¹⁹⁰ Gillacrist and his 12th century successors used the title 'bishop of Louth' rather than the 'bishop of Clochar'¹⁹¹.

ICUCs context of a married erenagh of Clochar with a daughter married into a hosteller's house in Connacht and who sends his newly converted grandsons to education at Clonard does not resonate well with the 12th century situation of this northern church. Even if the element should be borrowed from an older source, it seems unlikely that Clochar in Tyrone would be brought into a text supporting the cult of Findén in the 12th century. Additionally there is a continuity problem in the text with the brothers leaving their base in Connacht to wreck havoc on a church so far away as Airgialla territory. I suggest the Clochar in question is a site with a connection to:

- a) Connacht, as the erenagh marries off his daughter to a hosteller of this province, and
- b) Clonard, as the brothers appear to feel an affiliation with Clonard and perceives Findén as the 'fosterfather of Ireland'.

As for places with names including 'Clochar', Onomasticon Goidelicum lists a few alternatives. In Connacht we find Clochar Uí Muirghile, which is said to be a townland in Roscommon. A smaller church in this area would supposedly be attached to the great church of Comán. As previously mentioned, the church of Roscommon had close ties with Clonmacnoise. The Annals of Ulster records that of the seven comarbs whose deaths are recorded between 964 and 1097, four of them are given the title *comarba Ciarain 7 Commain*, that is, Roscommon and Clonmacnoise had joint abbacy.

Roscommon and Clonard are two of several great monasteries of Leth Cuinn, which was burned by 'Munstermen' in 1134, showing the two churches had a common foe in Munster. An erenagh in Roscommon could be expected to marry his daughter to a local man of some social standing, and it seems not unlikely for young men of the area to be educated at Clonard.

¹⁹⁰ Gwynn 1992:133

¹⁹¹ Ibid:213

Another possible Clocher is found closer to Clonard, namely Clocher Cruachan that is said to lie south east of Croghan Hill in Offaly.

The most tempting candidate with regards to the reforms is, however, found in Cronicon Scotorum¹⁹², which adds an interesting detail concerning the establishment of two dioceses of Meath in 1111. Though the national synod at Rath Breasail gave the status to Clonard and Duleek, the local synod of Uisneach transferred the diocesan status from Duleek to Clonmacnoise. The boundary between the two new dioceses of Clonard and Clonmacnoise is marked by a Clochan/Clochán an Imrim. Could this be the intended home of Uí Chorra's grandfather? It is a convenient location, not far from Connacht and close to Clonard.

- 5.9.3 Clonmacnoise and Clonard:

Hughes notes that the two communities came in close relation with each other in the 10th century. In the 10th and 11th century Clonmacnoise and Clonard appear to occasionally have joint abbacy¹⁹³.

In an entry preceding the one concerning the 1111 synod, the Annals of Tigernach records an attack on Clonmacnoise. This was perceived as being instigated by Muirchertach Ua Briain, showing the relationship between central Munster and the community was strained, perhaps in relation to the reforms. Signs of enmity show in the proceedings of the 1111 synod as well: Despite being defined within Meath, Clonmacnoise was ignored in favour of Duleek when the dioceses were set. The redistribution of Duleek's diocese to Clonmacnoise during the local synod of Meath later 1111, suggests a congenial relationship between Clonmacnoise and Clonard.

The exclusion of a great and influential church like Clonmacnois among dioceses established at Rath Breasail is surprising, as Gwynn remarks upon¹⁹⁴. He believes there were practical and personal reasons for it. Clonmacnois was an ancient stronghold and defender of the Old Irish tradition, both in matters of ecclesiastical and secular learning. Exemplifying this, Gwynn points to the 12th century Clonmacnoise work *Lebor na hUidre* which compiled purely secular texts in the tradition of Old Irish learning. The chief scribe of it, Máel Muire, was part of a family with a long history in holding chief positions at Clonmacnoise. In these respects, the school of Clonmacnois was a rival of the school at Armagh.

¹⁹² CS1111

¹⁹³ Hughes 1987:III p.19

¹⁹⁴ Gwynn 1992:188

Clonmacnois' abbot Gillecrist Ua Maoileoin is likely to have been present at Rath Breasail, as *Chronicon Scotorum* names him as the chief ecclesiastical person present at the synod of Uisneach. Gwynn recounts that Maelsechlainn king of Meath and Cellaig king of Brega were present at the synod, set to give Clonmacnoise the honour that had been denied at the synod of Rath Breasail.

In the light of the great changes the reformists had in mind for this debated group, Gillecrist is honoured with an unusual term in *Annals of Ulster's* entry for his death, where he is called the '*sonus 7 sobarthu airchinnech chell nErenn*' ('Happiness and prosperity of the erenaghs of the churches of Ireland')¹⁹⁵.

Clonmacnoise housed a Céli Dé fraction, which is clear from the obit of their leader in 1170: *Mael Mordha mac Uairerghi, cenn chelidh n-Dé Cluana, do ég.* (Maelmórdha son of Uairéirghe, head of the Culdees of Clonmacnois, died)¹⁹⁶.

One of the decrees from the 1101 synod reads: '*Gan dá oirchinnech do beith ar aonchill acht ar an gcill do biadh i gcomrac dá dóiged*' ('That two erenaghs are not to be over one church, unless it be a church set where two provinces march').

The decree seems designed to prevent rivalling erenaghs in the same church. One of the churches considered in the latter categories may have been Clonard. Gwynn uses Clonard as the prime example of a church 'set where two provinces march'. Clonard was lying on the border between Leinster and Meath and its coarbs sometimes presented with double title: *comarba Finnein 7 Mocholmoc*, suggesting that Clonard and Lynally had joint abbacy when the 11th century came to an end. A *comarba Finnein* died in 1055. His successor, Muirchertach mac Loingsich, appear to have been the superior of both Clonard and Kells. In the first year of his abbacy he was challenged and defeated by the abbot of Armagh and at his death in 1092 Muirchertach is credited with the abbacy of Clonard only.¹⁹⁷ There is a possibility of Clonard having two abbots at the time of the 1101 synod, as the papal legate of the 1101 synod, Maol Muire Ua Dunáin, most likely gained his first monastic experience at Clonard during the years of Muirchertach mac Loingsich.

These circumstances hints at a certain enmity or rivalry between Armagh and Clonmacnoise-Clonard.

¹⁹⁵ AU 1127.9

¹⁹⁶ AT 1170.4

¹⁹⁷ Gwynn 1992:166

The presence and status of Máel Muire Ua Dunáin at the first synod and Clonard apparently being an obvious choice as a diocese ten years later may indicate positivity towards at least parts of the reformists' agenda also at Clonard.

• 5.9.4 Emly:

The proceedings from the synod in 1111 had great consequences for Emly, the former chief church of Munster. A voyage tradition was associated with Emly and the founding saint Ailbe, and as the island community of Emly figures in the voyage part of ICUC it might be useful to examine the status of this church in the 12th century. Gwynn informs us Emly had been the chief church of the Eoganachta of Cashel for centuries before the synods. Byrne adds that Ailbe of Emly, in addition to two other Munster saints, had been preaching the gospel in Ireland before the arrival of Patrick¹⁹⁸.

When the Uí Briain established Cashel as archbishopric in the south, territories were transferred from Emly to the new capital, leaving the community of Ailbe as a suffragan bishopric in the province of Cashel. The Annals of the Four Masters report exceptionally many attacks on Emly after Toirdelbach Ua Brian reclaimed the kingship from his uncle Donnchad. An erenagh of Emly is killed in 1054 upon Toirdelbach's coming to Cashel and Emly is burned, apparently later that year. Further attacks are recorded in 1058, 1088, 1089, 1116, 1152, 1154 and 1162. The Annals of Inisfallen records another in 1092. The Four Masters reports an 'unusual attack' in 1123: *Amus anaithchnidh do thabhairt for comharba Ailbhe .i. Maol Mordha, mac meic Cloithnia .i. teach do ghabhail fair for lár Imleacha fein, 7 for mhac Cербhaill Uí Chiarmhaic tigherna Aine Cliach, 7 ro marbhadh moirsheiser ann. Térnattar tra na maithe ass tria mhiorbhail Dé, Ailbhe, 7 na h-eccailsi. Ro loisceadh ann din An Bernán Ailbhe. Ro marbhadh iaramh ria c-cind mhís an tí ro ghabh an teagh .i. An Giolla Caoch Ua Ciarmhaic. Deochain esidhe iar n-ainmniuchadh, 7 ro benadh a chend de a n-díoghail sháraighthe Dé 7 Ailbhe.* (An unusual attack was made upon the successor of Ailbe, i.e. Maelmordha, son of Cloithnia. A house was forcibly taken from him, and the son of Cearbhall Ua Ciarmhaic, lord of Aine-Cliach, in the very middle of Imleach, and seven persons were therein killed; but the chiefs escaped through the miracle of God, Ailbe, and the Church. The Bernan of Ailbe was burned on this occasion. The person who had taken the house, i.e. Gillacaech Ua Ciarmhaic (who was after being named a deacon), was killed before

¹⁹⁸ *Irish Kings and High-Kings* 2001:72

the end of a month; and his head was cut off, in revenge of the violation of the laws of God and Ailbe’).

- 5.9.5 Armagh:

Armagh or St Patrick does not figure at all in ICUC. This seems to be a deliberate choice, which might imply a demonstrative resentment towards the Patrician city. The voyage part includes portions borrowed from other texts in which Armagh is mentioned in honourable words. In ICUC these honours are removed. The Annals of the Four Masters reports under the year of 1162, that a synod was held at Kildare where this decree was made: ‘*as don chur-sin ro chinnsēt clérigh Ereann na badh fer leighinn i c-cill i n-Erinn an fer na badh dalta Arda Macha cédus* (‘On this occasion the clergy of Ireland determined that no one should be a *fer léiginn* of a church in Ireland unless he were an alumnus of Armagh’)¹⁹⁹. Ruaidhrí, son and successor of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair not only supported the decree, but gave ten cows each year from himself and every successor of his to the *fer léiginn* of Armagh, in honour of Patrick, to give lecture to students of Ireland and Scotland²⁰⁰.

This support may be connected to Ruaidhrí’s accession to kingship. After Ruaidhrí’s attempts to seize the kingship from his father, Ó Cróinín remarks that he only survived through the intervention of powerful clerical forces²⁰¹, where the archbishop of Armagh led the group of clerics negotiating on his behalf.

5.10 Restructuring Ireland

Flanagan summarises that as a result of the reforms, *localised churches that may previously have functioned as semi-autonomous units with their own customs and practices were now deemed to be under the authority of a restructured episcopate*²⁰².

To restructure a society so extensively was not easy, and this is particularly transparent in the contentions at Armagh. The high level of violence probably united both laity and clergy in a wish to do something about it. Though, while a renewal of moral values was welcomed, we may expect that presiding erenagh families of many churches aside Armagh protested against an uprooting of the traditional system. Apart from Patrician Armagh, the ancient churches and thereby saints of Ireland were reduced to smaller and less influential dioceses. A former giant like Emly became a suffragan under Cashel, which had never been primarily associated with

¹⁹⁹ FM 1162.9

²⁰⁰ Kenney 1966:11

²⁰¹ Ó Cróinín 1995:283

²⁰² Flanagan 2010:243

the Church before. Malachy, the great reformist, and new archbishop of Armagh, helping his brother Gillacrist to the bishopric of Clochar/Louth and other instances of reformists appointing their preferred candidates without the canonical procedure they preached, may have come across as hypocrisy. One of the reasons for Malachy's appointment by his predecessor Cellach, was that he, in line with reform ideals, was not related to the Uí Sinaich family who until then had presided over Armagh.

To a community like Clonard it may have appeared offensive that archbishoprics were given to the church project of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair at Tuaim and the foreign dominated Dublin. Concern on behalf of the ancient communities seem obvious from the proceedings of the synod of Uisnech, where Clonmacnoise was given the second bishopric of Meath. What seems like an attempt to monopolise or control monastic education from Armagh in 1162 may have caused further resentment from Clonard, one of the pioneers in monastic schooling in Ireland.

When it comes to learning in the aftermath of the 12th century, Ó Corráin calls the reform a disaster. Deprived of status and resources, the monastic learning centres no longer functioned as the base of Irish literature and culture. The learned class moved out of the monasteries and into the courts where they joined the court poets to form a class of bardic poets²⁰³.

6. Boat and Crew

A skin-covered boat, known as a currach, appears to be the prime vessel of choice for voyagers in the *immram* tradition. Two of four *immrama* has the word '*curaig*' in the title; *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin* and *Immram Curaig Úa Corra*.

As a staunch vessel that was easy to make, the currach was widely used for many centuries before and after the 12th century, but in this literary context, they may primarily have iconographical value. Wooding argues strongly for this view of the hide-covered vessels in the article "St. Brendan's Boat: Dead Hides and the Living Sea"²⁰⁴. Because these boats have been so widely used and perhaps closer associated to Ireland than any other type of boat, they have been thought to reflect reality. Other boats figure in literary contexts, where boats made of strange materials such as stone and glass, are obvious subjects for interpretation. While

²⁰³ Ó Corráin 1989:44

²⁰⁴ Carey, Herbert & Ó Riain (ed.) 2001

hide-covered boats in literature perfectly well may reflect reality, Wooding²⁰⁵ points out that they predominantly occur in penitential context.

To what extent is Uí Chorra's boat realistic?

6.1 The boat

At Kinvara, the Uí Chorra resolve to '*araile sáer ba cara dóib boí isin tír do thabairt cuccu 7 curach trechodlaide do dénum dóib. Dorónad in curach corbo hurlam trebardaingen é. Is é dano luach ro iarrastar in sáer ar dénum in churaig, a lécun féin leó isin curach*', ('bring to them a certain wright who was a friend of theirs and who was in that country, and (to get him) to build for them a three-skinned boat. The boat was built, so that it was ready, strong, and staunch. This is the price, which the wright asked for building it, that he himself should be allowed to go with them in the boat'.)

Máel Dúin as well as the Uí Chorra sets out in a three-skinned currach. Hornell estimates in his article "Currachs of Ireland" which is also cited by Wooding, that one hide would suffice for a small coracle carrying one or, at most, two persons. The three-hide boat would hold three or four persons. In view of that, Uí Chorra's boat carrying nine men and Máel Dúin's boat carrying at least seventeen is not a realistic scenario.

