Legitimisation of Sacral Kingship in Early Medieval Ireland, and England, 6th to Mid-9th Centuries AD

By

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Submitted for a Ph.D. degree to Trinity College Dublin

Conducted in the Department of History

2021

Declaration

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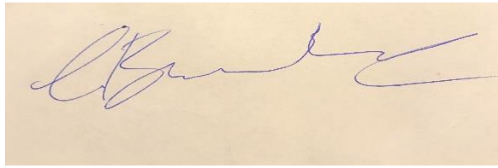
Signed:  Date: 28 March 2021

Summary

This thesis is a comparative analysis of sacral kingship in early medieval Ireland and England from the sixth to mid-ninth centuries that explores the nature of kingship during a period of religious conversion in two distinct cultures on the periphery of the Roman Empire. Sacral kingship is defined as an institution in which a ruler occupies a unique position in society that is both secular and religious. They are an actor through which a deity, or multiple deities, act and they are protectors of their demesnes, both natural and supernatural. The realities of rulership have demonstrated that kings do not become kings as a matter of course, but rather through a complex process of legitimisation. This thesis will explore three modes of legitimisation: descent from deities and legendary figures, inauguration rituals, and royal/elite burial. Through this analysis, the thesis seeks to understand the similarities and differences between sacral kingship in early medieval Ireland and England, why these methods were used and how they were effective, and to understand the agency of the kings, clergy, and the people in partaking of and reinforcing this ideology. The comparative model is used to highlight the variety of approaches used in this thesis as well as pinpoint similarities in order to create a model of broader processes of sacral kingship in early medieval Europe. Moreover, it is useful for examining why sources in one society are silent on various aspects on kingship, which allows us to gain a wider perspective on kingship in early medieval Ireland and England that would otherwise be invisible to us. In addition, it is an interdisciplinary perspective that utilises study of historical texts and archaeological analysis, which allows us to widen our scope and fill gaps in our knowledge.

The first main section, Chapter 2, is an exploration of genealogies in early medieval Ireland and England and how these texts were used as constructions of descent used to legitimise or delegitimise kings and their families from rule. The Irish evidence is considered through an analysis of the Uí Brigte genealogy and female eponymous ancestors. This is then contrasted with the English genealogies known as the "Anglian collection", a short genealogical document listing the ancestry of kings of six early medieval English kingdoms. The role of legendary ancestors and how descent from these figures influence the legitimacy of one's sacral kingship. Chapter 3 examines the role of inauguration rituals for legitimising kingship, focussing on their historicity, aspects of the rites, and how they were influenced by ties to the landscape and ancestry. Possible inauguration rites in early medieval Ireland are examined through an analysis of saga texts and hagiography alongside their physical setting at the inauguration sites of Tara, Cashel, Iona, and Dunadd. This is compared with

the evidence from early medieval England, which has little direct evidence of inauguration rites, but potential avenues of exploration like assembly sites and numismatics may provide a window into understanding these rites better. Chapter 4 surveys the relationship between kings and burial, first through an analysis of the textual references to burial in early medieval Ireland, which is then compared with three case studies of sites of potential royal burial sites at Collierstown, Knowth, and Iona. The textual evidence for burial in early medieval will then be analysed and compared with two case studies, Sutton Hoo and the Prittlewell Princely Burial. It will be discussed how we might begin to identify elite burials through certain criteria, and past scholarship on elite burials will be reconsidered within this analysis.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisors, Dr Immo Warntjes and Professor Terence Barry, whose consistently helpful advice, guidance, and support has made this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank Trinity College Dublin for the granting of the HEA COVID Extension Fund, which helped me a great deal at the end of my thesis.

There are several academic colleagues that have aided my research. I would like to thank Dr Edel Bhreathnach and Dr Katharine Simms for their helpful comments and advice on early Irish kingship. I would also like to thank Professor Damian McManus, Professor David Stifter, and Dr Sharon Arbuthnot for their aid with Old Irish. I would also like to extend my thanks to the late Professor Donnchadh Ó Corráin, whose work on the Irish genealogies and his unpublished manuscript transcriptions made this thesis possible. I also thank his widow Fidelma Maguire for allowing access to these transcriptions.

This thesis would not have been possible if not for the excellent group of PhD students in the Medieval History Research Seminar, but particular thanks go toward Dr Stephen Hewer, John Tighe, Donncdha Carroll, Carlo Cedro, and Michel Summer for your help and useful discussions with our work. I would also like to give special thanks to Dr Niall Ó Súilleabhéan, who aided me in edits for this thesis and alerted me to scholarship that I was otherwise unaware of. I would also like to thank all the members of the Medieval and Early Modern Writing Group, your constant support in person and online has been extremely helpful. I would also like to thank Dr Mary Rambaran-Olm, Chris Halsted, and Florence Scott for their friendship, wit, and assistance with this thesis especially during difficult times. I also want to thank Carmela Dimaculangan, whose steadfast friendship across oceans and continents has been treasured.

To my parents Judy and Brent, my brothers Nathan and Geoff and my sister-in-law Carly, and my grandmother Helen whose support have made the last four and a half years possible. Finally, to my boyfriend Alex, whose love and support all these years has helped me tremendously in completing this thesis.

For my parents, Judy and Brent Bromhead

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Early medieval Ireland and England, like other societies in Europe and elsewhere in the world, had leaders who were elevated to kingship based on their descent and sacral status. Kingship is an enduring ideology that conjures images of noble men in the distant past and the ever-present thought that these men were destined to rule through the virtue of their descent, bolstered by their deeds. The notion that kings are born to their role, divinely chosen, is an idea that is not born of nothing. It was carefully constructed and constantly negotiated over time, through traditions that had to maintain a semblance of antiquity while being innovated in certain ways that reinforced and legitimised a king-claimant and his kin to their elevated status. Far from being innate, a man's right to rule had to be established and maintained through a series of actions and rituals. In addition, kings were not simple men: their status and their role were inherently tied to divinity through either descent, or the idea they were chosen and blessed by God. This is known as sacral kingship, where a king's relationship to their deities or deity is highlighted and marked as a special relationship that is separate from all others in society. This is frequently contrasted with political kingship, where the day-to-day manifestation of rule is less about the mythos of the ruler and more on the political and legal powers. Sacral kingship is kingship: it cannot be divorced from political kingship. The sacrality of the ruler is intrinsically linked to their legal and political power and status. The key to the tangible political reality of rulership is tied to the metaphysical attributes assigned to kings that set them apart from the rest of society. As Aziz Al-Azmeh states in his 1997 monograph *Muslim Kingship*:

> "Just as icons of kingship announce and confirm at a glance the possession of kingship, these figures of divinity work to elevate the royal office and its prerogatives to the status of icon of divinity. They simultaneously announce and confirm royalty by means of icons that imply a propositional rather than a conventional or indexical character. Indeed, the correlation of sacredness and terrestrial power, both mysterious and awesome phenomena, takes place through a shared mystique, made all the more potent in a universally enchanted world in which the reality of subtle phenomena was indistinguishable from that of the more tangible. In the world the sacred is all that is related to the beyond, by analogy, emanation, descent, figure,

> functional parity, or apostolate, many of which relations are often brought to stand for the other…"[1]

As Al-Azmeh notes, kings were raised above the general population through various means, and were seen to have special but subtle power, afforded through a link with the divine, and then witnessed in the terrestrial world. Al-Azmeh's definition of sacral kingship broadly applies to many cultures and societies, particularly within Asia and Europe, but it is important to acknowledge the various expressions of the sacrality of rulers. Moreover, it is important to understand how, if similarities exist, how and why the expressions of sacral power were used.

Aims and Objectives

This thesis will examine the methods by which the ideology of sacral kingship was negotiated and reinforced during a period of religious conversion through a comparative analysis of early medieval Ireland and England pre-830s AD. This will be answered through an exploration of three different questions: How were genealogical texts constructed and used to demonstrate descent of kings from deities and legendary figures? How were inauguration rituals used to legitimise sacral kings, and is it possible to reconstruct these rituals from the surviving saga, hagiographical, narrative, and chronicle evidence? Is it possible to identify kings through burial, and how was burial used to define sacral kingship? Through the exploration of these questions, the methods by which sacral kings and elites in early medieval Ireland and England legitimised kingship will be uncovered, highlighting in particular the ways that these methods were not simply literary tropes but had socio-political implications in early medieval insular society. In addition, this thesis will seek to understand the similarities and differences between these methods of legitimisation and how they varied over time and space. This thesis represents the first broad analysis of sacral kingship in early medieval Ireland and England that synthesises and compares the historical and archaeological research of genealogies, inauguration rituals, and burials. In addition, the relationship that these three themes had with one another is a significant aspect that has yet to be fully examined in the scholarship.