Seeing as Uí Chorra's boat gets two of its hides pierced by worms on the voyage, doubt may arise as to whether 'three-skinned' imply the size or the thickness of the boat. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports under the year of 891 three Irish pilgrims coming to King Alfred in a boat without oars, wherein is a short description of the boat: '*Se bat wæs geworht of þriddan healfre hyde þe hi on foron*' (The boat in which they came was made of two-and-a-half hides)²⁰⁶. This non-fictional event implies that the number of hides is an indication of the size of the boat, not the layers of hide.

When two of the hides of Uí Chorra's boat is pierced, its continued floating is miraculous, as parts of the hull are open. When it happens, the elder on board says: *Is tualaing Dia ar n-anacul cid isin óenchodail bem*', ('God is able to save us though we be in the one hide (...)'). This comment and the chronology the incident occurs in may be a reference to the aspects of crime and punishment sometimes associated with sea voyages. A boat of one hide is frequently associated with the type of boat used in legal punishment. With roots in pre-

²⁰⁵ Carey, Herbert & Ó Riain (ed.) 2001:83

²⁰⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 891

Christian practices, church fathers encouraged this punishment in cases where verdicts were difficult to reach. Leaving their fates with God, criminals would be ‘cast adrift’ in small, fragile coracles²⁰⁷. The memory of a link between one-hide crafts and punishment seems to be reflected in Cormac’s Glossary, where *cimbith*, ‘prisoner, condemned person’ is explained to stem from a Greek gloss meaning ‘boat of one hide’²⁰⁸.

The incident of the worms piercing the hides of Uí Chorra’s boat occurs directly after a section of visions connected to violence and warfare. Uí Chorra’s sins are connected to violence and warfare. The brothers are sent through a series of visions themed as their sins and subsequently find themselves in a boat of one hide; the boat of convicted criminals. The only thing that truly secures their further voyage, i.e. their future after the violence, is the grace of God.

Uí Chorra never reach the actual Paradise in tale, they are shown the precincts, pre-stages and terrestrial versions of both Paradise and Hell. They are frequently told that the island they’ve reached is not the one they’re destined for. Returning from the Otherworldly realm with lessons learned and a message to spread is a feature shared by ICUC, IMD and ISM. The type of boat may be connected to this: In Life of Brendan the saint returns from his first voyage because he’s unable to enter Paradise in a boat made of dead skins. He builds a new boat out of wood in order to reach Paradise on his second voyage. Oskamp makes a point out of Brendan having to build a ”non-Irish” boat to reach Paradise²⁰⁹, but there seems to be little reason to believe a wooden boat would be regarded any ”less Irish” than a curragh. The ancient Irish made several types of boats²¹⁰, currach being one of them. Wooding does criticise the assumption that ”*individual ethnic groups build only single types of craft as a matter of tradition.*”²¹¹ The currach may be a symbol of mortality, while the wooden boat symbolises a cross – that brings the saint to Paradise.

6.2 The brothers

The initiators of the voyage are the three Uí Chorra brothers.

Their background story, which comprises large part of the frame story, tells of men with a twofold origin and thus twofold potential, a feature they share with the main character of

²⁰⁷ T.O.Clancy “Subversion at Sea”, ed. Wooding 2000:200

²⁰⁸ *Sanas Cormaic* (Meyer ed.) p.21

²⁰⁹ Oskamp 1970:29

²¹⁰ Various boats described in T.L.Cooke “Observations On An Ancient Irish Boat” (Transactions of Kilkenny Archaeological Society, Vol.2, No.1 (1852)

²¹¹ ed. Carey, Herbert & Ó Riain 2001:80

Máel Dúin. The latter symbolise a union of church and state through being the offspring of a warrior and a nun. A similar union can be perceived in the Uí Chorra brothers, who are the offspring of an erenagh's daughter and a hosteller.

The brothers show loyalty and zealousness in what they do. In the time they perceive themselves as underlings of the devil, they wage war on the Church and bring great destruction to Connacht. After the conversion when when St. Findén almost incredulously asks if they are not content to spend their lives peacefully at Clonard, they insist it's not enough. They demand a judgement, without actually getting one.

They are simply told to reverse their wrongs as much as possible, by rebuilding the churches. After two restoration tours of Connacht, they are fascinated by the sunset and decides to follow in the direction of the sun at sea.

Lochán, the elder brother, appears the leader of the trio. He is the first to convert as he is the one receiving the vision of Heaven and Hell, and on his advice the two younger brothers follow him. They are both the villains and heroes of the tale, at first representing what may have been perceived one of the largest problems in 12th century Ireland – mindless violence and destruction – and then turning into the agents initiating the voyage which is a learning process that comes to include both laity and clerics.

6.3 The shipwright

The ex-destructors are joined by an agent of creation as the shipwright makes the fourth crewmember. The influential text IMD shows Máel Dúin building his own boat on the instructions of a druid. Despite the brother's newfound experience with building, Uí Chorra's boat is built by a new entrant. No pagan element is involved. The shipwright's desire to be paid by joining them on their voyage shows that the brother's renewal agenda resounds with him. At this point, the number of crewmates corresponds to the size of the curragh.

6.4 A repentant jester

We find the generic motif of the extra crewmember as the fifth man appears in the form of a jester (*crossán*). This motif, which also occurs in IMD and NB, involves someone who joins the voyagers uninvited and in the last moment. Clancy remarks, however, that it does not seem to signify the same in all texts²¹².

²¹² Wooding ed. 2000:210

Seeing the voyagers ready to embark the jester decides to leave the party of buffoons he is with and pleads with the brothers to allow him on board. The Uí Chorra deny him at first, but eventually accept him for God's sake. The jester leaves his work clothes with the party, an act that seems to emphasise how he sacrifices his old self to join the other repentants. As Clancy says, the motif of the extra crew member seems in this case to be a lesson in humility: The brothers have no right to pass judgement on others and even the scorned members of society are as worthy of God's mercy as they are²¹³.

It has been suggested²¹⁴ the jester is a representant for traditional learning and his membership among the crew symbolises reconciliation between the teachings of the church and secular learning. In his attempt to convince the voyagers to let him on board, he tells them: *dogén airgairdiugud menman 7 aicenta foraib 7 níba lugaide bar crábud é*. ('I will make for you merriment of mind and nature, and your act of devotion will not be the less'.) The episode seems to demonstrate with particular clarity that the authors of the tale did not necessarily see any harm in secular entertainment (or learning) During the tale we seem to witness an absolution of repenting *díberga* (heathen brigands), in which aftermath the author does the same for the frequently reviled *crossán*.

The transformation the character goes through at the shores of Cenn Mara appears to be reflected in two different meanings of the word *crossán* – jester and crossbearer²¹⁵. In this transformation, he appears to embody the words of Christ²¹⁶: '*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*'. Like the Uí Chorra, the jester wishes to do penance. His art appears to be made harmless in the expression 'merriment of mind and nature', but still he equals his sins to those of the Uí Chorra.

The attitude towards the jester seems to change rapidly. When he dies the crewmates are mournful and remember him like this: '*Crossán becc buí occainn oc airfithiud dúinn*', ('we had a little jester delighting us').

6.5 Church representatives

The final additions are a bishop, a priest, a deacon, and a gillie, who are seemingly inexplicably inserted into the tale. The bishop, priest and deacon appear to represent the clerical hierarchy prior to the church reform. With the exception of the gillie, a servant, these

²¹³ 2000:211

²¹⁴ For instance by M. Ni Mhaonaigh in 'Pagans and Holy Men: Literary Manifestations of Twelfth-century Reform', in *Reform and Renewal: Ireland and Twelfth-century Reform*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin 2006), pp. 143-61

²¹⁵ DIL *crossán*

²¹⁶ Matt 16:24

are definite clerical characters. While it may or may not be of significance, we may note that the more debated character of the *erenagh* is not included and neither is the abbot. That these very characters are included may show a possible sign of conformity with continental churches. That bishops, priests, and deacons were thought the prime ecclesiastic roles might be reflected in the annals, here concerning the 1111 synod: *'Is si-seo uimir aesa graidh batar isin mordail sin. 57 n-espuic ocus 318 do sacartaib ocus 27 deochain, ocus ni fuil airim ara med do cleirchib'*, ('this is the number of ecclesiastics who were in that convention: 57 bishops, and 318 priests, and 27 deacons, and there is no counting the clerics because of their number')²¹⁷.

Ironically, the technicalities of the voyage enters the impossible when the ecclesiastical representants are onboard the small boat, as the number exceeds by far the capabilities of a curragh of three hides.

The bishop, priest and gillie become central characters at the last island of the voyage tale, where their further affairs are foretold.

6.6 In the same boat

Details concerning the boat and crewmates give an impression that ICUC was the result of at least two more or less individual pieces put together. The lay group of the crewmates are merged with the clerical group abruptly and without an explanation. This does however not imply the merging lacks design. Placing both the obvious and the less obvious recipients of God's mercy in the same boat seems to reflect an increased concern for the souls of persons on the outside of the traditional ecclesiastical inner circle. A reason for this concern could be related to apocalyptic fears and a wish to save souls. Another reason to turn the attention towards laity could be the role of lay rulers and politics in the 12th century restructuring of the Church, where some of the traditional, strong Church centers lost some of their influence.

Voyage tales appear to rarely show realism concerning the practical sides of manning and navigating the boat. Large crews are put in what can only be symbolically small boats. ICUC shows realism up to a point: The shipwright builds a boat on commission from the three Uí Chorra brothers. The vessel is intended to hold them and him, so he builds a three-skinned curragh, which is sufficient for four persons. The jester, as last-minute passenger let on board

²¹⁷ Annals of Tigernach 1111.6

for God's sake, could be included in the then very crowded boat. With the inclusion of the clerics, the style of writing changes and realism is ignored.

Being the sons of an erenach's daughter and a hosteller, the brothers symbolise a union of church and laity. A similar union is found in the selection of crewmembers. This may show an intention to compose an *immram* that encompassed all parts of society, from lowly to holy.

7. Visions at Sea

In the following walkthrough of the islands and visions described in the voyage part of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*, we will endeavour to trace the sources which may have influenced them as well as relate them to circumstances in the world outside the scriptoria. Many of the Uí Chorra's experiences at sea are more or less clearly influenced by tableaux occurring in other seaman's stories. *Immram Máel Dúin* (IMD), *Navigatio Brendani* (NB) and the parallelling *Betha Brenainn* (BB) and *Immram Brain* (IB) appear the most comparable, along with the apocryphal *History of Enoch and Elia* (EE) which also tells of a sea voyage. The Bible is an obvious reference, such as the voyagers going to sea for 40 days and 40 nights, which is likely to be an allusion to the voyage of Noah's ark which was of the same duration²¹⁸.

It is the prose version of *Immram Máel Dúin* translated by W. Stokes which is used here. *Immram Brain* in the translation of K. Meyer and the *History of Enoch and Elia* as rendered by K. Jankulak. Unless otherwise stated, I quote the edition of *Immram Ua Corra* by van Hameln²¹⁹ and Stokes' translation *The Voyage of the Húi Corra*²²⁰.

The islands/visions are for the sake of simplicity numbered 1-23. Visions perceived as similarly themed are divided into the subheaded sections.

7.1 Widening the Gates of Paradise

1. The first island reached by the voyagers is inhabited by men agrieving and lamenting. One of the crew goes ashore to ask tidings of the island-folk, but begins to wail and lament in the same manner. He remains on the island.

The loss of crew members is a recurring phenomenon in the *immram* genre and might reflect the reality of the sea pilgrims in early Christian Ireland and the inescapable fact that not all

²¹⁸ Genesis 7:12, 17

²¹⁹ *Immrama* (Dublin, 1941)

²²⁰ RQ vol.14 pp.22-69 (1893)

who ventured out came back. Compared to similar scenes in *Immram Brain* (IB), *Immram Máel Dúin* (IMD), *Navigatio Brendani* (NB) and the *Betha Brenainn*, ICUC stands out by losing a crew member at such an immediate point. Another unusual detail is that there is no form for identification of the lost person, despite a slight introduction of each crew member prior to the embarkment. Stokes suggests, based on who is mentioned later in the text, that it must be the shipwright who stays with the Laughters²²¹. The lack of specification in the text, may however bear an intention on its own. In IMD there seems to be a connection between the supernumerary crew members, in that case the foster brothers of Máel Dúin, and the lost crewmates. The foster brothers practically forces themselves on board so that the number of voyagers exceeds the number set by Máel Dúin's advisor druid, and eventually they are all lost. Two of them remain respectively on the islands of the Wailers and the Laughters. NB displays a rather similar situation: three monks left behind by Brendan joins in on the voyage. Here, however, Brendan foresees judgement for two of them and bliss for the third²²². In the compared examples, the losses are predictable and perhaps even justifiable. By starting the voyage with this scene, the author might be dismissing the idea that doom is obvious for certain persons. The Uí Chorra brothers are prime examples themselves, as ex-criminals with every prospect of doom in store, that a change of course is possible.

The theme of the island of the contagious Wailers and/or Laughters has parallels in other voyage tales. IB tells how one crew member is similarly inexplicably lost on an island populated by laughing people²²³. Oskamp states that the Wailers and Laughters seem an obvious analogy of each other. There seems to be an aspect of madness to it, and when one is smitten with the madness he is beyond any communication understandable to the voyagers. In the corresponding incident with the Wailers in IMD the boat crew manage to recover two of the men lost to the island. When asked what they had seen, they answer: *Verily, we know not, but what we saw others doing, we did*²²⁴.

Oskamp applies to these islands what he calls the Motif of Conformation²²⁵, a phenomenon emphasising that the voyagers have truly entered the Otherworld, where they are subject to other rules and the world is hazardous in ways they are not familiar with. Perhaps the motif has roots in voyagers losing their wits, adrift on the ocean.

²²¹ Stokes (ed.) *The Voyage of the Hui Corra* footnote §18

²²² NB §IV

²²³ *The Voyage of Bran* §61 (Meyer trans.)

²²⁴ IMD part XV

²²⁵ Oskamp 1970:72

In light of the 12th century context, we may theorise that the island as employed in ICUC is an image of counterproductive practices in the contemporary society and, when such practices are deeply embedded in it, how easily their use spreads to successors. We may expect that persons in higher offices were likely to look to their predecessors for guidance and in that manner also continue practices which may have been detrimental to society. As we have seen earlier, a major debate during the reforming synods of the 12th century concerned the hereditary ecclesiastical offices, which were accused of abuse against monastic tenants. We may imagine other inhabitants of the island once entered it with the same good intentions as the crew member of ICUC, only to become, like him, another extension of the islands system.