This thesis will be split into three broad sections based around the three research questions above in which the theme will be discussed separately for early medieval Ireland and England, but with comparisons throughout and in the conclusion of each chapter. The first section will discuss how early medieval genealogies were used to legitimise or delegitimise kings from their rule

[1] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London, 1997), p. 18.

through the process of linking them with legendary ancestors. These ancestors may have been real people, or perceived as real, or they may have been pre-Christian deities. The second section will examine inauguration rites, the rituals by which kings are installed to their position, and how these rituals were used to affirm the right of a king to rule his kingdom. These rituals were often depicted as being directly tied to supernatural forces, both non-Christian and Christian. The final section will examine the burial of kings in texts, and will attempt to relate these to real burials of elites that have been uncovered in order to understand how burial perpetuated the power of sacral kings after death and the importance of ancestors in the landscape. Through these analyses, we will understand the processes by which kingship was enforced and legitimised in early medieval Ireland and England and why these processes were used.

1.2 Historiography of Sacral Kingship

The historiography of medieval kingship has often focussed on specific kingdoms or aspects of kingship, rather than offering a broader perspective. Marc Bloch's 1924 monograph *Les Rois thaumaturges* (published in English in 1973 as *The Royal Touch*) remains one of the few comparative analyses on sacral kingship, in which he discusses the supposed healing powers of the French and English kings for healing the disease scrofula through a detailed discussion of the documentary analysis, although certainly was influenced by ethnographic comparative religion like James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.[2] While his focus is on the central middle ages, his analysis is based upon the acknowledgement of the sacrality of kings in the early middle ages, highlighting in particular kings' descent from pre-Christian deities and later the use of unction in inauguration ceremonies.[3] While his analysis relies partially on outdated models of ethnographic comparison, his overall analysis of comparing two societies' development with a specific form of sacral expression of kingship remains useful for the study of sacral kingship.

Although the study of kingship is not a new field in either Irish or English historiography, to date there have been few comparative studies between the two medieval societies. There have been suggestions that it would be a valuable topic of study, particularly by Daniel Binchy. In 1968, he gave a series of lectures at Oxford titled "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship," in which he assessed

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[2] Marc Bloch, *Les Rois thaumaturges. Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué a la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg, 1924), translated in March Bloch, *The Royal Touch. Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, transl. J.E. Anderson (London, 1973), pp. 1 – 8, 28 – 29.
[3] Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, pp. 28 – 43.

several points of comparison between early medieval Ireland, Wales, and England.[4] He examined the nature of the sacral king, his status within law, dynastic succession, and grades of kingship. The only discussion of early medieval English kingship was in his analysis of dynastic succession, where he stated that a comparison between tanistry in early medieval Ireland and the æðeling in early medieval England was needed.[5] This comparative perspective was further examined by Patrick Wormald in his 1986 paper "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship: Some Further Thoughts," which was an expansion of Binchy's lectures.[6] Wormald discussed previous historiographical and methodological problems in attempting a comparison between these two societies, highlighting in particular the availability and balance of the source material as well as the preconceptions regarding Irish and English kingship.[7] Wormald's paper was very insightful in outlining areas of comparison, such as inauguration rituals, the king's role in society and the power they wield in war and administrative duties.[8] However, there have been no in-depth discussions that have compared kingship in these two societies since.

There have been singular studies on kingship in early medieval Ireland. Francis J. Byrne's 1973 monograph *Irish Kings and High-Kings* was a thorough analysis of kingship and the socio-political histories of major kingdoms and territories in the early medieval period up to the Norman Invasion of the twelfth century.[9] More recently, Bart Jaski published his 2000 monograph *Early Irish Kingship and Succession*, which is a well-researched documentary analysis of the political and legal aspects of Irish kingship.[10] His chapter on sacral kingship is an excellent overview of the source material but his conclusion regarding sacral kingship is that the evidence from early medieval Ireland "has not given rise to an image of sacral kingship in the documentary period in which the king stood above his subjects and acted as mediator between society and (super)natural forces. And why should there be, when there were bishops, priests, and other clerics to attend to this task?"[11] His argument centres on the idea that kingship, while keeping aspects of sacrality, was effectively

[4] D.A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, *The O'Donnell Lectures for 1967 – 8, delivered in the University of Oxford on 23 and 24 May 1968* (Oxford, 1970).
[5] Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, pp. 24 – 30.
[6] Patrick Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship: Some Further Thoughts," in Paul Szarmach and Virginia Darrow Oggins (eds), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, Studies in Medieval Culture XX (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp. 151 – 183.
[7] Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship," pp. 151 – 158.
[8] Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship," pp. 158 – 172.
[9] Francis J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 2nd ed. (Dublin, 2001).
[10] Bart Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2004).
[11] Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, p. 88.

"secularized" in order to fit in with Christian ideologies.[12] Jaski observes that kingship in the early Christian period underwent changes as society converted to a new religion. The argument that Irish kings had no religious function because of the existence of Christian clergy does not acknowledge the role of sacral kingship elsewhere in Christian Europe. Moreover, the theory that sacral kingship is incompatible with the reality of kingship as a political ideology assumes that there is a dichotomy between ritual and real life, between sacral and profane.[13] While the division between the two is reinforced to an extent in order to maintain the image of rituals as special, David Graeber argues that "it is precisely in royal ritual and the politics surrounding it that such frames seem most in danger of collapse – where it is possible, even, to say that ritual really is politics by other means, but only to the measure that it is also possible to say politics becomes ritual by other means."[14] While rituals are not inherently religious, kingship rituals were specifically tied to links with the supernatural or divine. This thesis seeks to challenge the dichotomy of sacral and profane by highlighting how kingship rituals were necessary for promoting political power.

There have also been several useful collections of essays on kingship in early medieval Ireland. For instance, the 2005 collection *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, edited by Edel Bhreathnach, is an excellent compendium of essays spanning historical and archaeological studies on Tara.[15] Another key work is the 2011 *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship*, edited by Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman, and Edel Bhreathnach which similarly approaches kingship from a variety of disciplines.[16]

There have been few overviews of kingship in early medieval England. One of the major studies is William A. Chaney's 1970 monograph *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, in which he focussed specifically on various features of sacral kingship such as divine descent, the ruler-cult, and the status of the sacral king within law.[17] Chaney's study was highly interdisciplinary and comparative as a necessity, due to the lack of written material for the period that he was

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[12] Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, p. 88.

[13] For the purposes of this thesis, "sacral" and "sacred" are synonymous. Scholarship tends to use "sacral" to refer to kingship, but you may

[14] David Graeber, "Notes on the politics of divine kingship: Or, elements for an archaeology of sovereignty," in David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins (eds), *On Kings* (Chicago, 2017), pp. 377 – 464, here 378 – 379.

[15] Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005).

[16] Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman & Edel Bhreathnach (eds), *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* (Dublin, 2011).

[17] William A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley, 1970).

analysing.[18] The second study is J.M. Wallace-Hadrill's 1971 monograph *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent*.[19] Wallace-Hadrill's analysis was more generally on early Germanic kingship, particularly among the Franks and English. His analysis is quite brief, which is to be expected as they were a series of lectures. His comparison with Frankish kings is very useful for understanding the later changes to sacral kingship in early medieval England.[20] These studies were both very useful studies of pre-Christian and conversion-era kingship, but their arguments require more analysis in the wake of new archaeological finds and approaches. Moreover, the sacral nature of kings in pre-Alfredian England has not been discussed at a broader level since. For the political history of early medieval England, Barbara Yorke's *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* is an incredibly valuable synthesis of the available historical material.