Alternatively, or even simultaneously, the wailing may be inspired by the pagan custom of keening the dead. To Christian commentators this may have symbolised the hopelessness of the pagan beliefs. The island with its pagan wailing may be used as an image of practices which was evil to the Christian author. The violence of the *diberga* or other agents of warfare may have entailed in this image. The high level of violence was another problem likely to be highly relevant to the author. The island's tableau of contagion may be an image of violence breeding violence.

2. The jester dies on board, much to the sadness of the remaining crew. When pleading with the Uí Chorra brothers to be let on board, he said: '*dogén airgairdiugud menman 7 aicenta foraib 7 níba lugaide bar crábud é*', ('I will make for you merriment of mind and nature and your act of devotion will not be the less'). Supposedly the voyagers are sad to lose a source for encouragement and joiety.

A parallel is found in the *Betha Brenainn*, where a jester joins in as the supernumerary passenger. He leaves the tale by being practically ordered to martyrdom when the saint tells him to jump ashore on an island inhabited by large, flesh-eating mice.

No judgement is passed on the jester, nor are we informed about any cause of death in the case of Uí Chorra's jester. As a supernumerary, though, he seems to die uncharacteristically peacefully, in the boat surrounded by friends who mourn him. Adding to the *caritas* shown towards this character, there is a follow-up scene where the jester returns to the boat in the shape of a bird to announce his departure to Heaven. This consoling revisitation has been interpreted as an expression of acceptance towards secular learning²²⁶, which a jester

²²⁶ M. Ní Mhaoinaigh: "Pagans and Holy men: Litterary manifestations of twelfth-century reform"

(*crossán*) was a representant of. A *crossán* was a character belonging in court entertainment, but far from the most prestigious or respectable participant²²⁷. By giving him an honourable end, contrasting the harsh treatment the jester receives in other voyage tales, the author seems to establish a theology with remarkably lowered thresholds to Paradise. Salvation is no longer attainable only for the saints, but anyone willing to make a sacrifice and personal effort. There lies a paradox in the fact that the island of the Wailers is the only Otherworld experience for the jester, a character that spent his life in the service of comedy.

The sequence introduces a concept found in numerous places throughout the text, which is human souls in the shape of birds. Human beings transforming to birds is not an unusual device in Irish mythological tradition. In this text the metamorphosis seems to be connected to souls of diseased humans. Hudson writes in *Irish Sea Studies* that the concepts of resurrection and metamorphosis was easily confused in the early days of Christianity in Ireland.²²⁸ In time this association would perhaps become a poetical device for describing the afterlife to a lay audience.

3. The voyagers go ashore on a wonderful island on which a beautiful river of wine flows through a grove of appletrees. They are nourished on apples and wine so they '*perceived not wound or disease in them*'. The wind makes sweet music in the treetops.

The island of Emain in IB is a possible literary inspiration for this island. Apples with magical qualities frequently appear as tokens of Otherworld. When approached by his Otherworldly visitor, Bran is given a branch of an appletree from her home, which she tells him is without sickness and debility. Like on the island where the Uí Chorra find themselves, 'sweet music' is resounding on Emain.

Apples as food on an earthly Paradise is also observed in IMD, where in §VII Mael Dúin takes a branch in his hand that eventually bears a cluster of apples which feed the voyagers for forty nights.

The image of the beautiful garden free of ailments evokes associations to the Biblical Garden of Eden. Genesis 2: 9-10 tells how the garden was watered by a river flowing from Eden and that God made '*trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food*'. The Biblical passage does also encompass the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that

²²⁷ Stokes, Meyer defines him as a 'lewd, ribaldrous rhymer' (Archiv für celtische Lexicographie, vol.3, Niemeyer 1907)

²²⁸ B. Hudson: *Irish Sea Studies* 2006:193

eventually leads to the Fall of man. This island appears like a garden of Eden, but it does not seem to hold any shadow of evil. The intake of wine and food with supernatural healing qualities also gives an association to the Eucharist. As seen in the frame story, the brothers receives a Heathen baptism after birth. After their conversion, there is no explicit mention of a Christian baptism, though Lochán requests that a mass is said for them at Clochar, which could entail a christening. The arrival on this island, however, may signify a new start, i.e. a christening. Going back to the garden of Eden, they eat of the appletrees, but in contrast to the Biblical Fall where this act entailed a defilement of creation, they are nourished and healed of wounds and disease – evils of the world.

4. The voyagers reach an island populated by four different groups: *áes forusta findliath* 'a folk sedate, fair-grey' in the first place, *rígfhlaithe*, 'royal lords' in the second, *óchlaích*, 'champions' in the third and *gillada*, 'servants', in the fourth place²²⁹. The beautiful, bright inhabitants are laughing and playing. A crew member goes ashore. To the other crew mates he appears black and hideous next to the islanders, until he joins them in their games and laughter, upon which he becomes bright like them.

The island seems a likely re-modeling of similar islands in IMD and NB. This quadruple set-up is found in IMD§16 where the island is divided in four parts by enclosures made from precious materials: '*sonnach di ór 7 sonnach aile di argut, in tres sonnach di umu, in cethramad di glain*' ('an enclosure of gold and another enclosure of silver, in the third place an enclosure of brass, in the fourth place an enclosure of crystal') The materials may symbolise the people within them, which are, in the first place, *ríg* (kings), in the second *rígna* (queens), *óclacha* (warriors) are in the third place and *ingena* (maidens) are in the fourth²³⁰. Oskamp relates the island, clearly representing Irish court society, to yet another island found in (NB, where Brendan encounters an island populated by three separated groups of people – boys (*pueri*), young men (*iuuenui*) and elders (*seniores*) which obviously depicts a monastic society²³¹. Commenting on the quadruple island of ICUC, Oskamp suggests it contains elements of both the court island of IMD and the monastic island of NB: He likens the kings and warriors of ICUC to those found in IMD, and the young men and elders of NB to the servants and the fair-grey folk of ICUC. The enclosures of IMD are notably absent from ICUC, as is women.

²²⁹ Translations by Stokes': *The Voyage of the Hui Corra*, RQ 14 (

²³⁰ IMD part XVI

²³¹ Oskamp 1970:61 / *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatís XVII*

Alongside the defined groups of *rígfhlaithi*, *óchlaích* and *gillada*, the expression '*áes forusta findliath*' (dignified/experienced grey-haired folk) seems peculiarly diffuse. They may evoke the image of the otherworldly *áes sídh*, i.e. the Tuatha Dé Danann. In the last poetic recital of the voyage tale, it seems a similar reference is made as the Uí Chorra is stated to have embarked over the sea '*for knowledge of the wonderful folk*'²³².

A likely alternative is that the island has been 'christianised', and the grey folk represents sages or counselors of a court.

On this island we are back at the theme of conformity encountered at Vision 1, though this time it is reversed to indicate happiness. The earliest occurrence of the island of the Laughers seems to be the *Inis Subai* encountered in IB, where one of Bran's enquiring men went ashore only to join the Laughers in their mindless gaping. The Laughers of ICUC seem to be of a different nature. Oskamp notes that the foolishness of the Laughers in IB is replaced by an unworldly and heavenly happiness at the islands of the Laughers in IMD²³³, which could similarly be said of the Laughers' island in ICUC. Máel Dúin's foster brother, whose lot it was to explore the island started playing and laughing with the islanders as he had always known them. The island of ICUC also bears semblance of a paradise, due to the brightness of the people and the congenial atmosphere. The lack of fences and the playing and laughing that everyone participates in could give the impression the men are equals, or in an equal situation on this island.

The shift from blackness to brightness appears in a reversed manner in IMD. The Wailers of IMD are described black, and once the crew member is assimilated, the rest of the crew can't recognise him from the islanders.

The paradisaical happiness of the island may be regarded as a contrast to the hopelessness and grief prevailing in Vision 1. The bliss may be a depiction of afterlife awaiting after the renewal that could be said to take place at Vision 3. The exploring crew member who appears 'black and hideous' and turns bright in the islanders' company may be a reference to the people described in the Revelation 7:14, '*they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*'. Eternity for these people is bright and happy, but for the unsaved in Vision 1 eternity is filled with wailing.

²³² van Hamel (ed.) *Immram Ua Corra* §25, l.533

²³³ Oskamp 1970:55

In keeping with the optimistic line of salvation-for-all which appear an important message of the tale, the 4th island may also be another emphasis that reaching Paradise is obtainable for the classes represented by the islanders, who we may assume is lay people.

The loss of the mate sparks a reaction with the men in the boat. When he doesn't return to the boat they become mournful, which could be a picture of how those alive mourn their dead, even if the diseased has, according to the religious concept, reached a better place.

7.2 In the Trail of Máel Dúin

The visions in this section seem to consist of a re-arranged serie of natural phenomena borrowed from IMD.

5. They are shown an island on a pedestal. The platform of the island stands so high up over the sea that they can not see who is upon it, but they hear a man conversing.

The voice from an unseen source appears to be a borrowing from the scene in IMD, where the crew of Máel Dúin hear it from a silver pillar (see 7).

The pedestal island as it is encountered in IMD has a door at its base, which the voyagers find to be locked. No inhabitants are seen or heard, but Máel Dúin perceives there is a plough at the top. In keeping with an interpretation based on actual experiences by early sea pilgrims in northern landscapes, Oskamp²³⁴ suggests this island is a poetic adaption rooted in an island with an inaccessible coastline. He also relates it to an island found in the *Betha Brenainn*, where a tablet is cast down to the voyagers that reads²³⁵: *'Spend no toil in trying to enter this island, for ye will never come therein; but the island which ye will seek ye will find, and this is not it. And og to thy country and to thy land, for there is a multitude seeking thee, and who would fain see thee. And search the holy scriptures wherein has been said: Mansiones Dei multae sunt.'* Brendan's version of the island may indicate that at an earlier point in voyage literature the island on a pedestal was an image of the *terra deserta*; the place where the hermit decides to live his life and, eventually, die. The inaccessability of the island seems to signify that the island is not the 'place of ressurection' for the voyagers or even that the life of a hermit is not for them.

It seems clear then, that the pedestal island of ICUC has gone through an evolution through at least two earlier texts, NB and IMD, during which it has been stripped down for each new adaption. No desire to enter the island occurs on behalf of the Uí Chorra, nor is any

²³⁴ Oskamp 1970:63

²³⁵ Ibid: 28

attempt made to do so. The island is a mere vision on the water and it seems unlikely that any audience would recognise the island as a hermit's resting place without familiarity with the earlier tales. Peeling off the details may have been a device in order to create a wider space for interpretation. A man conversing on a pedestal out of range for the voyagers could be viewed as a tableau of communication failure, as the fact that the man is conversing implies there should have been an audience or participant. The Uí Chorra brothers are, as non-clerics, representants for the laity. Dorothy Africa²³⁶ has pointed out that a consequence of the ideal of the reclusive ascetic prevailing in the Irish Church for centuries brought on the consequence of neglect in the area of pastoral care. The preaching of the Church might have become too introvert, or, as this scene literally depict, lofty. Turning attention towards laity may be the motivation for the voyage tales in the 12th century, where the saintly leading character we find in NB is replaced with humble sinners from lay ranks.

6. The voyagers see a river in form of a rainbow. It makes a harsh noise and the text relates that *'ní thócbad cenn ó tráth nóna dia sathairn co tráth teirte dia luain'* (Stokes' rendering: 'it appeared not from noon on Saturday till terce on Tuesday', should perhaps rather read 'it did not rise (...)'.²³⁷) While the river is not raised, it has the taste of honey.

The river is likely to be based on a similar 'water-arch' flowing like a rainbow and teeming with fish over an island in IMD. Oskamp relates this vision to a natural phenomenon like waterfalls or geysirs encountered by early sea pilgrims and later put into literary fables²³⁸.

Leaving out the island and the fish which features in the water-arch vision of IMD, may indicate that the author of ICUC wished to emphasise the river's likeness with a rainbow in order to create a further parallel to the Biblical story of Noah's ark. In this context, the rainbow is set in the sky as a reminder of a covenant between God and men signifying that never again shall the water 'become a flood to destroy all flesh'²³⁹. A reminder of this covenant would be relevant to apocalyptic notions of Ireland's doom. One of these was, according to Hudson²⁴⁰, the Patrician claim that Ireland would perish in a flood seven years before the Last Days to escape the horrors of the End. This fate, along with the

²³⁶ "Church Reform" p.90 in *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture* (Donnelly 2004)

²³⁷ Cf DIL: §*con-ocaib*

²³⁸ Oskamp 1970:63

²³⁹ Genesis 9:13-15

²⁴⁰ Hudson 2006:175-76

appointment of Patrick as the advocate of the Irish, was one of the blessings held to be received by the saint. We may expect it to be a part of a promotion of Patrick as Ireland's chief saint, a position he naturally would have competitors for. One of them was, as Hudson further relates, Findén of Clonard. Findén was also revered as the advocate of the Irish and it was promised that anyone buried at Clonard would never face torment in Hell²⁴¹.

7. A marvellous vision is shown to the voyagers; a four-cornered silver pillar in midst of the sea. A fishing net is drawn from its summit into the deep. In the last mention of an Uí Chorra brother's name, Lochán is said to put a mesh aside to keep as a token. The passage contains a direct reference to Máel Dúin: '*adconnairc Máel Dúin in ní cétna*', ('Máel Dúin beheld the same thing')²⁴². NB shows that Brendan indeed beheld it too, measured it and brought home a chalice and a dish from it²⁴³. Brendan seems to have been an important influence in other portions of the text, this direct reference to Máel Dúin within the section of islands so similar with a section in IMD, makes IMD the closest source here. One striking alteration of the pillar incident in IMD is that a member of Máel Dúin's crew takes a mesh of the net as a token which he intends to offer Armagh in the event of him reaching Ireland again²⁴⁴. We may expect the author in this manner showed his reverence for the Patrician capital. Comparatively, Lochán too keeps a mesh of the silver net as a token of the experience, but no intended recipient is mentioned at all. The omission may be an indication of reluctance towards Armagh on the author's part.

IMD contains yet another homage to Armagh: Máel Dúin's crew encounters an octagon in the sea. A net of white silver is stretched from the octagon over the western plain of the sea. A mighty voice is heard from the stone, but no one understands it. A crew member hacks off a piece of stone, as a token to be laid on Patrick's altar, i.e. Armagh. While the voice heard by Máel Dúin may have influenced the use of it on the pedestal island, the sequence is otherwise omitted from ICUC.

7.3 Warnings

8. The voyagers arrive at an ecclesiastical interlude as they enter the Island of Dega, a disciple of Andrew the Apostle. This island is not found in any of the other *immrama*. Dega explains

²⁴¹ Hudson 2006:176

²⁴² *Immram Ua Corra* §8, line 269

²⁴³ NB part XXII

²⁴⁴ IMD part XXVI

his situation; he was sent in pilgrimage for having forgotten a Nocturne and awaits Doomsday on the island, accompanied by the souls of holy human beings in the shape of birds.

Stokes suggests Dega is a reference to a bishop by the name of Degha who is commemorated in the Martyrology of Donegal at August the 18th²⁴⁵. This saint associated with craftsmanship belongs to the 6th century and is described as ‘one of three master artisans of Ireland’²⁴⁶.

Kenney writes that Dega’s association with a monastery at Inis Caoin (in present Monaghan) must indicate that this church belonged to the *paruchia* of Clonmacnoise at some point²⁴⁷.

According to the Annals of Ulster, Inis Caoin was burned in 1166 along with Armagh and other sites.

A bishop named Deg is briefly mentioned as the father of Columbcille’s friend in the *Life of St Columbcille*, in which is also found a link between Ciarán, Columcille and Findén of Clonard: Columbcille is visiting Findén when the latter has a dream in which he sees two moons arise from Clonard. One of them, a golden moon symbolising Columbcille, fares north and Ireland and Scotland glistens by its light. The other, a silver moon representing Ciarán, fares to the Shannon and the center of Ireland glistens by it. Supposedly this signifies how two alumni of the school of Clonard themselves became great founders. The same text includes a sequence where Ciarán expresses a wish for a church full of students to attend at the hours, while Columbcille asks for gold and silver to cover God’s relics – instead of this he is, however, granted wealth for his congregation²⁴⁸.

The sequence strengthens the possibility for the Dega of ICUC to have been a student of Ciarán, as it indicates that the church of Ciarán was associated with keen observance of canonical hours. However strict the rule at Clonmacnoise may have been though, sending monks adrift seems an extravagant consequence for the neglect of an hour.

The island may be an image of clerics neglecting the ecclesiastical founders who was appointed by Findén of Clonard as the ‘12 Apostles of Ireland’ – in effect the abandonment of old structures set up by the founders of Irish Christianity in favour of new dioceses established on the basis of the political situation in 12th century.

²⁴⁵ *The Voyage of the Húi Corra* (Stokes ed.) footnote §26

²⁴⁶ *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* 82.2

(“Thrice fifty bells, victorious deed, with one hundred strong ringed croziers, with sixty perfect gospels, by the hand of Daigh alone”)

²⁴⁷ Kenney 1966: 383-384

²⁴⁸ *Betha Choluim Chille. On the Life of St Columba, Three Middle-Irish Homilies* Stokes (ed.) (1877)

The neglected canonical hour in question may have been chosen for its symbolic value. The Nocturne is marked by prayer at 9PM, midnight and 3AM. The last hour, from 3 till 6AM, coincides with the Biblical ‘fourth watch of the night’. This watch, signifying the end of night and break of dawn, was the time when the disciples, including Andrew, was in distress in their boat on the waves of Gennesareth and Christ came walking to them on the water, calming the waves²⁴⁹.

Distress at night followed by relief at dawn is found in ICUC. The Uí Chorra brothers intend to kill the erenagh of Clochar at night, but a vision of Michael the archangel changes this agenda. The villains become exemplary disciples. The precarious night time followed by light at dawn appear to be reflected in the brothers’ birth. The diabolically conceived brothers are born during the night, though the birth of the youngest who is given the name Silvester (*light/sun of the earth*²⁵⁰) by the end of night may foreshadow that the light of day will end a dark night = light of Christ will end the pagan darkness. Light prevailing darkness may foreshadow the plot of ICUC, but also be a moral lecture of the tale.

Thus, the cleric neglecting a nocturne could be interpreted as contemporary clerics diverting from what they should be doing in a troubled time i.e. “night”, and that if they adhered to traditional practices, the relieving dawn would shortly break through.

(As in the case of Comán of Cenn Mara mentioned earlier, there seems to be a discrepancy between name and place association here. Dega being a disciple of St Andrew indicates he has a connection to Scotland, as Andrew was established patron saint of Scotland before the 12th century. If the monastery at Inis Caoin was a Columban church, it is not impossible that it had close ties with Scotland. As the Life of Columbcille states, the influence of Columbcille would spread both in the north of Ireland and in Scotland. Dega may have been equated with a similarly named cleric. *A Calendar of Scottish Saints*²⁵¹ includes a Scottish bishop by the name of *Daganus*. A Scottish cleric could be regarded as a disciple of Andrew by a 12th century commentator. The bishop lived in the 7th century and was involved in the Easter debate in the Celtic church. Daganus was an opponent to the Roman computation of the holiday and thus championed Celtic uniqueness in this matter – as did Clonard in those days.)

²⁴⁹ For instance Mark 6:47-51

²⁵⁰ As the name is interpreted in Voragine’s etymologies *Legenda Aurea*, see Chpt.2

²⁵¹ Barrett 1919

9. The boat reaches the flagstones of Hell. The great, vast plain of the island is inhabited by dead and living men, among them a band with feet of iron. They yell as red flames roll over them like ocean waves.

At the flagstones, they see burning hosts (*sluag mór*) with fiery spits through them. It is explained that these are souls that never repented in their earthly lives.

At this island, the author may take to grips with the belligerent culture of his time. ‘*Sluag mór*’ may be a warfare reference, as it could signify an army²⁵². ‘Feet of iron’ occurs in Biblical setting where Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, where a beast appears with ‘feet made partly of iron and partly of clay’²⁵³. Daniel interprets the iron part of the feet as the strong elements of a kingdom (which should not be mixed with brittle elements, represented by the clay). If we presume our author had this reference in mind, the men tormented on the island may be a warning or reminder to an influential ruling power: If they do not repent their actions in time, a grim fate awaits. The fact that dead men are mixed with living men may indicate that the author thinks not only of wrongdoers of the past, but men alive and active in his time.

A paralleling motif is found in the *Betha Brenainn*, where the voyagers reach the gates of Hell. In this earlier text they are shown to Brendan by the Devil himself, who is sitting on the prow of the boat, unseen by everyone but Brendan²⁵⁴. It seems likely that ICUC, as the only extant voyage tale, lends this sequence from the Life. The Uí Chorra are taken to see the flagstones of Hell, but the Devil himself is conspicuously absent in the voyage part²⁵⁵. The reason for this may be found in the background of the Uí Chorra brothers. As the frame story of ICUC tells, the Devil is present in the brothers’ psyche as a spiritual guide or even father figure until their conversion. He is never credited with a physical appearance and once the brothers renounce him, there is not as much as a mention of him. This shows the author’s concern was for the human mindset and interactions rather than fascination with the Devil persona himself.

7.4 Goodbye sovereignty

²⁵² DIL §*slóg*

²⁵³ Daniel 2:33

²⁵⁴ Lismore lives (Stokes ed) *Betha Brenainn* line

²⁵⁵ Devils occur, but in plural form they must be taken as demons or minions of Hell.

10. Uí Chorra's boat takes them further to a shiny island inhabited by 'a certain woman'. An island fortress is enclosed by a brazen palisade and a brazen net is spread on the palisade spikes. The voyagers approach the fortress when the wind blowing through the net makes such a music that they fall asleep. They sleep for three days and three nights. A woman wearing shoes of white bronze emerges.

The woman carries a pitcher of brass in her one hand and a drinking cup of silver in the other. She gives them foods 'like soft cheeses' and water from a well, containing every savour.

The sequence of ICUC appears as a mix of two episodes in IMD, which strengthens the theory she is a sovereignty woman. In the first of these²⁵⁶, a girl is encountered on an island populated by four classes. The beautiful girl comes to them, distributing cheese²⁵⁷ and savoury liquor. On the third day they find themselves in the boat, the island has disappeared from them.

In the subsequent sequence, Máel Dúin is hosted by a woman who lives within a brazen fortress and shows the oft seen traits for the sovereignty woman. She is beautiful, she serves drink and she's expected to sleep with the male leader – an arrangement the boat crew attempt to set for Máel Dúin. She declines the offer and the voyagers fall asleep and wake up in their boat, with no island in sight²⁵⁸.

The question of intercourse appears the most striking difference between the IMD encounter with the sovereignty and the ICUC encounter. Uí Chorra's woman is significantly toned down, casually introduced as 'a certain woman'. Her wearing 'two blunt shoes of white bronze' signifies she is a woman of some social standing. There is, however, no remark on her beauty nor does anyone express any intention of sleeping with her. The remaining features is the fortress and her serving of drink. The author of ICUC may have attempted to redefine this traditional character. Unlike the Land of Women in IB, the woman is no longer the goal or terminus of the voyage. She tells them, uncharacteristically for sovereignty, that *'dáig ní sunnda atá bar n-esséirge, cid inann cenél dúinn dib línib'* ('though your kindred is the same as ours, not here is your resurrection')²⁵⁹. This could be seen as an encouragement to abandon notions of kingship, despite of hereditary claims. Alternatively, sovereignty may be attainable

²⁵⁶ IMD part XVI

²⁵⁷ cf. 'foods like soft cheeses' (ICUC)

²⁵⁸ IMD part XVII

²⁵⁹ *Immram Ua Corra* line 307-308

for some, but not this crew. Meeting her and peacefully parting with her could infer a resignation of kingship or secular power.

Throughout this sequence we hear of structures and objects made of bronze and brass. In Biblical settings, these materials is particularly used in religious structures. Examples include the bronze pillars and the sea of bronze balanced on twelve brazen bulls in the Temple in Jerusalem²⁶⁰, and Moses' altar for burnt offerings which was to have a grating of network of bronze²⁶¹. As many have written of, much efforts was put into presenting pagan Ireland as the local equivalent to Israel, and the pre-Christian history to Ireland's own Old Testament. In line with these efforts, the sovereignty woman in her fortress may be likened to the covenant and temple of the Old Pact.

The notion of a woman in the sea pointing out a direction, might have roots in a vision found in the *History of Enoch and Elia*, which belongs in an apocryphal *Acts of the Apostles*. Here the voyagers are met by a female warrior standing on a rock at sea. She is seemingly made of copper and indicates a path to them with her finger²⁶².

The tableau could additionally imply a more straightforward message. The sovereignty woman is known to be a representation of Ireland. Her message could point to the future voyage of the crew, in which they abandon Ireland.

ICUC may show a slight change in the view on women seen in other voyage tales. Máel Dúin and Bran both find themselves on islands populated by women who turn out to be traps: Bran and his crew while away the ages of the world in the Land of Women and can never return to Ireland. Máel Dúin only escapes the island of the Queen and her seventeen daughters on the second attempt, by a crew member sacrificing his hand. The woman of ICUC does not seem to pose any similar threat or temptation.

11.Great, many-coloured birdflocks appear to the voyagers. One bird sits on the gunwale of the boat. They converse with it and learn that the bird is the soul of a woman and a *manches*, a female tenant of a monastery. She relieves them of their fears of going to Hell, but tells them that the birds are the souls that come out of hell on Sunday, indicating that she is one of them. She also shows them three rivers: The souls in the shape of birds come out of them and they are pursued by devils in the shape of otters, eels and black swans. She tells them to not feel sad, as the souls of man are enduring punishment for the sins they have committed.

²⁶⁰ 2 Kings 25:13

²⁶¹ Exodus 27:4

²⁶² Text given in Wooding (ed) 2000:247

The bird-woman's further relating of her own story gives insight as to what type of sins are being punished like this: She did not her husband's will and clave not to lawful wedlock. Three bright rays upon her breast is a reflection of the three good deeds she did towards her husband. She states that all her colour would have been bright like the rays had she not severed from lawful wedlock.

The sequence seems to address several issues.

The manyfold vision does not seem to have any parallel in extant voyage literature, but the introduction of the woman is comparable to an incident is found in the *Betha Brenainn*. Brendan and the boat crew find a maiden of enormous size. She is dead, a spear has gone through her. Brendan brings her to life, baptises her and asks her concerning her kindred. '*Do aitreachtuibh in mhara damhsa*' ('of the inhabitants of the sea am I), she replies, '*don lucht oilit 7 ernaigít eiseirgi doibh*' (of those who pray and expect their resurrection'). Brendan then asks her: '*In docum nimhe ragha fochedair, nó in docum h'athardha?*' ('Wilt thou go at once to heaven, or wilt thou go to thy fatherland?'). The girl answers in a language only Brendan understands that she will go to heaven²⁶³.

The Uí Chorra meets a woman, also in a supernatural form (bird), who concerning her kindred states: '*A tír nÉreann damsa*', ('Of the land of Erin am I'), and '*7 anim banscáile mé 7 manches duiti mé*', ('and I am the soul of a woman and a monkess unto thee'). Brendan's otherworldly woman seems to be altered to a earthly female belonging to a contemporary institution. The elder on board speaks, but instead of enquiring about her fate, he is concerned about the men in the boat: '*Abair frim de seic, in tiagmait dochum ifirn?*' ('Tell me this, are we going to Hell?')²⁶⁴. The woman assures them that they will not. Compared to the parallel in the *Betha Brenainn*, ICUC seems to highlight ordinary mortals and their fates. Shows the voyagers remaining awareness of their evils.

The incident seems to convey the message of the importance of staying loyal to a partner. It may however be understood in different ways. Firstly, it could be a straightforward exhortation to be faithful to one's lawful wedded spouse. The term used for the bird-woman's marriage is *lánamnas dligthech*. The term *áes lánamnassa dligthig* is explained by Hughes²⁶⁵ as the term for the married lay tenants on monastery grounds, folk in lawful wedlock.

²⁶³ *Betha Brenainn* (Stokes ed.) line 3683

²⁶⁴ *ICUC* (van Hamel ed.) §12, line 321-322

²⁶⁵ "The Church in Irish Society 4-800" p313

Marriage customs was highly present on the reformist agenda, but the decrees preserved regarding the subject are centered on which unions should be avoided. It is, however, not unlikely that the subject of fidelity was an additionally debated issue at or prior to the synods, considering the letter Anselm of Canterbury to Muirchertach Ua Briain. One of the bishops' complaints concerned Irishmen abandoning their wives '*without any reason; that wives are given in exchange; (...)*'²⁶⁶. The same complaints was made by Anselm's predecessor Llanfranc, who wrote a rather similar letter to Muirchertach's father Toirdelbach Ua Briain. Still, the ICUC incident clearly indicates that it is the woman who is the unreliable partner. Considering that the infidelity element of the scene appears unique to this voyage tale, it may have signified a message intended for specific recipients.