1.3 Scope and Terminology

The focus of this thesis will be from roughly the late fifth century to the ninth century; this broad chronological range is to accommodate for archaeological evidence that can only be approximately dated to a bracket of years, while the earliest textual evidence would date to the late sixth century. The thesis can largely be described as "pre-Alfredian", in that it focusses on early medieval England before the rise of Wessex and King Alfred (d. 899), although this thesis will not examine his father Æthelwulf (d. 858) or his grandfather Ecgbert (d. 839) either. The reasons for this are twofold. Wessex and Alfred's kingship have been examined at length elsewhere, and it is necessary to narrow the focus of this thesis to a manageable project.[21] The geographic focus on this thesis will be on early medieval Ireland and England. Ireland for the purposes of this thesis refers to the island of Ireland. Early medieval England refers to the Old English-speaking kingdoms, which roughly covered the modern country of England and parts of southern Scotland. This thesis does not use the term "Anglo-Saxon" past its use in previous publications as it was not a widely attested term for the period of focus and has a wider white nationalist and racist usage in the early modern and modern eras. Susan Reynolds has highlighted the problems with this terminology in 1985, stating that the

[18] Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 1 – 6, 14 – 16, 99 – 101.
[19] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1970* (Oxford University Press, 1971).
[20] Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Germanic Kingship*, pp. 98 – 151.
[21] Some studies on Alfred include Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1998); David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007); Levi Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871 – 978* (Cambridge, 2013).

"early medieval English did not call themselves Anglo-Saxons."[22] More recently, David Wilton has examined the medieval and modern usages of the term, and has highlighted that "Anglo-Saxon" was not commonly used in an insular context, but rather "*englisc*" had wider usage even in Saxon sources like Ine's law code (pre-726).[23] Thus, while some scholars may find using England and English problematic due to links with modern ethnonationalism and the problems of tying medieval kingdoms and polities with modern nation-states, they are the most useful terms for the purposes of this thesis. It is also worth noting that scholarship has used "England" quite extensively in phrases such as "Anglo-Saxon England", and so this thesis simply reframes it as "early medieval England". This thesis will also bring in a discussion of Dál Riata, which represents a bridge between Ireland and England: this was an Old Irish-speaking region of Western Scotland, but its proximity to the early medieval English kingdoms and the differences in material culture make it difficult to categorise it as "Irish". As this thesis will demonstrate, the ecclesiastical culture at Iona shares many parallels with England but evidently was still informed by Irish cultural norms.

1.4 Methodologies

This thesis relies on two major methodological frameworks. The first is comparative analysis, which has been well-established in the study of medieval history since Bloch's *Les Rois Thaumaturges*. The process of comparative history is best summed up by Bloch himself in his 1953 article "Towards a Comparative History of European Societies":

> "...The units of comparison are societies that are geographically neighbours and historical contemporaries, constantly influenced by one another. During the historical development of such societies, they are subject to the same over-all causes, just because they are so close together in time and space. Moreover, they have, in part at least, a

[22] Susan Reynolds, "What Do We Mean by 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo-Saxons'?" *Journal of British Studies* 24:4 (1985): 395 – 414, here 414.

[23] David Wilton, "What Do We Mean by *Anglo-Saxon*? Pre-Conquest to the Present," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 199:4 (2020): 425 – 456, esp. 435 – 439; see also Mary Rambaran-Olm, "History Bites: Resources on the Problematic Term 'Anglo-Saxon'. Part 1," *Medium* (2020), available at https://mrambaranolm.medium.com/history-bites-resources-on-the-problematic-term-anglo-saxon-part-1-9320b6a09eb7 (Accessed 26 March 2021); Mary Rambaran-Olm, "History Bites: Resources on the Problematic Term 'Anglo-Saxon'. Part 2," *Medium* (2020), available at https://mrambaranolm.medium.com/history-bites-resources-on-the-problematic-term-anglo-saxon-part-2-bdad6f7439c6 (Accessed 26 March 2021); Mary Rambaran-Olm, "History Bites: Resources on the Problematic Term 'Anglo-Saxon'. Part 2," *Medium* (2020), available at https://mrambaranolm.medium.com/history-bites-resources-on-the-problematic-term-anglo-saxon-part-3-2f38919569f0 (Accessed 26 March 2021).

> common origin [...] The comparison of various European societies...belongs to this latter methodological category."[24]

Although he notes that useful comparisons can also be undertaken between places that are not linked culturally, geographically, or temporally, this particular approach described in the quote underpins my thesis. He also noted that "many similarities cannot be reduced to imitations," and that "these cases are the most interesting ones...because they can be helpful in the discovery of causes."[25] Therefore, this analysis is not based on whether Ireland or England influenced one another in the development of kingship, but rather to compare similar processes that are poorly attested for one society that have more sources for the other. The method of comparison in this thesis differs slightly from Bloch in that this thesis primarily uses comparisons to fill in gaps in the evidence for both societies. This method presents a challenge when the existing evidence demonstrates differences, so it is important to avoid assumptions of identical societal development. Rather, using evidence from one society to fill gaps in evidence in the other can be used as a general framework for interpretation. This comparison may then lead us to conclusions otherwise impossible because of the lack of primary source material. In addition, it is then possible to discuss the silences in the primary sources on certain areas. Moreover, the comparison between these two societies has not been widely explored, although, as noted above, both Binchy and Wormald have argued that an in-depth comparative analysis is necessary.

Chris Wickham has also espoused the benefits of comparative history, stating that it is essential to avoid "cultural solipsism", that ultimately viewing medieval Europe as disparate societies or even nations leads to nationalistic teleological assumptions. In addition, he states that comparative analysis allows historians to "test" their hypotheses.[26] His reasonings for the use of comparative history are very important for this thesis, especially the concept of "national teleologies". A majority of studies on early medieval Ireland and England remain highly "insular," with few references to comparable examples outside of Europe.[27] Moreover, historiographic trends

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[24] Marc Bloch, "Towards a Comparative History of European Societies," in Frederic C. Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma (eds), *Enterprise and Secular Change: Readings in Economic History* (Homewood, 1953), pp. 494 – 521, here p. 498.
[25] Bloch, "Towards a Comparative History," p. 504.
[26] Chris Wickham, "Problems in doing Comparative History," *Reuter Lecture 2004* (Southampton, 2005), pp. 5 – 28, here pp. 2 – 3.
[27] Guy Beiner and Joep Leersson, "Why Irish History Starved: A Virtual Historiography," *Field Day Review* 3 (2007): 66 – 81, here 81; Stefan Berger, "A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in

have situated England as normative, where early medieval developments from fragmented kingdoms were on a direct linear line to unification as the Kingdom of England.[28] Ireland, then, is framed as a "failure" in comparison with England, a perspective that also aligns with perceptions that early medieval Ireland was "weird" or especially archaic and strange.[29] Comparative history can highlight how societies shared similar developments as well as identify differences and can provide an alternative perspective on how and why early medieval societies developed as they did.

This thesis is an attempt to move past the nativist/anti-nativist (or revisionist) debate in early medieval Irish historiography. The debate positions scholars who argue that the medieval narrative texts were essentially pre-Christian in nature with a thin veneer of Christianity, a dominant historiographical trend until a paradigm shift in the mid-1980s that focussed on the Christian nature of the Irish texts.[30] Elva Johnston has highlighted a newer paradigm of post-revisionism that draws on both historiographical trends resulting in more nuanced and less polemical studies.[31] My analysis of the Irish and English evidence is with this in mind: it is possible that texts that were produced during the conversion era and even after to draw on both autochthonous and Christian traditions. Moreover, this thesis rejects the notion of a hostile binary of "pre-Christian" and "Christian" in the texts and archaeological evidence. The reality is considerably more complicated as there was a constant process of adaptation, accommodation, and gradual change in the early medieval period of traditions and ideas.

Comparative analysis is a useful framework for analysing the development of kingship, but it can also help move scholarship away from nationalistic and isolated conclusions. The comparative methodology of this thesis is twofold: it compares two different historiographical traditions as well

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Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present," *The Journal of Modern History* 77:3 (2005): 630 – 678, here 670.

[28] Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400 – 800* (Oxford, 2005), p. 42

[29] Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship," pp. 151 – 152.

[30] Roy Flechner, "Conversion in Ireland: Reflections on the State of the Art," in Roy Flechner and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (eds), *Converting the Isles I: The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World* (Turnhout, 2016), pp. 45 – 46; for a thorough examination of the scholars on either side of the debate, see Jonathan M. Wooding, "Reapproaching the Pagan Celtic Past – Anti-Nativism, Asterisk Reality and the Late-Antique Paradigm," *Studia Celtica Fennica* 6 (2009): 51 – 74.