Alternatively, or simultaneously, the incident could be regarded as analogous. In her article regarding another 12th century text, Herbert²⁶⁷ calls to mind how marriages were a means to seal political alliances and for that same reason could be abruptly broken up. Tales about half-hearted, wronged or unjust spouses could be political situations put into literary fables. If this is the case with regards to this island, infidelity towards a spouse may translate to disloyalty to a ruler. This tableau put up against the situation of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne in the 12th century, could imply the episode is a reference to the Aidnean change of loyalty from the Uí Bhriain to the Uí Chonchobair after the latter's rise to power. As was the custom, the Aidnean lords seem to have married their daughters off in connection to alliance agreements. As seen previously, one of them appear to have been married to the Uí Bhriain house first and the Uí Chonchobair later²⁶⁸.

The three rivers of respectively otters, eels and black swans might be a revisitation of the vision of Lochán in the frame story, where he sees the four rivers of Hell; a river of toads, a river of serpents, a river of fire and a river of snow.

We may expect the creatures constituting the rivers to be animalic representations of human souls, as seen earlier in the text with regards to the birds. Otters sometimes figure in Irish texts as helpers of holy men. One example of this occurs in IMD, where otters bring salmon and firewood to a stranded hermit²⁶⁹. Eels, on the other hand, might be associated with malevolence, as McKillop notes that lake monsters may be referred to as eels. Compared to the other species, swans have played a more prominent role in Irish tradition . There are

²⁶⁶ Gwynn treats this letter in *The Irish Church in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (1992:175)

²⁶⁷ "The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca: A Twelfth-Century Tale" (1997:27)

²⁶⁸ Cailleach Dé, *Foras Feasa* part XXVII

²⁶⁹ IMD part XXXIII

several instances of metamorphosis between human and swan shape, as seen in *Aisling Óengus* and *Tochmarc Étaíne* e.g. Swans appear to have associations to purity, beauty and potential good luck²⁷⁰. The colour black could signify that these usual traits are reversed and signify something impure. We have earlier, on the island of the Laughers, seen that the crew member appeared black and hideous until he was ‘smitten’ by the blissful islanders and became white like them. The various associations to the souls may indicate that what fate awaits humans in the afterlife is not necessarily obvious.

12. They reach the island of the grey-haired harp-player. It is a beautiful island with shining grass and purple-headed flowers. Birds and bees sing music to the flower heads and the man chants a melody that is the sweetest in the world. Everyone salute each other and the old man tells them to fare forth. This island is another one unique to ICUC among the voyage tales.

A harp-player is known as one of the regular attendants of a royal court. Geoffrey Keating writes in *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* that: ‘*ar gach airdrígh da mbeith i n-Éirinn deichneabhar do bheith do shíor 'n-a fhochair gan scarthain ris do ghnáth*’, (‘every high king of Ireland should keep ten officers in constant attendance on him’), and one of them should be a ‘*oirfideach ré seinm agus ré gabháil duan agus dréacht do láthair an ríogh*’, (‘musician to play music, and to chant poems and songs in the presence of the king’). Also the Bible tells of harp-play for the king and for God. Both in Biblical and Irish texts it can instill specific moods into the listeners²⁷¹.

The mood of beauty and merriment that permeates the island is possibly an effect of the music emanating from the harp. While in a court, the most important person will always be the king, but on this island it is the harp-player that literally plays the leading role, surrounded by a choir of birds, bees and flowers. As remarked earlier, we have in several incidents seen birds as representants for human souls. It is tempting to believe we are dealing with transformed humans here as well, due to their anthropomorphic behaviour.

As for the bees, McKillop relates that bees are thought to hail from Heaven and bring secret wisdom with them.²⁷² The presence of a harp-player and lack of a church or other ecclesiastic symbols may suggest the island is a glimpse of a royal court. The flowers with purple heads

²⁷⁰ ‘swan’ McKillop (1998)

²⁷¹ E.g. Job 30:31, 1.Sam 16:23, and *Bruiden da Choca*

²⁷² ‘bee’ McKillop (1998)

may even represent royal persons. The colour purple (*corcra*) is frequently found in the garment of royal persons. An example is found in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, where a boy is clothed in the trappings of a king's son, which is explained to be '*bratt corcra co cuaich oir*' (a purple robe with a golden fringe)²⁷³.

The voyagers do not enter the island. The boat merely passes it and the harp-player appears to wave them along. This could be viewed as an effect of the island in Vision 10, where the voyagers could be said to refrain from royal claims.

7.5 Warfare horrors

13. After voyaging for 'a long time', various frightful visions appear to them on the sea. First up is a man rowing with a fiery spade. Now and then waves of flame roll over him. He explains that this is his punishment for being one who rowed on Sundays.

14. A big hideous miller is shown to the voyagers. He tells them he is the Miller of Hell and that he puts into the mill 'everything as to which niggardliness is shewn in the world'.

The theme of the Mill of Hell is paralleled in IMD. Máel Dúin's crew encounter the miller who explains that he is casting half the corn of their country into the mill of Hell, because it has been subject to niggardliness²⁷⁴.

In the ICUC version we find a significant alteration. Here the miller is not putting away corn, but perhaps more typical symbols of wealth which may be said to be common causes for warfare - jewels, treasures and kine.

15. They meet a huge horseman, riding a horse of flames. The occasional wave rolling over him gives him temporary moments of relief. He explains he suffers like this for stealing his brother's horse and riding it on a Sunday, and that this is the punishment awaiting everyone who rides on a Sunday.

16. An island appears to them, populated by men being tormented by black birds with fiery beaks and talons. They tell the voyagers that they are 'dishonest smiths and braziers' and add: 'our tongues are blazing in our heads as a penalty for everyone's shame by reason of our handiwork'.

A frightening island of smiths appears to be a popular motif in voyage tales. Máel Dúin rows away when voices are heard on the island discussing the coming of the voyagers²⁷⁵. The

²⁷³ *Lebor Gabála Érenn* LXX "Óengus Tuirmech Temrach"

²⁷⁴ IMD part XIV

²⁷⁵ Ibid XX

incident is paralleled in NB²⁷⁶. Brendan and his crew similarly never disembarks on the island because they are afraid of it – a sentiment proved justified both in IMD and NB when the islanders attack them by throwing glowing iron. Oskamp does not parallel ICUCs island of dishonest smiths with the savage smiths in the Voyage of Brendan and IMD, as he interprets the latter as the result of seamen’s tales about a volcano.

Considering that ICUC and especially IMD appear to have so many motifs in common and the author of the former must have had good knowledge of the latter, it seems likely the smiths of ICUC are modeled on the smiths of IMD. With that assumption, it is interesting to see ICUC take what seems to be a slightly different stand on the subject of smiths. The savage smiths seem to awaken scepticism and disdain by merely being smiths. As Oskamp notes, smiths generally had a bad name because of alleged magic powers²⁷⁷. The island seen in ICUC is a place of punishment for dishonest smiths and braziers, not smiths and braziers in general. That the island is placed in the middle of what may be perceived a section concerning violence and war, it seems likely the negative depiction of dishonest smiths may be connected to their practical function rather than superstitions attached to them. In this context the disdain could be connected to unacceptable conduct with regards to the forging of weapons.

17. Another vision on the sea appears, this time a black giant carrying a bundle of firewood, occasionally ablaze, on his back. In his hand an iron staff. He is flinging himself under the sea to escape the flame, only to get a sea-wave of fire rising over him. He explains this is retribution for being one who used to carry firewood on Sundays.

The frightful visions concerning the characters rowing, riding horses and carrying firewood are particular to ICUC. They depict actions related to battle – horses were rode into battle and coastal kingdoms would be familiar with naval warfare. The carrying of firewood may be an allusion to the burning of sacked sites.

Seeing how they are connected to Sunday they give associations to events occurring prior to the 12th century. Sabbatarianism does not seem to have been a theme particularly emphasised by the reform movement, as far as the preserved decrees tell. Keeping Sunday special was, however, essential in Donnchadh Ua Briain’s reform efforts in the 11th century. An entry of 1040 in the Annals of Inisfallen corresponds well with the visions seen in 13, 15 and 17: ’

²⁷⁶ NB part XXIII

²⁷⁷ Oskamp 1970:64

Cáin 7 rechtge do dénam oc mac Briain innas na dernad ó ré Patraicc I n h-Érind conna laimthe gait do dénam na h-engnam Domnaig na h-imthecht nach aire ar muin i n-Domnuch; ocus dano na laimthe míl innille do thabairt hi tech'. (A law and ordinance, such as was not enacted in Ireland from Patrick's time, was made by Brian's son, to the effect that none should dare to steal, or do feats of arms on Sunday, or go out on Sunday carrying any load; and furthermore, that none should dare to fetch cattle within doors.)²⁷⁸

18. The voyagers find themselves in a fiery sea and they see men's heads in abundance dashing against each other in it. One of the brothers says: *'is aba éca in ní atchiam'* ('that which we see is an abode of death')²⁷⁹. Danger creeps closer as worms in the sea pierces the two lower hides of the boat. The 'elder' consoles the boat crew: *'Ná tabrad i sním sin'*, and further *'Is tualaing Dia ar n-anacul cid isin óenchodail bem 7 mas ed as áil dó ar n-aided leó sút, ní fétar tuidecht i n-agaid a thoile'*. ('Let not that trouble you' - 'God is able to save us though we be in only the one hide; and even though yon worms desire to destroy us, they cannot go against His will'.)

In line with the theme of warfare the fiery sea with heads dashing against each other appears to be a metaphor for the battlefield. The words of the elder echoes those of Diarmait in a recension of the Battle of Carn Conaill²⁸⁰: *'Nach fetruidh-si, a chlerigh, nach ar lin na cruth brister cath, acht amail is ail ra Dia?'* ('Knowest thou no, O cleric, that a battle is gained neither by number nor outward form, but according to the will of God?') When Diarmait is saying this he is leading a small and inferior army against Guare Aidne of Connacht. His victory in the battle is considered a miracle. It is a similar miracle paralleled with regards to the boat. Staying afloat in a boat of one hide is another practical impossibility. What is being conveyed here appears to be that the causes that generate war may be mundane – perhaps one such reason is exemplified by the jewels, treasures and kine cast into the Mill of Hell – but the outcome is the result of divine influence.

7.6 Lurking Monsters

19. Uí Chorra's boat reaches an island wherein grows a wood full of honey that surrounds a green-grassed heath and a sweet-tasted lake. After the serie of horrors, the island appears like

²⁷⁸ AI 1040.6

²⁷⁹ van Hamel (ed.) line 415

²⁸⁰ MS Egerton 1782, ff 59b-61a, brought to attention by Stokes in his translation (*Zeitschrift f. Keltische Philologie* III)

a place of healing and calmness. They remain there for a week of rest. Upon leaving the island, however, the island shows its unknown depths. A frightening monster rises out of the lake and it seems to each of them that it is on him the monster will make an attack. The danger passes quickly and unceremoniously by the monster plunging back into the lake. The monster may be analogous to the Monster of Hell which Lochán is shown in his vision that leads to conversion. Of this monster it is said that *'ro gébtais fir domuin bás dia faicsin'*²⁸¹

(the men would die of seeing it).

There are examples of lake monsters in Irish tradition, though these seem to be legends revolving around a local saint's victory over them. The Uí Chorra crew respond in an untypical way when the monster appears to them, by standing petrified without any further action. This may indicate that the scene is not intended to demonstrate heroism in face of danger, but that it is rather intended to convey a warning.

What is initially comforting, beautiful and sweet-tasting might conceal a threat. The gaze of the monster meeting the gaze of each member of the boat's crew may indicate that nobody should feel unalarmed at this threat.

Looking to biblical influences for fearsome aquatic creatures, it is to be observed that monstrous beings on several occasions are used as analogies to unrighteous rulers. Pharaoh is compared to a 'sea monster' in Ezekiel 32:2 and in Daniel 7 Daniel interprets a dream of four monsters as four kingdoms.

The island could be interpreted as a general message of showing caution towards idyllic facades, but additionally it could contain a warning about a contemporary ruler.

Requiems for the dead

20. After rowing for a long time, the boat reaches the community of Ailbe of Emly at midnight – i.e. an island inhabited by the crew of one of Ailbe's two boats. A great light is in the island, which turns out to be the men's sunny countenance towards each other. The community are granted life till Doomsday and spend the time singing requiems for everyone who is dead at sea. The voyagers are told to leave the island before sunrise, because it will be tormentful to leave the beautiful island if they see it in daylight. After asking permission the Uí Chorra are allowed to fill their vessels from the clearest spring on the island and gather stones from the beach before they leave.

²⁸¹ van Hamel (ed.) *Immram Ua Corra* line 87-88

The litany named *Irish Litany of Pilgrim Saints* by Hughes reads in §43: "Twelve men who went with Ailbe to death." This happens to be the entry preceding the one concerning the three *Uí Corra* with their seven.

The legend of Ailbe's island might have partially developed from a wish to imagine a brighter fate for the pilgrims not returning home, though in this context it is highly probable to serve as a reminder that the old foundations of the Irish Church are still serving the Church. The saints of early Irish Christianity are still mediators and therefore they should be revered.

In the 12th century, the once major community of Emly in Munster suffered greatly under the reform acts of Muirchertach Ua Briain. Much of the grounds of Emly were taken to be part of the newly founded ecclesiastical center of Cashel. The many recorded attacks on Emly after Toirdelbach Ua Briain assumed his kingship seem to indicate a troubled relationship between the provincial kingship and the community.

Hudson points out that some communities felt fearful with regards to the setting aside of patron saints. Saints were said to refuse to revisit their sanctuaries because of injustice done towards them²⁸². Considering Ailbe was credited with preaching in Ireland before Patrick, the re-arrangement made by Muirchertach may have been received with worry, particularly in the eldest church communities.

The voyagers of NB spends two Christmas celebrations at the island of Emly. Here too, the island displays impressive light phenomena. Where as in ICUC, the island is lit up at night by the community members' sunny countenance upon each other, Brendan's crew witness the lamps before the altar being lit by a fiery arrow that comes passing through a window. The abbot explains that it is a spiritual fire and does not consume anything, like the burning bush in Exodus. Brendan asks what the analogy it has to 'this case', but no answer is provided. The phenomenon provides a link to Moses, witnessing the burning bush near Sinai²⁸³. The radiant faces in the Emly of ICUC, also provides a link to Moses. Exodus 34 tells that after conversing with God, the face of Moses is radiating light and he puts on a veil so as not to frighten the Israelites. Ailbe may have been likened to Moses as a deliverer of his people from what Christian commentators may have considered a form of slavery under paganism. In this process he may have received some of the features associated with the Old Testament prophet.

²⁸² *Irish Sea Studies* 2006:191

²⁸³ Exodus 3:2

The sun sets as the brothers embark on their voyage, and when they reach Emly the earthly sun is entirely gone. In its place is a holy light, symbolising the light of Christ. Soon a new dawn will come, which we may presume is an allusion to the return of Christ. The “death” of the earthly sun could symbolise the impending doom that awaits the earth, which means the requiems sung by the island community are, in fact, for the world. The boat needs to leave, because lingering to see the island in the dawn of the Last Day will be to see Paradise, and leaving it, we may assume, will be Hell. The boat crew are already assured that Hell is not the fate that awaits them. They have, however, still a mission on earth before the End.

The stones on the beach may be another borrowing from the *History of Enoch and Elia*: When departing from the church of Enoch and Elia, the voyagers are given the permission to take with them as much gold and precious stones as they wish. Wealth is clearly a blessing here, though ICUC includes a slight twist, as all the crew mates are saddened by the stones – either because they took none or because they did not take more.

Emly marks a turning point. Here the voyagers have left the last remnants of a secular world entirely to continue voyaging among ecclesiastical islands inhabited by hermits awaiting the End.

7.8 Holy islands

21. A ‘wondrous island’ with fair churches and altars is shown. The grass is green and with honey. An old man is singing psalms and ‘ever-lovely’ bees and purple-headed birds are chanting along with the delightful music.

The island shows some resemblance to the island in 12. Distinct differences include the presence of a church and a man singing psalms instead of playing music. Birds with purple heads are chanting instead of birds singing to purple-headed flowers. Earlier in ICUC birds have been explained as human souls.

The church and the psalm-singing are obvious marks of the island being an ecclesiastical one, whereas the “twin” island in 12 appears a royal one. As in the case of island no12 they don’t enter this island. If one assumes a link between the harp player’s paradise and this church island and sees it in light of 12th century events, the two islands could be a metaphor for a royal site turned into an ecclesiastical one. Cashel is the most obvious suggestion on such a site.

22. Next island is another ecclesiastical site where a hermit is praying in a hidden, secluded church. A bird is messenger between the voyagers and the hermit and eventually lets them

into the church. They sleep there and are given food from Heaven. The hermit tells them their resurrection is not there. He also relates to them their future adventures, though the author does not specify what these may be.

The secluded church housing an ecclesiastic may be a borrowing from the *History of Enoch and Elia*, where the voyagers reach a golden city. They dare not enter the gates, so they spend a night outside them. Next morning the gates mysteriously open. After extensive exploration the city, which is devoid of inhabitants, they eventually find a church which appears deserted as well. They eventually find the two clerics within it, Enoch and Elia, who after a brief conversation advises them to leave immediately and sail home²⁸⁴. The similarities between the two boat crews may indicate that ICUC was at one point partially modeled on EE and that the island of the secluded church with an advising cleric was similarly intended as the final island. Chpt.8 will further explore this theory.

23. The final island inhabited by one of Christ's disciples who relates to the voyagers their future is treated in the next chapter.

Starting out with the genre typical islands of the Laughers and Wailers, there is an increased presence of ecclesiastically themed islands towards the end of the voyage. Every hermit encountered on their voyage tells them to move on, it is often emphasised that they are not in the place of their resurrection. The voyage seem to unite very different classes of society in a mutual cause. This cause does not appear to be related to the early ideal of finding a *terra deserta* on which to spend their remaining lives upon. The time may be nigh, but that appears to call for action in order to save more souls rather than resign from the world. As repenting sinners, there is no judgement or condemning of the Uí Chorra or other crew members anywhere on their voyage. They are shown what horrors await for agents of violence who never repents, but they are also granted wonderful visions earlier being the remit of holy men.

8. To Rome and Back Again

8.1 The island of the hidden church

The final island of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra* is singled out in this thesis because it stands out and has been described by other commentators as problematical. The sequence seems like an

²⁸⁴ Esposito: "An Apocryphal 'Book of Enoch and Elias'" (Wooding ed. 2000:34 and 248)

abrupt shift into a prophecy elaborating the voyagers' further travels, in which figure many places and persons not mentioned earlier in the text. Thereafter follows a poetical recital by the bishop. Breatnach expresses puzzlement as to whether the author intended to leave the narrative as it stands or if his intention to modify it was frustrated for reasons now unknown²⁸⁵.

Unless otherwise stated, I quote the edition of *Immram Ua Corra* by van Hameln²⁸⁶ and Stokes' translation *The Voyage of the Húi Corra*²⁸⁷.

As previously mentioned, the island of the secluded church (Chpt.7.8, vision 22) may at one point have been intended the last island for the Uí Chorra voyagers. On this island, the voyagers are received by a solitary ecclesiastic with a servant in the shape of a bird. The visit ends with the elder telling them to depart; *'uair ní hand sít boí i ndán dóib esséirge. 7 ro innis dóib a tuirtheda ó sin immach'*²⁸⁸. ('for their resurrection was not destined to take place there; and he related to them their adventures from that time forth'). One might get the impression this island was at one point the last due to its similarities with the final island of *The History of Enoch and Elia*: The island entails a hidden church where the voyagers meet holy men who relates to them their future travels. Additionally, the Uí Chorra and the boat crew of EE appear to sail the same way southwards. The boat of EE sails towards Gallilee. Though not disclosed until the final island, the Uí Chorra sail towards Spain. The Mediterranean and Spain lies on the same sea route.

The actual relation of these adventures is not disclosed here, but on the final island, where its inhabitant, Christ's disciple, relates them. It seems the author wished to include one more island tableau before the prophecy.

8.2 The island of Christ's disciple

Ráncatar ass sin co hinis I mboí descipul do Chríst. Ba hamra in inis dano. Recles 7 eclais indi. Cansait a pater fri Dia i ndorus na hecailse. Asbert in sruith boí isin eclais: 'Fochen irnaigde ar n-aite Ísu,' ol sé. 'Cid ón,' ol in sruith baí isin dorus, 'cá háit I fácbais éside?' 'Is dia disciplinaib damsa,' ol sé, '7 ro imgabus é corro élóduis uad for muir, conom tarla isin insi seo, 7 ro chaithes ní di lusrad 7 di thorad na hinse olchena, co táinic aingel di nim cuccum 7

²⁸⁵ "The Structure and Transmission of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*" p.107, Ériu 53 (2003)

²⁸⁶ *Immrama* (Dublin, 1941)

²⁸⁷ RQ vol.14 pp.22-69 (1893)

²⁸⁸ §23, 486-487

asbert frim: 'Ní cóir dorignis,' ol sé, 'cid ed, bia isin bethaid sin cen éc co bráth.' Atúsa dano amlaid sin cosindiu 7 trítSom ticc proinn cach nóna cuccum.'

Dochótar i n-óentech iar sin 7 tothluigset biad di nim dóib. Óro guidset combad i n-óenfhecht doberthe proinn dóib, doroch in t-aingel cuccu 7 fácbais a proinn for líc cloiche ina fiadnaise forsín trácht, .i. bairgen cacha fir díb 7 ordu éisc fuirri I mboí cach blas no accobrad cach óen díbsom fo leith.²⁸⁹

(They came thence to an island wherein dwelt one of Christ's disciples. Marvellous, moreover, was the island. A cell and a church were therein. They chanted their paternoster to God before the church. Quoth the elder who was in the church: 'Welcome (is) the prayer of our tutor Jesus!' 'What is that?' said the sage who was in the doorway: 'in what place hast you seen Him?' 'One of His disciples am I', saith he, 'and I failed Him, and fled from Him on the sea, till I chanced upon this island, and I ate some of the herbs of the island and also of its fruit, till an angel came to me from heaven and quoth to me: 'Not rightly hast you done,' quoth he: 'howbeit you shall bide in this life without death till doomsday.' So I stand in that wise till today, and through him there comes not to me a meal at every none.

Thereafter they (all) went into one house and besought food from heaven for them. When they had prayed that a meal should be given to them (all) at the same time, the angel comes to them and leaves their meal on a flagstone before them on the strand, to wit, a cake for each man of them, and upon it a piece of fish wherein was every savour that each of them severally would desire.)

Individual impressions of the same experience are made a point of at several of the islands of ICUC. In most cases they are given food that assumes a different flavour to each of them, but a similar phenomenon occurred on the island of the lake monster, where the monster's gaze seemed to meet the eyes of each one of them alike. This may stress how the experiences have personal effect on them, likewise it is the individual choices that decide their fate. The disciple on the island does not seem to be a model saint despite of a personal relationship to Christ on earth. Like the brothers he acted wrongly, but he made a different choice at the crossroads of life. He is on the island because he fled from the consequences, while the voyagers are there because they wished to meet them.

8.3 Spain

²⁸⁹ §24, 488-507

Upon saying farewell, the voyagers ask the disciple to relate their future to them, a request he agrees to.

‘Ragthaisi,’ ol sé, ‘uaimse indossa forsin muir co Rind Espáine, 7 tecémait lucht n-óenaig forsin muir dúib oc iascach, 7 béraitseom leó sib dochum tíre.

(And he said to them: ‘Ye shall go’, saith he, ‘from me over the sea to the Point of Spain, and a boat’s crew will meet you oh the sea a-fishing, and they will take you with the to land).

The translation is apparently unclear, but Stokes took *lucht n-óenaig* to be ‘boat’s crew’ on a fishing boat who will meet the Uí Chorra’s boat and take them to land. On this land they are going to establish a church and community.

The disciple describes in detail how they shall act when they set foot on Spanish land: ‘7 amal ragasa,’ ol sé frisin escop, ‘asin churach for tír, déna sléchtain fo thrí do Dia 7 in fót forsa fuiréma do thraigid, dáilfid in slóg imbi di cach leth’.

(And when thou’, he said to the bishop, ‘shalt go out of the boat on shore, make prostration thrice unto God, and around the sod whereon you shalt set thy face the host shall assemble on every side.)

Regarding the church and community in Spain, Bowen states the Celtic Church did in fact expand into northwestern Spain. The monastery of Santa Maria de Bretoña near Mondoñedo in Galicia bears witness to this²⁹⁰. Whether the stimulus came by way of Brittany or directly from Ireland or Britain is not known, but the church was included in the episcopate of Britoña in a list dating from Suevic times, and had at one point a bishop bearing the Irish name Mailoc²⁹¹.

Bowen further writes that this Galician area is an ancient Celtic one in which the Teutonic Severi had established themselves early in the migration period. How long the links between the Celtic church of Galicia and the major centres in north-western Europe lasted, we do not know. He asserts that they could not have survived the Arab conquest of North Africa and Spain in the late 7th and early 8th centuries. The Arab conquest of Bordeaux and Aquitaine, though less lasting, must have severed completely the old connections of this area with the Celtic lands, and virtually cut off the southern section of the great sea route²⁹².

Ireland’s relations with northwestern Spain (and southwestern France) were rekindled after a recession of the Arab tide, though not to the same extent as earlier, as in the 8th and 9th centuries, before the Viking attacks, Bowen states that Irish peregrini rather took to the

²⁹⁰ Bowen 1969:76

²⁹¹ N.Chadwick 1961:58-59)

²⁹² Bowen 1969:76-77

north²⁹³. That literary voyagers of the 12th century travel this way, might be one of the signs that the author of ICUC was inspired by or used old sources for the tale.

Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain was evidently a target for Irish pilgrims in the 12th century. Harbison states that actual pilgrimages are recorded from the 13th to the 15th century, but that art historical evidence shows that various souvenirs from the place is found in Irish burials from the 12th century²⁹⁴.

Stokes identifies 'Point of Spain' with great probability to be Cape Finisterre²⁹⁵. Finisterre in northeastern Galicia was on the sea route from the British Isles to Rome. According to Bowen's description, this route passed through the Straits of Gibraltar (or alternatively used the land crossing at Narbonne-Carcassonne) to Rome and the western basin of the Mediterranean and even North African coast.

In the 5th century, the sea route between northern Spain and Ireland was particularly active, as was the one between Ireland and southwestern France. Bowen writes pre-Patrician Christianity may have reached Ireland this way²⁹⁶.

8.4 Sun symbolism

The meagre sources make it difficult to make statements about the sun in Celtic religion, and thus about the use of ancient sun symbolism in ICUC, but the text appears to exhibit some remarkable references to the sun which may suggest that the author was familiar with ancient sun symbolism, added a layer of Christian meaning to it and employed it in the tale.

Firstly, Cáerderg gives birth to three sons representing each their time of night. The youngest, born at the end of night is named Silvester, stemming from an imagined etymology *sile/sol terra*, meaning the light/sun of the world²⁹⁷. Further, I have suggested in Chapter 3 that the city of Tuaim, which is subject to the brothers' destruction, may be a reworking of an earlier legend in which a band of brothers wreck destruction on Tuaim Gréine, '(burial) mound of Grian/the sun'.

The decision to set out to sea is made while the brothers watch the sunset at the shores of Cenn Mara, expressing their wonderment in what seems like uncharacteristically poetical

²⁹³ Ibid

²⁹⁴ Harbison "Pilgrimage" p.374 in *Medieval Ireland* (Duffy ed.)

²⁹⁵ *The Voyage of the Húi Corra* footnote §43

²⁹⁶ Bowen 1969:51-52

²⁹⁷ In the etymological compilation of *Legenda Aurea* by Voragine

terms: ‘*7 cia leth I téit in grian, ’ ol siat, ’ó théit fon fairge?*’ (‘And in which direction goes the sun when he goes under the sea?’)²⁹⁸

The journey’s end, which for at least two crew members is in Spain may have implications of sun symbolism stretching back to ancient Celtic culture. That the Irish themselves believed their ancestors to have reached Ireland from Spain is obvious from various sources, among them *The History of Ireland* by Keating, in which he writes:

’Adeir ughdar Spáinneach darab ainm Florianus del Campo, ag teacht lé seanchus na h-Éireann, gurab Spáinnigh do réir a mbunadhas na Brigantes agus gurab ón Spáinn tángadar i n-Éirinn agus ó Éirinn don m-Breatain’, (A Spanish author named Florianus del Campo, agreeing with the Irish records, says that the Brigantes were Spanish by origin, and that it was from Spain they came to Ireland, and from Ireland they went to Britain)²⁹⁹.