[31] Elva Johnston, "Review: Early Irish History: The State of the Art," *Irish Historical Studies* 33:131 (2003): 342 – 348. Her more recent publication that explores literacy in early medieval Ireland deconstructs the debate and reframes the discussion on how to approach early Irish texts. See Elva Johnston, *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2013), but esp. pp. 16 – 26 for a discussion of the debate and the problems that have arisen as a result.

as two different societies. Preconceived notions regarding these two societies have presented a barrier to effective comparisons even though similarities between these two societies are readily apparent. Thus, while this thesis begins with presuming underlying similarities, these have not been discussed at length. Moreover, these similarities present a unique opportunity to highlight where early medieval Ireland and England differed in the legitimisation of sacral kingship.

The second methodological framework for this this thesis is interdisciplinarity, a methodology that involves applying two or more academic disciplines in a project. It is extremely useful in filling in gaps that one type of source or discipline cannot answer.[32] In the field of medieval studies there is often a paucity of written evidence, and thus expanding our field of vision to include other disciplines and their studies can allow us to gain a fuller picture of the period we are studying. Moreover, interdisciplinary studies are inherently comparative, in that you are comparing several different types of sources and methodologies. Ultimately, interdisciplinary studies are highly valuable as it allows us to consult a wider pool of source material. Written sources can be highly problematic, as they may have gone through several forms of transmission and are corrupted from the original. Furthermore, they tend to reflect the mentalities of a limited group of people. Thus, if we combine written sources with other types of evidence such as archaeological material, linguistic analysis, and sociological and anthropological frameworks, we can obtain a fuller picture of the period that we are studying.

In interdisciplinary work, it is important to understand the limitations of the evidence and the methodologies involved with approaching the material. Archaeology can be highly interpretive, with the scientific data being sometimes ambiguous or inconclusive, while any interpretations of said data may be highly flawed. Archaeology was heavily influenced by Victorian values of the public (male) and private (female) spheres and the application of Victorian gender norms upon grave goods remains a significant problem.[33] There is a high level of androcentrism in archaeology, and this often informs how archaeologists gender human remains. In other words, material culture has been used to gender individuals, which has led to incorrect conclusions regarding burials.[34] In history, the use of texts allows us to establish a historical narrative, but written material often

[32] For an overview of interdisciplinarity, its definitions, applications, and challenges, see Harvey J. Graff, "The 'Problem' of Interdisciplinarity in Theory, Practice, and History," *Social Science History* 40:4 (2016): 775 – 803.
[33] Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (London, 1999), pp. 20 – 25, 32; Marianne Moen, *The Gendered Landscape: A discussion on gender, status and power in the Norwegian Viking Age Landscape*, BAR International Series 2207 (Oxford, 2011), p. 11.
[34] Moen, *The Gendered Landscape*, p. 5 – 8.

privileges the most powerful in society and combined with survivability and problems of transmission leaves us with interpretive difficulties where our knowledge is thin. Thus, while integrating disciplines is highly useful for finding a broader view of past societies, we must still be aware of how all types of evidence have interpretive difficulties.

1.5 Sources

Our historical understanding of early medieval Ireland is largely based on the medieval Irish annals, of which there are several compilations, although for this thesis I will be relying largely on the *Annals of Ulster* (henceforth *AU*) and the *Annals of Tigernach* (*ATig*), but where necessary I have also consulted the *Annals of Inisfallen* (*AI*), the *Annals of Loch Cé* (*LC*), and the *Annals of the Four Masters* (*AFM*).[35] The annals all survive in post-eleventh century manuscripts, but are invaluable texts for early medieval Ireland as many of the annals, like the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach*, preserve entries from an early medieval contemporary chronicle often titled the "Iona Chronicle".[36]

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[35] For a recent discussion of these annals, see Daniel P. Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals: their genesis, evolution and history* (Dublin, 2008); For another recent discussion and analysis of the annals, see Nicholas Evans, *The Present and Past in Medieval Irish Chronicles* (Woodbridge, 2010); for the edition and translation of the *Annals of Ulster*, see Seán Mac Airt & Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin, 1983); for the *Annals of Tigernach*, see Whitley Stokes (transl) *The Annals of Tigernach*, 2 vols (Felinfach, 1993); see also Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, available at *CELT: The Corpus for Electronic Texts*, https://celt.ucc.ie//published/T100002A/index.html (Accessed 26 March 2021); For the *Annals of Inisfallen*, see Seán Mac Airt, *The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B 503)*, repr. (Dublin, 1988); The *Annals of Loch Cé* cover the period from 1014 to 1590 but were compiled over several centuries. For the edition see William M. Hennessy (ed. and transl.), *The Annals of Loch Cé. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1590*. 2 vols. (London, 1871); For a discussion of the text and its relation to the *Annals of Connacht*, see B.W. O'Dwyer, "The Annals of Connacht and Loch Cé and the Monasteries of Boyle and Holy Trinity," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 72 (1972): 83 – 101; The *Annals of the Four Masters* is a seventeenth century compilation of annals, many of which are still extant but clearly had access to material that no longer exists. It exists in four manuscripts: University College Dublin, MS A 13, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 6, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 7, Royal Irish Academy MS C iii 3, and TCD MS 1301. For the edition, see John O'Donovan, *Annala rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Dublin, 1856), *s.a.* 1475. For a discussion of the text, see Bernadette Cunningham, *The Annals of the Four Masters: Irish History, kingship and society in the early seventeenth century* (Dublin, 2010); See also Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 56 – 60, 293 – 303, 311 – 312, 328 – 341; When necessary, I have consulted Dan P Mc Carthy's synchronisation of the annals, available at http://www.irish-annals.cs.tcd.ie/ (Accessed 5 April 2018).

[36] See A.P. Smyth, "The Earliest Irish Annals: Their First Contemporary Entries, and the Earliest Centres of Recording," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 72 (1972): 1 – 48; Daniel Mc Carthy, "The Chronology and sources of the early Irish annals," *Early Medieval Europe* 10:3 (2001): 323 – 341; Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 153 – 167; Daniel Mc Carthy, "The Genesis and Evolution of the Irish Annals to AD 1000," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 52 (2018): 119 – 155; Nicholas Evans, "Irish chronicles as sources for the history of northern Britain, A.D. 660 – 800," *The Innes Review* 69:1 (2018): 1 – 48; For a fuller overview of the historiographical discussion, see Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 61 – 117; for another discussion of the scholarly background on the annals, see Evans, *Medieval Irish Chronicles*, pp. 1 – 7.

There are too many manuscripts to list here for the Irish Annals, but there are some key witnesses for the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach*:[37]

1. Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, TCD MS 1282 (*Annals of Ulster*, late fifteenth century).[38]
2. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 489 (*Annals of Ulster*, early sixteenth century).[39]
3. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 502 (*Annals of Tigernach*, late-eleventh or early-twelfth century).[40]
4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 488 (*Annals of Tigernach*, fourteenth century).[41]

For the purposes of this thesis, it is highly useful as it records the births and deaths of kings in Ireland, as well as other notable events like battles and monastic foundations. Thus, for understanding genealogical and saga texts, the annals provide a useful resource for cross-checking historical figures with narrative texts that may be of dubious historicity.

The major source for early medieval England remains the Venerable Bede's (d. 735) *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*HE*), written circa 731.[42] As Bede remains our most important source for narrative history in early medieval England, naturally there are several studies and edited collections on his life, works, and ideology.[43] It is important to highlight that Bede's purpose in writing was to promote the idea of a Christian English identity, particularly from a Northumbrian perspective.[44] Bede's approach to kingship has been discussed by J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, Conor

[37] Mc Carthy discusses the provenance of the manuscripts for the whole corpus in Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 18 – 60.
[38] Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 34 – 36; The manuscript is available online at *Digital Collections: The Library of Trinity College Dublin*, https://doi.org/10.48495/d504rq85r (Accessed 2 July 2021).
[39] Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 36 – 37; The manuscript is available online at *Digital Bodleian*, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/84134710-3dd3-4ab4-8ea0-72c22a685c65/ (Accessed 2 July 2021).
[40] Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, p. 21; The manuscript is available online at *Digital Bodleian*, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/ea96c258-35fa-4d52-949c-5a0ef99ce659/ (Accessed 2 July 2021).
[41] Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, p. 22; The manuscript is available online at *Digital Bodleian*, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/2bebcdbb-ef7a-4985-bd16-4e9a8d897919/ (Accessed 2 July 2021).
[42] Charles Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam Gentis Anglorum, Historam abbatam, Epistolam ad Ecberctum una cum Historia Abbatum Auctore Anonymo*, two vols. (Oxford, 1896); For the English translation, see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, transl. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. ed. (London, 1990). This thesis will rely on these two editions of Bede's text, although occasionally Bertram Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969) will be used.
[43] For instance, Nicholas J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in context* (Abingdon, 2006); Scott Degregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010); George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009); Máirín MacCarron, *Bede and Time: Computus, Theology and History in the Early Medieval World* (Abingdon, 2020).
[44] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 95 – 98.