The boat of the Uí Chorra navigating in this direction may have been regarded in the 12th century as a return to old foundations.

Among Celtic influences on northwestern Spain, Professor Garcia Quintela of the University of Santiago de Compostela includes myths about the sun. He highlights in his article³⁰⁰ reports from antique writers of the sunset in this area: According to Florus, a Roman army campaigning in Galicia fled in horror when they saw the sun set in the sea, growing in size and setting the water ablaze. Further is a passage from Strabo, where he denounces various descriptions of the Holy Promontory, now Cape St Vincent, on the southwestern point of Spain: ‘*Posidonius tells us the common people say that in the countries next the ocean the sun appears larger as he sets, and makes a noise resembling the sound of hot metal in cold water, as though the sea were hissing as the sun was submerged in its depths..*’³⁰¹, Garcia Quintela says that the same myth appears to be connected to two extreme points of the Atlantic coast of Iberia, both of which provided the scene for specific rituals and where unsettling observations about the sun were made.

Of several examples made by Garcia Quintela of sites with religious associations along the coast between Brittany and southern Spain, one with particular interest is a city described by Strabo with the name *Ebora*, derived from Celtic *eburo*, ‘yew’, in which is found a sanctuary called *Lux Dubia*, ‘light of sunset’³⁰².

²⁹⁸ van Hamel (ed.) *Immram Ua Corra* p.100 line 164

²⁹⁹ *Foras Feasa* part XX

³⁰⁰ “Celtic Elements in North-Western Spain in Pre-Roman times” in *E-Keltoi*

³⁰¹ Strabo, *Geography* III:I:15

³⁰² Strabo III:1:9

Concerning the northwestern point of Spain, Strabo further writes that it was populated by ‘*the Artabrians, who live in the neighbourhood of the cape called Nerium, which is the end of both the western and the northern side of Iberia. But the country round about the cape itself is inhabited by Celtic people*’³⁰³.

These elements support the possibility of ancient Celtic sun cult in Spain. There were evidently myths concerning the sun at the Spanish west coast, and particularly in areas inhabited by population groups perceived as Celts.

Further, Strabo writes about a sanctuary used by the Celts of Anas that ‘*it is not permitted to make sacrifices nor to go in the night, as then the place is occupied by the gods. Travellers visiting the place have to spend the night in a nearby village, go during the day and take water with them*’³⁰⁴. The night appears to be a dangerous time. This concept is also found in the frame story of ICUC. The brothers, conceived through diabolical means, are born at night – one at the beginning of night, one a midnight and the aforementioned third brother at the end of night. Further, the brothers go to Clochar intending to kill their grandfather and burn his church. When they arrive, they decide to perform the deed after nightfall. Perhaps relevant, the inhabitant of an island visited by the boat’s crew, Daga, is sent in pilgrimage on the ocean as a consequence of one night having forgotten to say a nocturne – as if saying the canonical hour prayer was a means of protection at night.

The birth of the youngest brother at the end of night may represent a foreshadowing of the story’s progress, assuming the author was familiar with the imagined etymology of Silvester, *sole terra* ‘light of the earth’³⁰⁵. The three are born in the nightly danger zone, but a spiritual light will eventually victor in their lives as the sunrise of the earthly morning.

The *sole terra*, ‘light of the earth’ coming to the place called *finis terra*, ‘end of the earth’ is charged with meaning. The sunset was apparently felt a frightening phenomenon at this specific place. The sun’s death by “drowning” was perhaps linked to other concepts about death and to early Christians in Ireland it may have been significant to bring their new ‘light of the earth’ to the place associated with the dying of light. The concept seems to resonate the words attributed Patrick³⁰⁶: ‘*those wretches who adore the sun must give way to the true Sun, Christ*’.

The dying of the earthly sun and the coming of the holy sun may additionally be reflected in the island of Emly. The light has died there, but in its place they have holy light.

³⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁴ Strabo III:1:4-5

³⁰⁵ Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea*

³⁰⁶ Confessio 60

Garcia Quintela connects the sun-associated deity Lugh to these observations, which may provide another bridge between ICUC and sun myths. MacKillop states the following: *'Early Christian commentators coordinated Lug, the victor of the Fomorians, with the archangel Michael, the conqueror of Lucifer (...)'*³⁰⁷. In the frame story, Michael the archangel is an agent in the conversion of the brothers. Lochán, the brother who is born at the beginning of night, receives a vision in which he is taken to see Hell, and thereafter Heaven. In Heaven, he sees God on his throne, surrounded by music making birds. One of the birds is brighter than the others and sings sweeter than every melody. Lochán perceives that this is Michael the archangel, in the shape of a bird, in the presence of the Creator. In this context, it would seem it is the archangel's role as conqueror of the Devil that is evoked, due to his prominent appearance during the conversion process of the Devil's warriors. When Lochán awakes, he has had a change of heart about the war he and his brothers have been waging and encourages his brothers to join him in following God.

If then, there is a connection between the sun, Lugh and Michael, the brothers' wonderment at the course of the sun at Cenn Mara and their subsequent voyage could be understood as a pilgrimage in the path of Michael as a means to further their conquering of the Devil.

In Ireland, it appears the Céli Dé at Tallaght especially venerated Michael the archangel. A hymn to St Michael was found which is presumed to have been in use at Tallaght, and possibly composed there³⁰⁸. Cellach, a king of Uí Dhúinchada is said to have bestowed Tallaght to God, Michael, and Maelruain and exempted the community from royal tribute³⁰⁹. A re-initiation of a Michael cult may have surfaced after year 1000, when Skellig Michael appears to have received its dedication to the archangel³¹⁰. Special interest in the evil defying archangel at this time may be connected to the apocalyptic fears prevalent in Ireland in the early 11th century³¹¹.

Harbison also mentions there was a cult to Michael in Monte Gargano in Italy which provided a target for Irish pilgrims, though its popularity never came close to Rome³¹².

³⁰⁷ *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* 2004:306

³⁰⁸ Follett: *Céli Dé in Ireland* 2006:165

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*:174

³¹⁰ Harbison: *Pilgrimage in Ireland* 1995:151

³¹¹ Seen for instance in FM 1096.9

³¹² Harbison 1995:15

8.5 Peter's successor

The prophecy continues: '*rosia do chlu co Róim 7 not bera comarba Petuir sair co Róim 7 fáicfe in sacart út isin inad sin 7 fáicfe in dechan ina shacrista 7 congébthar in t-inad sin fo gnáthugud co bráth. Fáicfe in gilla la Bretnu 7 anfaid and céin bas béo*'

(And thy fame shall reach to Rome, and Peter's successor shall bring you eastwards to Rome, and thou shall leave yon priest in that place, and thou shalt leave the deacon as a sacristan, and that place shall be upheld in use till Doomsday. You shall leave the gillie in Britain, and he shall remain there so long as he shall be alive.')

Peter's successor may here allude to the youngest brother, as he appears to be named after the Pope Silvester, commemorated in *Félire Óengusso* on the same date as Ss Lochán and Énna. Though no Irishman has held the Holy See so far, there are legends about candidates to the appointment. In *Notes on the Early History of the Dioceses Tuam, Killala and Achonry*, Knox mentions the *Life of St Endeus* by Colgan in which three holy men departs from Ireland³¹³. At least one of them reaches Rome where he is offered the Holy See. Upon the Irishman's refusal, the appointment is, however, given to Hilary (presumably the Hilary who held the See 461-468). The men return to Ireland and settle on Aran. *Betha Brenainn* appears to refer to these three men on Aran³¹⁴. This legend tells us there existed notions about Irishmen sailing the southwestern sea route to Rome and becoming influential in the Vatican. These notions may have contributed to the voyage tale displaying the same route and target.

Pope Silvester I was thought, as noted in *Félire Óengusso*, to be the confessor of the first Christian emperor Constantine. The pope's alleged abilities of communicating successfully with rulers may have been "transferred" to his literary counterpart and constituting a reason for the character's journey to Rome.

Popes with special bonds to the British Isles in the 12th century was Adrian IV and Alexander III.

Adrian IV, who held the See 1154-59 as the first and only Englishman so far, signed a papal grant for King Henry II, which granted him dominion over Ireland. It was, however, under the next pope the bull was acted upon. After receiving a large number of reports claiming the Irish moral was in a parlous state, Alexander III, Pope 1159-81, confirmed the position of

³¹³H.T.Knox 1904:62

³¹⁴BB line 3740-41

Henry II as Lord of Ireland.³¹⁵ He also excommunicated William I of Scotland and put the kingdom under interdict.

Geoffrey Keating offers a comment to this in *The History of Ireland*: *'As gach ní da ndubhramar is follus nach fíor ré a rádh nach raibhe rí ná arduachtarán ar Éirinn go Gabhaltas Gall; agus is follus fós nach raibhe cur cinnte ag Pápa na Rómha ar Éirinn riamh, acht mar do bhí ar an Spáinn nó ar an bh-Fraingc nó ar chríochaibh oile go haimsir Dhonnchadha mic Briain Bhórainmhe do chuaidh don Róimh tuairim is seacht mbliadhna déag ar thrí fichid sul tángadar Gaill i n-Éirinn. Gidheadh ar ndul do Dhonnchadh mac Briain don Róimh, amhail adubhramar thuas, tug féin agus uaisle Éireann aonta ré cur do bheith ag Easpog na Rómha orra, do bhrígh go mbídís féin easaontach ré chéile fá iomchosnamh Éireann. Óir tar ceann go scríobhaid ughdair go coitcheann gur bhronn Constantinus impir iar ngabháil bhaiste dhó oiléin iarthair Eorpa do Shilbhester Pápa, níor shealbh don Phápa ar Éirinn sin, do bhrígh nach raibhe sealbh na h-Éireann ag aoim-impir da raibhe riamh san Róimh ná ag Constantin'.*

(From all we have said it is plain that it is not true to say that there was neither king nor chief ruler over Ireland until the Norman Invasion; and it is moreover plain that the Roman Pontiff had never definite authority over Ireland any more than he had over Spain or France or other countries until the time of Donnchadh, son of Brian Boraimhe, who went to Rome about seventy-seven years before the Normans came to Ireland. But when Donnchadh, son of Brian, went to Rome, as we have said above, himself and the nobles of Ireland consented to the Bishop of Rome's having authority over them, because they were wont to contend with one another for the mastery of Ireland. For, although authors generally write that the Emperor Constantine, after his baptism, bestowed the islands of western Europe on Pope Sylvester, that did not give the Pope possession of Ireland, since no emperor that was ever in Rome, nor Constantine, had possession of Ireland.)

The exile of Donnchadh in the 11th century appears to be viewed by some as a form of treachery. (Gwynn mentions a fabricated story about the crown of Ireland brought by Donnchadh to the Pope³¹⁶.) Keating wrote of course in retrospect, seeing how the Church reforms of the 12th century coincided with the Norman invasion. Donnchadh could, arguably, be called an early initiator of the reforms, which in the 12th century helped pave the way for the Normans. Donnchadh's exile in Rome could have suggested an invasion of Ireland by foreign lords with a papal grant was part of his plan.

³¹⁵ K. Simms: "The Norman Invasion and the Gaelic Recovery (Foster, ed. 1999)

³¹⁶ Gwynn 1992:86-87

We may, however, expect that opponents of the restructuring of the Irish Church before the coming of the Normans wished to avoid the alignment with the continental church for fear of traditional church centers losing their power. It is interesting that Sylvester was thought to have possession of all western European islands belonging to 4th century Roman empire. We are left with speculation as to why an Irish Sylvester should sail to Rome in a 12th century context, as ICUC implicate. Perhaps some nurtured a wish to see an Irish pope in Rome to undo the actions of Adrian, or alternatively, send Irish delegates to the Pope to discuss the matters.

8.6 Coming home

ICUC continues: *'Celebrat iarom don tsenóir 7 fácbait in insi 7 ro comallad dóib uile amal asbert friu ó thossach co dered. Táinic in t-escop ó Róim amal asbertmar remainn 7 ro innis in gilla na scéla sin uile dó. Ro thóeth in gilla iar sin 7 ro mairset na scéla sin ocond escop. Ro inniside iat d' Shóerbrethach escop dia muintir. Ro inniside iat do MoCholmóc mac Colmáin I nÁrain.'*

(*'Then they bid farewell to the old man and leave the island, and all was fulfilled from beginning to end, even as he had told them. The bishop came from Rome as we said before, and the gillie told all those tales to him. Thereafter the gillie died (or fell), and those tales remained with the bishop. He related them to Soerbrethach bishop of his community, and he related them to Mo-Cholmóc a son of Colmán in Aran'.³¹⁷*)

The prophecy comes true, but what happens next is somewhat confusing. A bishop comes from Rome to what must be Britain, as that is where the gillie is located. Nothing, however, is said 'before' about an arrival to the British isles by a bishop. It seems likely to be a different bishop than the one who travelled from Ireland, as there would not be a need for the gillie to tell him the tales of the voyage. As to next recipient of the tale, the death of a bishop and superior of Cork named Saerbrethach son of Conadh is mentioned in *Chronicon Scotorum*³¹⁸. The meager information provided in ICUC makes it difficult to present a theory.

Based on earlier argumentation about the influence of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne legends on ICUC, 'Colmán in Aran' may imply Colmán mac Duach. This saint, a temporary of King Guaire Aidne, gave name to the diocese corresponding with the 12th century remains of this kingdom, Kilmacduagh. He is also associated with a church on Inis Mór on Aran. If a successor of

³¹⁷ van hameln ed. *Immram Ua Corra* (trans. Stokes)

³¹⁸ CS896

Colmán mac Duach indeed is the intended recipient of the tale, this adds to the list of indications suggesting the tale at one point had Aidnean affiliation.

Returning home seems to be an important theme in the concluding part of ICUC. Firstly, the voyagers go from Ireland to what may have been perceived as an earlier homeland in Spain. The relation detailing further travel is unclear, and even more so the seemingly discontinuous narrative following the prophecy, but it would appear one or more members of the crew continue to Rome and thereafter return home to Britain or Ireland. The *immrama* all seem to have an ending that includes a return home, often in order to share the story. ICUC is, however, unusually diffuse as to how this happens, and which persons are involved. Possibly it is the homecoming itself, which is crucial. As in a rite of passage mimicing the death and resurrection of Christ, the pilgrim separates from the homeland, spends time in the liminal realm represented by the sea and finally returns home changed. The return may have been regarded as a divine acceptance of the separational sacrifice.

Additionally, the return may have had a practical significance in the 12th century. As the relationship between Rome and Irish fractions with more reluctant attitudes to the reforms, the ending may indicate a voyager going to Rome, making his business there, and then returning home with an accomplished agenda. Clergy with Aidnean affiliations seem to take ownership of the text in the section concerning the sharing of the tale, if the 'Colman in Aran' is a representation of Colmán mac Duach.

As shown above, references to the sun tie several elements of ICUC together and may be a remarkable example of how the learned both employed old symbols and provided them with a new layer of meaning. During the 'diabolical years' of Conall Derg and his sons, the night time is vulnerable and filled with fears: The hosteller and his wife decide to make communion with the Devil in a conversation they have at night, the sons are born during night and the young men plan to kill their grandfather at night. After Lochán's vision where he meets Michael the archangel, they eventually arrive at sea, to follow the course of the sun. The connection between the sun, the deity Lugh and the archangel Michael as explained above, may indicate that they follow Michael's example and continue the conquest of the Devil throughout their lives. Conquering the Devil has an obvious meaning of a spiritual, inner

battle, but we may expect the author also had in mind practical matters, which in the 12th century may have been related to the extensive changes in the Irish Church.

9. Conclusions

Immram Curaig Ua Corra seems to demonstrate the words of Clancy – ‘*the new genre of the Voyage Tale was very much an evolved one, a complex mix of influences and intentions*’³¹⁹.

The extant tale appears to have served many causes, both of a practical, moral, and spiritual nature. As to influences, the text appears to show elements from ancient times to a contemporary medieval time. What seems to be a patchwork of influences and agendas makes a contextual reading something of a challenge.

9.1 Violence

Typically for the *immram* genre, ICUC addresses on one level violent laity. The voyage tales of the 11th and 12th century would seem to be a response to the situation where violence had escalated into a major social problem. The authors put it in perspective by likening attacks on churches to particularly traumatic experiences that may foremostly reflect problems of the early Church. The modus operandi of the Uí Chorra brothers appears heavily influenced by the pagan *díbergach*, ritualised reavers on vendettas against churches. While *Immram Máel Dúin* shows how violence breeds violence in a society where revenge was encouraged, ICUC goes to grips with the very origin of evil. Destruction of churches and sanctuaries is a crime which initial motivation and cause can be traced back to the Devil.

ICUC appears to focus on how to make religious heroes out of the most violent and least respected lay people. Presumably violence had escalated to an extent where it was realised clearer than earlier that while martyred clerics in burnt churches might save their own souls, it did little good for a well-functioning society.

The eagerness in saving souls is shown on many occasions. The God of ICUC appears extraordinarily forgiving compared to earlier statements in monastic works. At one point, there was apparently no way to salvation for committers of *díberga*, but in ICUC the erenagh of Clochar assures his grandsons that God can forgive even diabolical warfare.

³¹⁹ Clancy 2000:202

9.2 Recycling of symbols

Developing new meanings onto old symbols seems to be remarkably demonstrated by the narrative's sun symbolism. As seen in Chpt.8, Strabo's reports about sun beliefs among Celtic populations in northwestern Spain seem to resound with the use of sun symbolism in ICUC. Night time is a precarious time when threatening forces are at work. The evils in Conall Derg's hostel happen at night, as well as the birth of the three sons. Lochán born at the beginning of night, Énna born at midnight and Silvester born at the end of night. Silvester's name may have been associated with an etymology implying the 'sun/light of the earth' – and the birth of Silvester at the end of night may thereby foreshadow that after the spiritual darkness, the spiritual sun will break through. The conversion of the brothers is depicted with the same imagery - the spiritual sun that rises after a long, dark night. Determined to kill their grandfather and burn his church upon him, the brothers wait until the night to go through with the plan. In the meantime, however, Lochán experiences a vision where he sees Michael the archangel by the throne of God, whereafter he and his brothers convert. Christianising a sun-associated deity into Michael, the archangel primarily known as a defeater of the Devil, gives an "updated" version of how sun vanquishes night. When morning comes, they journey to Clonard and a new start in life.

The sun setting in the sea prompts the brothers to go voyaging. Presuming a connection between the sun and the archangel Michael, the scene could be understood as a divine calling to go on a voyage. It could also be understood as a redefinition of the night. In the heathen world, the night was dangerous, but in the Christian world it matters not that the worldly sun is out of sight. When the boat reaches the island community of Emly, it is midnight. It is, however, not dark – the island is lit up by divine lights in each of the island inhabitants, as a symbol of the sacred light within that has renders the worldly sun irrelevant. The boat crew are asked to leave before dawn because the beauty of the island in daylight will make it unbearable to leave. We may expect that this dawn is an allusion to Paradise, which indicates that the End was thought to be near. To see Paradise and then be sent away from it equals Hell – a fate the voyagers have been assured is not theirs to bear.

Christianising sun-associated deities into Michael the archangel emphasises how Christianity was interpreted as the true sun defeating what the Church saw as pagan darkness.

9.3 Repentance and salvation

The salvation theology of ICUC is remarkably optimistic. The idea that some sins cannot be absolved is rejected, but it is emphasised that the sinner needs to repent and seek rehabilitation. ICUC's encompassment of all, from lowly to holy, so to speak – is demonstrated by the selection of crewmembers. Aside the vile, though repenting criminals, we find a craftsman who might represent common lay people without the most horrendous crimes on their record, a jester representing the more despised parts of court entertainment and a group of clerics ranged from bishop to gillie. It would seem that the wide range of groups represented is an image conveying that in the quest for salvation, they're all in the same boat. The open, accepting arms of the Church seems to be coupled with a prevailing reluctance to make judgements. The subject is first brought up by the brothers themselves at Clonard, but Findén can barely bring himself to tell them to rebuild the destroyed churches – and even then he provides them with 'the power of thousand men' to help them with the mission. Findén appears to announce a future judgement from the holy ernenagh Comán at Cenn Mara, which he tells the brothers to fulfill, but a scene involving this ernenagh and, supposedly, a judgement has not survived the extant tale. In stead it seems to be emphasised that the decision to go to sea is made voluntarily.

The lack of judgement may be a reflection of how, in the 'real world', violence was so common that it was difficult to separate violators from victims. Who will be the judge if all are guilty? All the men of Uí Chorra's boat confess to being guilty of going to Hell. The voyage may be seen as a way of taking responsibility for one's own penance and rehabilitation.

A further emphasis of how forgiveness is obtainable for all sins appears during the voyage. In the 'warfare section', the boat is pierced by serpents, yet miraculously stays afloat. The elder onboard reassures the crewmates that 'God is able to save us, though we be in the one hide'. As shown in Chapter 6, a boat of one hide had an association to criminals and the ancient punishment of casting adrift. This suggests that what the elder really says is that God can save them, even if they are criminals.

Salvation and rehabilitation of sinners, we may expect, was a reform ideal shared by most participants of the synods.

9.4 Reform issues

ICUC appears to address reform issues in some cases. It seems clear that many customs of Ireland looked outrageous seen with continental-minded eyes. One might say that Ireland's

long independence from the Roman empire and, subsequently, the Roman church structure, created a unique form for Christianity.

It seems likely that, when one party influenced by continental customs wished to conform to the canonical procedures of the Roman church, there must also have been a party who felt that uprooting the traditional monastic system was wrong, and perhaps even a rebellion against the founding saints of Ireland.

The presence of the island of Emly may partially illustrate this: The community spend their time on the island singing requiems for the dead. This is an element that may be interpreted in different ways, but it could be seen as a reminder that the saints associated with the foundations of Christianity in Ireland are still mediators who should be respected and remembered.

A tracing of the saints appearing in ICUC, either by characters named after them or by guest appearances, seems demonstrate the development from the early dynastic cults to the great monastic learning centres led by communities such as Clonard.

A message conveyed in ICUC seems to be that one must not forget one's founders. The fatality of turning away from the foundations may be reflected already in the frame story, where the hosteller couple turn to heathen practices instead of trusting the Creator – who from the Church's perspective is the foundation of life. Reducing the monastic foundations in Ireland in favour of a new system based, to a large degree, on the political situation of the 12th century may, to the opposing parties of the restructuring agenda of the reform, have come across as atrocious. It might have been the situation sparking the creation of the extant version of ICUC, where Findén is emphasised as the '*aite na hÉrenn*'.

The erenaghs were debated during the synods with regards to what they should or could not do. As seen in Chpt.5, the erenaghs were apparently in a position where power could easily be abused, and the occasional angered comments regarding erenaghs who accepted tithes but neglected their duties seem to indicate that abuse sometimes happened. In the case of ICUC, we are given an example of a model erenagh. His seems to handle the situation with his wild grandsons in an exemplary manner and we may assume his hospitable conduct is connected to the fact that they are converted in his house/church. The brothers' plan of murdering their clerical grandfather and burn his church upon him reflects a crime specifically mentioned in the decrees of Cashel 1101. Murder within own kin or murder by which the law of hospitality or safe-conduct was violated was decreed to render the culprit without sanctuary in a church. One might expect this was intended as a means of reducing intermonastic violence. In ICUC,

the situation is avoided, a result we might expect is achieved partly on account of the erenagh's conduct.

The episode at Clochar suggests that the author belonged to a side that saw the potential in the erenaghs. Their sub-order status could be regarded as a strength if they, in that position, could fill a mediating role between laity and the Church. If we suppose that the extant text is a Clonard reworking of an earlier text, where the two saints of Clochar and Cenn Mara are toned down to the benefit of Findén: The grandfather erenagh may have been kept in it to the significant degree he is for the purpose of demonstrating what an erenagh could mean to a society – when he acted properly.

The voyage tale has a heavy focus on saving laity and in this agenda, the erenagh may have been thought an important actor.

In the question of marriage, ICUC does not seem to address the topic of immoral unions. There is, however, some emphasis on another reformist concern, the importance of staying loyal to a partner. The topic surfaces during the voyage by the encounter with a woman who suffers in Hell because of her lack of care for her husband. It may, however, also be reflected in the hosteller couple. When they prove unsuccessful in producing heirs, there is no talk of ending the union.

The subject of marriage, however, brings us over to the political implications of the tale.

9.5 Marriage unions

The concern related to the fragility of marriages in 11th and 12th century Ireland appears to be connected to the employment of marriage as part of political agreements. How lightly a marriage could be entered and how unceremoniously it could be dissolved may be exemplified by the 1102 truce between Muirchertach Ua Briain and the Norse king Maghnus, where the marriage agreed to with Muirchertach's daughter and Maghnus' son was abandoned due to political interference.

As a marriage often seems to have symbolised an alliance between two kin groups or territories, the parties in such a marriage union could be said to represent their homeland. In view of this, the focus of ICUC of staying loyal to a spouse could be understood as a message of staying loyal to an alliance.

The tale contains implications of which parties this message is addressed to, though due to what seems like layers of reworking only hints seem decipherable.

9.6 Metaphors, reactions, and reworkings

Breatnach suggests that the introductory frame story is a later addition to an earlier voyage, where the episode at Cenn Mara is the link between the later addition and the earlier narrative pertaining to the actual voyage³²⁰.

As seen in Chpt.3, ICUC contains striking parallels with legends associated to the territory in which Cenn Mara lies, the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne (FA). The gathered evidence of FA influence suggests that there may have existed a voyage tale affiliated with the territory.

The three villains of extant ICUC appear to be countered by three holy men. Of the three holy men, Findén appears to be an addition belonging to the extant tale. The remaining two, Comán of Cenn Mara, and the erenagh of Clochar appear toned down in favour of Findén and could represent an earlier text. It seems likely that the saint of Cenn Mara and, possibly, an erenagh, held more protruding positions in the hypothetical earlier version, and that our extant tale is a reworking by promoters of Findén of Clonard.

Attempts to contextualise the FA layer of ICUC could give various results. Though, a likely scenario is that it involved young men of the province and their dual potential. Presumably Conall Derg would represent secular aspirations and Cáerderg a more sacred way. Perhaps the tale was related to Aidnean agendas of restoring the greatness of their 7th century kingdom. If so, the conversion and further voyage may have represented a resignation from aspirations of secular power. During the voyage, the men encounter an island inhabited by a woman who arguably could represent sovereignty³²¹. The sense of separation, or farewell, which could be said to characterise this sequence could indicate that for some, the royal greatness of Uí Fhiachrach Aidne was truly a thing of the past.

In the 12th century the tale could be seen as a fable over Aidnean hopes connected to the second marriage of Cailleach Dé and her son Ruaidhrí Ua Conchbair. Cailleach Dé appears to have been married into two royal houses, which at the time were in opposition to each other. The second marriage with Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair seems likely to have been a result of Toirdelbach's rise to power. Her son's Ruaidhrí's attempts to seize the kingship were supported by a substantial group, and we may expect his mother's kin were among them, due to his future relationship with the Aidnean lords which seems to have been of a benign nature.

³²⁰ "Structure and Transmission" p.105

³²¹ van Hamel *Immram Ua Corra* line 295-308

Ruaidhrí seems to have had a long and troublesome way to kingship, as the long unfavoured son among several candidates. Upon accession, it seems as though he proved to be a king who remembered to ‘pay his debts’. The archbishop of Armagh’s efforts in negotiating him out of his father’s fetters may have contributed to the reason for Ruaidhrí’s support to Armagh at a synod of 1162.

During this synod, however, a decree was made which secured Armagh’s unparalleled status in monastic schooling, as it implied that every *fer léiginn* of Irish churches had to be an alumnus of Armagh.

This may further have sparked the composition of the extant Clonard version of ICUC. As one of the oldest monastic learning institutions of Ireland, it seems likely that Clonard was outraged at Armagh’s aspirations of education monopoly. The community may additionally have been disappointed over Ruaidhrí’s support to Armagh at the expense of the traditional connections of the Síol Muiredaig.

These contextual interpretations of *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*, could be illustrated by drawing almost any number of parallels between voyage details and 12th century elements, such as for instance how the lake monster rising on the beautiful and comforting island during the voyage could be an allusion to an unjust king emerging from the province Connacht. The visions of tormented ‘Sunday sinners’ may represent a memory of Donnchad mac Briain and his enactment of Sunday laws, and the bird woman suffering in Hell on account of her disloyalty could refer to the shifting loyalty of the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne in relation to the Uí Bhriain and Uí Chonchobair kings. This conclusion may, however, sum up the main features of such a reading.

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