O'Brien, and Sarah Foot.[45] His works add to our understanding of the ideology of kingship in the early medieval period. What is also useful though is highlighting where Bede was silent on other aspects of kingship, such as inauguration rituals. Attempts to understand why he would be silent on such acts can also aid our understanding of the ideology of kingship.

Bede's *HE* is extant in hundreds of manuscripts that would be impossible to list here, but there are several early versions of the text, some written soon after Bede's death in 735. Some of the manuscripts are listed below, although it is by no means an exhaustive list:[46]

1. Kassel, Landesbibliothek 4° MS theol. 2 (fragment, late eighth century, Northumbria).[47]
2. London, British Museum, Cotton Tiberius C. ii (late eighth century, southern England).[48]
3. *Moore MS*, Cambridge, University Library Kk.5.16, (c. 734 – 737, Northumbria).[49]
4. Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, lat. Q.v.I.18 (c. 747, Northumbria).[50]

The other important source for our period is a text that is now called the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (henceforth *ASC*), a modern appellation as it is unnamed in the manuscripts.[51] It is the only extant annal from early medieval England, but the earliest possible date of the compilation of the existing versions of *ASC* of 891, and while this situates within a context that is just outside of

[45] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "Gregory of Tours and Bede: their views on the personal qualities of kings," *Frühmittelalterlichen Studien* 2:1 (1968): 31 – 44; Conor O'Brien, "Kings and Kingship in the Writings of Bede," *English Historical Review* 132:559 (2017): 1473 – 1498; Sarah Foot, "Bede's Kings," in Rory Naismith and David A. Woodman (eds), *Writing, Kingship and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 25 – 51.
[46] For a full discussion of the textual history of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, see "Textual Introduction," in Colgrave &. Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. xxxix – lxxiv.
[47] "Textual Introduction," in Colgrave & Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. xlii. The manuscript is available online at Universität Kassel (https://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1333026103678/1/LOG_0000/) (9 April 2018).
[48] "Textual Introduction," in Colgrave & Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. xlii. The manuscript was digitised by the British Library (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_C_II) (9 April 2018).
[49] "Textual Introduction," in Colgrave & Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. xliii – xliv. The manuscript is available at the University of Cambridge Digital Library (http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-KK-00005-00016/1) (4 April 2018).
[50] "Textual Introduction," in Colgrave & Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. xliv. The manuscript has not been digitised, but a facsimile is available. See O. Arngart (ed.), *The Leningrad Bede: an eighth century manuscript of the Venerable Bede's 'Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum' in the Public Library, Leningrad* (Copenhagen, 1952).
[51] Dorothy Whitelock, David C. Douglas, & Susie I. Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation* (New Brunswick, 1961), p. xi; The *ASC* is preserved in seven manuscripts and one fragment. For an overview of the relationship of the different manuscripts to one another, see Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. xi – xxi.

the chronological scope of this thesis, the *ASC* is our only source for early medieval England post-Bede.

The oldest extant manuscript of the *ASC* is Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 173, otherwise known as the *Parker Chronicle*, which consists of two independent manuscripts bound together, the first of which contains the *ASC* and dates to somewhere between the ninth and tenth century, and the second half of which is from the eighth to ninth century.[52] While it is the earliest version, it has several issues of its own and is not inherently more valuable than the later versions, as it is twice removed from the original exemplar and omits several sources that were recorded in other copies.[53] The provenance of this version of the *ASC* was likely the Kingdom of Wessex under the reign of King Alfred I (d. 899) although the extent to which Alfred directed the compilation of the *ASC* and its dissemination is debated. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge have cautioned against assuming the text is Wessex propaganda.[54] The other two versions of the *ASC* of special importance for this thesis are in two later manuscripts, based on archetypes from the eleventh century: British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B IV, otherwise known as the *Worcester Chronicle*, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc 636, or the *Peterborough Chronicle*.[55] While these two are much later than our time period, they both preserve a set of annals from eighth-century Northumbria, which were also recorded in the *Historia regum Anglorum et Dacorum*, attributed to Symeon of Durham.[56] The question of how much these annals were altered by later compilers is unknown, and while the *Worcester Chronicle* and *Peterborough Chronicle* have a close agreement on their entries, they still have several key differences, notably with some of the entries concerning Northumbria, based on

[52] Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. xi; Subsequent references to the *ASC* will depend on the translation by Whitelock, Douglas & Tucker. For the original Old English edition, see Charles Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, with supplementary extracts from the others*, 2 vols, ed. (Oxford, 1892), which contains the *Parker Chronicle* in parallel with the *Peterborough Chronicle* (referred to as the *Laud* MS in the book); For another edition of the *Parker Chronicle*, see Robin Flower and Hugh Smith (eds), *The Parker Chronicle and Laws (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 173): A Facsimile* (London, 1941). Unfortunately, I was unable to consult this version for the thesis.

[53] Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. xi – xii.

[54] Nicholas Brooks, "Why is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about kings?" *Anglo-Saxon England* 39 (2010): 43 – 70, here 48; Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (ed. and transl.), *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 40 – 41.

[55] *Worchester Chronicle*, British Library, London, MS Cotton Tiberius B IV, ff. 3r – 86v, available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_IV (accessed 21 November 2020); *Peterborough Chronicle*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Misc 636, ff. 1r – 88r; for the dates of the manuscripts, see Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. xiv – xvii.

[56] Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. xiv.

earlier northern annals.[57] Thus, while the exemplars for the versions of the *ASC* in the *Worcester Chronicle* and the *Peterborough Chronicle* are later than the chronological framework of this thesis, their use of these Northumbrian annals makes them very useful for this thesis as they provide knowledge for Northumbria after the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

These sources provide the narrative framework for this thesis, which otherwise relies upon sources like genealogies, saga texts, legal texts, and hagiographies along with material cultures and landscape archaeology that would be otherwise very difficult to interpret without a framework of dates and events. These other key sources will be analysed within the chapters below where the analysis is based on their readings. A disclaimer is also necessary at this stage, for the last year of this thesis was undertaken during the 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of access to libraries has resulted in using sources that are older editions and translations or are online versions rather than the physical texts. Where I have had difficulty with accessing material, this will be explained in the footnotes.

1.6 Language

There is no straightforward way to standardise Old English names. The orthographic features in the texts vary, and certain names are uncommon in their appearance. Thus, it is important to establish a schema for the discussion.

1. Initial /u/ and /uu/ will be amended to /w/, i.e. Uuoden → Woden, Uihtlaeg → Wihtlaeg
2. /ð/ and /þ/ will be maintained instead of /th/
3. Certain name-forms will be amended in the discussion for well-attested individuals, as certain name-forms in the genealogies are unusual, i.e. Eduine → Edwin

Old Irish names present similar issues, as spellings in scholarship and the manuscripts vary, particularly if the manuscripts present some names in Middle Irish while others are kept as Old Irish. Generally, the Old Irish forms of names will be used, and if there is confusion over name spellings then this will be clarified in the thesis.

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[57] Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. xiv – xv. There was an assumption that these annals split into two versions that diverged from each other early on and formed the basis for the differing passages in *Worcester* and *Peterborough* on Northumbria. The entries that are not common to both manuscripts were added later to *Worcester* after they had diverged and represent late interpolations as this theory does not explain their close relationship after this supposed divergence. Thus, the *ASC* did not necessarily reach Northumbria in the ninth century but rather more likely dates to the tenth century when the Bishops of York were educated in southern England.

Chapter 2. Legitimacy through Descent – Genealogies and Kingship

Royal genealogies were a widespread genre of text in the early medieval period as royal kindreds sought not only to explain their origins in the deep past, often to provide a sense of linearity among (usually) male descendants. Gabrielle M. Spiegel states that a medieval genealogy was "written above all to exalt a line and legitimize its power, [it] displays a family's intention to affirm and extend its place in political life."[1] They are intrinsically tied to the origin legends of a people and contribute to the formation of ethnogenesis, which is the formation of ethnic identities or kindreds centred around the origins of elite groups.[2] These origin stories promote the idea of a central and linear development of an ethnic group, centred around elite leaders whose descendants are the current kings or rulers; these stories are far from historically accurate, but rather are a top-down process that tie diverse groups together through a myth of shared descent.[3]

Genealogical literature is a broad category of both written texts and oral traditions, present in premodern and modern societies across the world.[4] Modern genealogical research has been very popular with websites like *Ancestry*, and combined with new services where people can send in their DNA for the purposes of understanding their origins.[5] The linking of DNA with genealogical

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[1] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22:1 (1983): 43 – 53; here 47.

[2] The theory is based on Reinhard Wenksus, see Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Köln, 1961); The term and its application in medieval history was expanded on by Herwig Wolfram. See for instance Herwig Wolfram, "Typen der Ethnogenese. Ein Versuch," in Dieter Geueich (ed.), *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur 'Schlacht bei Zülpich' (496/497)* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 608 – 627; for examinations of this theory in English, see Alexander Callander Murray, "Reinhard Wenskus on 'Ethnogenesis', Ethnicity, and the Origin of the Franks," in Andrew Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 39 – 68; Andrew Gillett, "Ethnogenesis: A Contested Model of Early Medieval Europe," *History Compass* 4:2 (2006): 241 – 260.

[3] John Moreland, "Ethnicity, Power and the English," in William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell (eds), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 23 – 24.

[4] See for instance Pei Te Hurinui, "Maori Genealogies," *The Journal of Polynesian Society* 67:2 (1958): 162 – 165; Abdalla Omar Mansur, "The Nature of the Somali Clan System," in Ali Jimale Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia* (Lawrenceville, 1995), pp. 117 – 134; İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Structure and Function of the Genealogical Tree in Islamic Historiography (1200 – 1500)," in İlker Evrim Binbaş and Nurten Kılıç-Schubel (eds), *Horizons of the World. Festschrift for İsenbike Togan* (Istanbul, 2011), pp. 465 – 544; Sangwoo Han, "The Historical Background of the Popularity of Genealogies in Korea," *Journal of Family History* 45:4 (2020): 498 – 516; Gíslí Pálsson, "The life of family trees and the Book of Icelanders," *Medical Anthropology* 21 (2007): 337 – 367.

[5] Alongside their central idea of allowing someone through a subscription model to research and put together family trees based on historical records, *Ancestry* advertises their DNA services as a method of finding "a more complete story of you." See *Ancestry*, available at https://www.ancestry.co.uk (Accessed 9 March 2021). Other sites like *23andMe* advertise their DNA services not just for the purposes of finding one's origins but also for one's "health picture." See *23andMe*, available at https://www.23andme.com (Accessed 9 March

research has several ethical implications, such as the use of DNA databases for law enforcement purposes without individual consent or even within academic frameworks where ancient DNA has been used to "confirm" medieval demographics and migration.[6] Moreover, such DNA tests have been used to confirm innate relationships to medieval communities, or among white North Americans some kind of Indigenous ancestry in order to make claims to indigeneity.[7] The search for origins cannot simply be reduced to ethical binaries, but rather occupy complex socio-cultural and political spaces within modern communities.[8] While the goal of genealogical research is tied to simply uncovering one's origins, there is a particular emphasis on royal or elite origins. While this thesis does not discuss ancient DNA alongside the genealogies, it is important to note that there is a consistent desire to "validate" genealogical descent while also promoting elite, royal, or legendary ancestors. While no dedicated scholarly study has been undertaken on the sociological mechanics of this, several blogs and websites sell their genealogical services for finding royal ancestors.[9] Attempts to explain our origins and identities through our ancestors is evidently a widespread practice, but the drive for how and why the early medieval royal genealogies were created differs

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2021); for criticisms of these companies, see A. Nordgren & E.T. Juengst, "Can genomics tell me who I am? Essentialistic rhetoric in direct-to-consumer DNA testing," *New Genetics and Society* 28:2 (2009): 157 – 172.

[6] G. Samuel and D. Kennett, "Problematizing consent: searching genetic genealogy databases for law enforcement purposes," *New Genetics and Society* (2020): 1 – 21; within Ireland for instance, modern Y-DNA has been used to link Irish surnames with population formation. See Brian McEvoy & Daniel G. Bradley, "Y-chromosomes and the extent of patrilineal ancestry in Irish surnames," *Human Genetics* 119 (2006): 212 – 219; Catherine Swift, "Interlaced scholarship: genealogies and genetics in twenty-first-century Ireland," in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Princes, Prelates and Poets in Medieval Ireland: Essays in Honour of Katharine Simms* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 18 – 31; misconceptions about ancient DNA abound, and are often used within a bio-essentialist framework. See Lorna-Jane Richardson and Tom Booth, "Response to 'Brexit, Archaeology and Heritage: Reflections and Agendas'," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 27:1 (2017): 1 – 5.

[7] Marc Scully, Stephen D. Brown & Turi King, "Becoming a Viking: DNA testing, genetic ancestry and placeholder identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39:2 (2016): 162 – 180; Jenny Reardon and Kim TallBear, "'Your DNA is *Our* History': Genomics, Anthropology, and the Construction of Whiteness as Property," *Current Anthropology* 53:S5 (2012): S233 – S245.

[8] For example, Alondra Nelson has undertaken a study on African American and Black British "roots-seekers" who undertake DNA tests to learn more about their ancestries and ethnic affiliations that were disrupted and lost through chattel slavery. The results varied, as many felt that their family histories were then at risk of being discounted on the basis of the DNA evidence, while others felt they filled in missing links and held a sense of completion or confirmation. See Alondra Nelson, "Genetic Genealogy Testing and the Pursuit of African Ancestry," *Social Studies of Science* 38:5 (2008): 759 – 783.

[9] Alison Ensign, "Are You a Part of the Royal Family Tree?" *FamilySearch Blog* (16 December 2019), available at https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/british-royal-family-tree/ (Accessed 10 March 2021); "Are you related to royalty?" *Find My Past Blog* (29 January 2020), available at https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/getting-started/are-you-related-to-royalty-genealogy-family-history-ancestors (Accessed 10 March 2021); "How to Find Out If You Have Royal Ancestry," *MyHeritage* (21 October 2020), available at https://education.myheritage.com/article/how-to-find-out-if-you-have-royal-ancestry/ (Accessed 10 March 2021).

from modern genealogical research. Genealogies now can be used to reconnect with our pasts or as a method to explain or understand our current identities. On the other hand, early medieval royal genealogies are used to explain wider group formation, while on an individual level are used to promote a person or a lineage within their current socio-political milieu.

Genealogies are not faithful historical records of biological descent, but rather as Donnchadh Ó Corráin states, "[they] are a way of ordering the multifarious socio-political data of a given society and organising its structure – and of necessity are ideological statements."[10] The construction of blood ties from distant ancestors to historical kings was also a necessary element in the legitimisation of rule in the early medieval period. This chapter will explore how early medieval Irish and English genealogies were used to legitimise sacral kingship through the creation of descent from legendary figures and deities during a period of religious conversion to Christianity. This chapter will begin with an analysis of the legendary late-antique Irish king Níall Noígíallach, eponymous ancestor of the Uí Néill in order to highlight how royal genealogies were constructed and altered to promote the legitimacy of rule. This will be contrasted through a discussion of the Déisi kindred the Uí Brigte, a genealogy that claimed descent from a woman which may have de-legitimised them from royal rule. These genealogies will then be compared with the Anglian genealogies, which took a considerably different form to the Irish genealogies in their presentation and focus. The ancestor deity Woden will be analysed at length to uncover the importance of this figure for legitimising kingship in early medieval England, with a focus on deconstructing preconceptions of this deity. Through this analysis, the role of genealogies in legitimising insular sacral kingship will be uncovered.

2.1 Historiography

As a genre, medieval genealogies have been subject to varying levels of scholarship. Léopold Genicot's pamphlet on medieval genealogies is one of the few to approach the texts from a wider view, but his paper relegates the texts as a "minor genre."[11] Largely, genealogies have been discussed either from a singular perspective of one society or culture, with a few comparative analyses. Georges Duby wrote two essays on the genealogies of the French aristocracy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[12] The form of the French aristocratic genealogies as medieval

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[10] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," *Peritia* 12 (1998): 177 – 208; here 182.

[11] L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies. Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, fasc. 15* (Turnhout, 1975), p. 7.

[12] Georges Duby, "The Structure of kinship and nobility: Northern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries," in Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, transl. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 134 – 148,

narrative texts has been examined by Spiegel and more recently Robert Bartlett.[13] For the early medieval period, there have been several comparative examples of royal genealogies. David Dumville has explored the relationship between genealogies and king lists in his 1977 paper "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," broadly focussing on these texts from an Insular (but especially English) perspective.[14] In 1980, Molly Miller published an article titled "Royal Pedigrees of the Insular Dark Ages: A Progress Report" that was largely a survey of some royal genealogies of Insular kingdoms, describing their historical contexts and sources and more generally regarding how genealogies were written.[15] Walter Pohl has examined the early medieval genealogies from the Continent and England in his paper "Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective from the Early Medieval West," where he examined the possible origins of the structure of genealogies and their uses in early medieval Europe.[16] These have been useful studies for approaching these often difficult sources, but to date there have been no comparative analyses on the ideological backgrounds of the early medieval Irish and English genealogies, and thus this thesis will add to our understanding of these texts.

The medieval Irish genealogies are a unique set of texts for the period and differ extensively from other royal genealogies in their vastness and complexity. Donnchadh Ó Corráin estimated that the total number of names across the medieval corpus is approximately 20,000, and two-thirds are historical.[17] As for family and dynasty names, his "conservative" estimate is 2,500.[18] They are spread across several large manuscripts and presented in several formats: verse, narrative, and lists. For example, several of the early Leinster genealogies are presented in verse, interspersed with

originally published as "Structures de parenté et noblesse dans la France du Nord aux IXe et XIIe siècles," in Georges Duby, *Hommes et structures du moyen âge* (Paris, 1973), pp. 267 – 285; Georges Duby, "French Genealogical Literature: The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Chivalrous Society*, pp. 149 – 157, originally published as "Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France au XIe et XIIe siècles," in *Hommes et structures*, pp. 287 – 298.

[13] Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function," 43 – 53; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Foucault and the Problem of Genealogy," *The Medieval History Journal* 4:1 (2001): 1 – 14; Robert Bartlett, *Blood Royal: Dynastic Politics in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 326 – 339.

[14] David Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," in Peter Sawyer and Ian Wood (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72 – 104.

[15] Molly Miller, "Royal Pedigrees of the Insular Dark Ages: A Progress Report," *History in Africa* 7 (1980): 201 – 224.

[16] Walter Pohl, "Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective from the Early Medieval West,' in Eirik Hovden, Christina Lutter & Walter Pohl (eds), *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia: Comparative Approaches* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 232 – 269.

[17] Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," 180 – 181.

[18] Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," 180.

genealogical lists that largely conform to the formula of "X mac (son of) Y meic Z."[19] Within each larger familial/geographical section, the various families and their vassal peoples are described in relation to one another, noting the branching paths and sub-families. The size of the source material that accrued over several centuries with various additions, deletions, and other edits has resulted in a corpus that is contradictory and confused. Genealogies for one family may appear several times over within one manuscript and are often contradictory. For instance, names may be in a different order, they may be doubled or tripled, or individuals may be added or removed. The latter may be explained as an effort to "standardise" the genealogies, to make the generations work. Or perhaps individuals were removed because it was not politically prudent to include them. Nevertheless, the Irish genealogies possess a wealth of information, much of it from the early medieval period and of families that were not politically powerful even during the historical period, which also suggests an antiquarian purpose of the genealogies as well. These genealogies were constructions, but the perception of descent was important for the continued reinforcement of kingship throughout the medieval period as territories shifted and through the changing fortunes of dynasties.

The Irish genealogies exist only in manuscripts from the late eleventh century onwards, and majority are from the fourteenth century and later. This chapter is based on my own readings of three key genealogical manuscripts:

1. LL: Trinity College Library, Dublin, *The Book of Leinster*, MS 1339, 11 – 12th c.[20]
2. Rawl. B 502: Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson B 502, 12th c.[21]
3. TCD 1298: Trinity College Library, Dublin, MS 1298, 14th – 15th c.[22]

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[19] Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," 191 – 193.

[20] The edition was consulted for this chapter, rather than the manuscript as the manuscript is at times very difficult to read due to damage. See *The Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachongbala*, vol 6. ed. Anne O'Sullivan (Dublin, 1983). The manuscript is digitised and can be found on *Irish Script on Screen* (http://www.isos.dias.ie/) (Accessed 28 April 2019).

[21] For an edition of the genealogies, see Michael O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 reprint (Dublin, 1986). The text was digitised and is available at *Digital Bodleian* (https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/#) (Accessed 28 April 2019).

[22] This manuscript has not been digitised. Donnchadh Ó Corráin transcribed the manuscript but did not publish it before he passed. See Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Transcript of TCD H.2.7 (TCD MS 1298)*, unpublished. Elsewhere, a small section of the genealogies has been edited. See M.E. Dobbs, "Miscellany from H.2.7 (T.C.D.)," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 21 (1938 – 1940): 307 – 318. In the literature, this manuscript is frequently referred to by its old shelfmark, TCD MS H.2.7.

Both LL and Rawl. B 502 are the most easily accessible Irish genealogical manuscripts, as both have been digitised, and editions of these manuscripts have been edited and published and are available online at CELT. MS 1298 has not been digitised, and only small sections have been edited and published, but it contains early material that is unavailable in the former two and has better attestations of obscure genealogies. There are several other useful genealogical manuscripts that have been digitised, which have been occasionally consulted:

1. BB: Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, *Book of Ballymote*, MS 23 P 12, 15th c.[23]
2. Lec.: Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, *Great Book of Lecan*, MS 23 P 2, 15th c.[24]
3. Laud: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Laud Misc. 610, 15th c.[25]

The main problem with the genealogical manuscripts is not only the lack of published editions, but the vast amount of material makes even consulting the digitised manuscripts difficult. ISOS lists the beginning text of each folio for those it has digitised, but even with that it can be difficult to find specific entries without bibliographic references. ISOS does give folio summaries, but genealogical manuscripts can be disorganised and genealogies for one population group may appear several times throughout. The genealogies were frequently changed and updated, and names were removed or added either to standardise generations or for political propaganda purposes.[26] The fourteenth and fifteenth century manuscripts are often better witnesses to early material, preserving sections dating from the seventh and eighth centuries, dated according to various linguistic features.[27]

Other texts will be consulted in this chapter, notably several Old Irish saga texts. The main tales used in conjunction with the genealogies are *Indarba na nDéissi*, *Aided Cheltchair mac Uithechair*, and the Conall Corc tales.[28] In addition to the saga texts, the Old Irish legal tracts will be

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[23] This manuscript has not been edited, but it is digitised on *Irish Script on Screen* (http://www.isos.dias.ie/) (28 April 2019).
[24] This manuscript has not been edited, but it is digitised on *Irish Script on Screen* (http://isos.dias.ie/) (28 April 2019).
[25] Portions of the genealogies have been edited in Kuno Meyer, "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 8 (1912): 291 – 338.
[26] John V. Kelleher, "The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," *Irish Historical Studies* 16:62 (1968): 144 – 147, but cf. Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," 185 – 186.
[27] Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," 178 – 179.
[28] *Indarba na nDéisi* has several alternate titles: *Tairired na nDéssi*, *Tucait innarba na nDessi*, and *Tocomlad na nDési a Temraig*. For the text and facing translation, see Kuno Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," *Y Cymmrodor* 14 (1901): 101 – 135; there is another early version that Meyer has edited, but it seems to be

referenced, largely because legal precedent was often described using legendary law-givers and there is overlap with these figures and their appearances in the sagas and genealogies.[29] Genealogically adjacent texts such as the *Banshenchas* will also be used as they provide other incidental information into historical figures mentioned in the genealogies. The *Banshenchas* is an eleventh-century text that lists famous women from the Bible, the Aeneid, and Irish literature and history. There are a number of versions of the text, and they can be separated into the Metrical and the Prose versions.[30] The text has subsequently been examined by several scholars, notably by Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin and Anne Connon.[31] This is a very useful text for my analysis for its comparative use in identifying women in the Irish genealogies, a key focus of this chapter.

The historiography on the medieval Irish genealogies is scarce in comparison with the corpus of material. Few scholars have published studies on the material, and as stated previously only a few of the manuscripts have been edited and published. Ó Corráin was one of the most well-versed scholars in the genealogies, but his only direct work on the topic was his 1985 article

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slightly shorter. See Kuno Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Déssi," *Ériu* 3 (1907): 135 – 142; for another edited version of the Irish texts, taken from the several versions, see Kuno Meyer, "Tucait indarba na nDéssi," in O.J. Bergin, R.I. Best, Kuno Meyer, J.G. O'Keeffe (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1907), pp. 15 – 24; see also Vernam Hull, "A Collation of Tucait Indarba na nDéssi," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 24 (1954): 132 – 135; Vernam Hull, "The Book of Uí Maine Version of the Expulsion of the Déssi," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 24 (1954): 266 – 271; for later versions of the text, Séamus Pender, "Two Unpublished Versions of the Expulsion of the Déssi," in Séamus Pender (ed.), *Féilscríbhinn Torna: Essays and Studies Presented to Tadhg Ua Donnchadha (Torna) on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, September 4th, 1944* (Cork, 1947), pp. 209 – 217; see also Vernam Hull, "The Later Version of the Expulsion of the Déssi," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 27 (1958 – 1959): 14 – 63; for a discussion of the text, see Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "The Déisi and Dyfed," *Éigse* 20 (1984): 1 – 33; Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "The Expulsion of the Déisi," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 110 (2005): 13 – 20; Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 122; for the edition and translation of *Aided Cheltchair mac Uithechair*, see Kuno Meyer (ed. and transl.), *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, Todd Lecture Series, Vol. XIV (Dublin, 1906), pp. 24 – 25; Vernam Hull (ed. and transl.), "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," *PMLA* 62:4 (1947): 887 – 909; Myles Dillon (ed. and transl.), "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," *Ériu* 16 (1952): 61 – 73; Vernam Hull (ed. and transl.), "The Exile of Conall Corc," *PMLA* 56:4 (1941): 937 – 950.

[29] D.A. Binchy (ed.), *Corpus iuris Hibernici (*henceforth *CIH)*, 7 vols. (Dublin, 1978); W. Hancock, Thaddeus O'Mahony, Alexander George Richey, and Robert Atkinson (eds and transl), *Ancient Laws of Ireland (*henceforth *AL)*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1865 – 1901). Due to the 2020/2021 pandemic, I did not have consistent access to *CIH* and thus I have had to rely largely on *AL*.

[30] For the edition of the *Metrical Banshenchas* see M.E. Dobbs, "The Ban-Shenchus [Part 1]," *Revue Celtique* 47 (1930): 283 – 339. For two versions of the *Prose Banshenchas* see M.E. Dobbs, "The Ban-Shenchus [Part 2]," *Revue Celtique* 48 (1931): 163 – 234. For the index of names listed, see M.E. Dobbs, "The Ban-Shenchus [Part 3]," *Revue Celtique* 49 (1932): 437 – 489.

[31] Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, "The Manuscript Tradition of the Banshenchas," *Ériu* 33 (1982): 109 – 135; Anne Connon, "The *Banshenchas* and the Uí Néill queens of Tara," in *Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (Dublin, 2001), pp. 98 – 108.

"Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition."[32] Nollaig Ó Muraíle has also published articles on the genealogies, such as their use for onomastics and on the various collections, as well as an edition of the seventeenth-century manuscript *Leabhar na nGenelach* by Dubhaltach MacFhirbhisigh.[33] David Thornton's 2003 monograph *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies: Studies in the Political History of Early Medieval Ireland* is an invaluable examination of the Irish genealogies of the kingdoms of the Déisi Muman in Ireland and Dyfed in Wales, and has been crucial for my own examination of these texts. In addition, an unpublished PhD thesis from Harvard University by Matthew Holmberg titled "Towards a Relative Chronology of the Milesian Genealogical Scheme" is a useful analysis of the structure of the Irish genealogies.[34] While these works have been key for bringing understanding to the genealogies, there remain several key factors that still require more discussion and analysis. For example, the role that eponymous ancestors played in the legitimisation of sacral kingship has yet to be explored at length, particularly the role that gender plays in having the "right" ancestors.

The scholarship on the early medieval English genealogies differs considerably from Irish scholarship because of the smaller volume of early medieval genealogical texts available. The early medieval English genealogies have been a subject of interest for German, English, and Danish scholars since the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century.[35] The first major discussion

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[32] Ó Corráin, "The Irish Genealogical Tradition," 177 – 208.

[33] Nollaig Ó Muraile, "The Irish Genealogies – An Overview and Some Desiderata," *Celtica* 26 (2010): 128 – 145; Nollaig Ó Muraile (ed.), *Leabhar Mór na Genealach: The Great Book of Irish Genealogies, compiled (1645 – 66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*, 5 vols., (Dublin, 2003 – 4); Nollaig Ó Muraile, *The celebrated antiquary: Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh* (1996).

[34] Matthew Holmberg, "Toward a Relative Chronology of the Milesian Genealogical Scheme," (Unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2017).

[35] Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1835), Appendix, but especially pp. I – XXIX; J.M. Kemble, *Über die Stammtafel der Westsachsen* (München, 1836); *A Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Poem of Beowulf with a Copious Glossary, Preface and Philological Notes*, transl. J.M. Kemble (London, 1837), pp. III – LV; Karl Müllenhoff, *Beowulf. Unterschungen über das Angelsächsiche Epos und die Älteste Geschichte der Germanischen Seevölker* (Berlin, 1889), pp. 5 – 8, 64 – 71; *Asser's Life of King Alfred, together with the Annals of St Neots, Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. William Henry Stephenson (Oxford, 1904), p. 152; Axel Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, *Translated from the Danish by Lee M. Hollander* (New York, 1919), pp. 381 – 386, 394 – 398, 429 – 437, 443 – 445, 477 – 483; H.M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge, 1907), pp. 6 – 8, 15, 24 – 31, 42 – 53, 59 – 61, 70, 87, 122 – 156, 226, 267 – 302; R.W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn* (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 195 – 205; Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, pp. 1 – 6; Much of the scholarship has been rooted in ethnonationalist perspectives about the distant "Germanic" past. For an overview of these perspectives, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 25 – 42; Joshua Davies, "The Middle Ages as property: Beowulf, translation and the ghosts of nationalism," *postmedieval* 10:2 (2019): 137 – 150.

of the genealogies themselves is Kenneth Sisam's 1953 article "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," which sought to analyse the breadth of the Early English genealogical material.[36] Sisam assessed the transmission of the genealogies in the manuscript evidence, their construction, and their wider historical context.[37] He analysed the genealogies at length, providing the various manuscripts and sources in which we may find them, although he dedicated a great deal of space to the Wessex genealogy.[38] Sisam did not discuss at length the ideological factors behind the construction of the genealogies, but his survey remains integral for understanding their specific historical context and relationships with one another. Moreover, he provided a clearer examination of the genealogical information than had been previously discussed in other works.

The genealogies were explored later by David Dumville in four essays. Published in 1976, his first essay on the subject explored the Anglian collection of genealogies, providing the dynastic lines in an easier-to-read manner, as well as discussing their origins and transmission.[39] In this paper, Dumville revisited the dates of each of the manuscripts while also attempting to trace the original genealogical manuscript that the Anglian collection manuscripts were based on.[40] Like Sisam, Dumville did not explore ideological aspects of these genealogies in particular depth, but his article enables an easier reading of the genealogies and provides more context for their production. As mentioned above, he also wrote a broader comparative study of Irish and Early English genealogies in his 1977 essay "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists."[41] Dumville went further to analyse the function of genealogies in the ideology of kingship from a comparative perspective, analysing Old English, Irish, and Welsh genealogies and regnal lists.[42] He addressed the presence of deities, namely Woden, in the textual material but when addressing the problem of why Bede included such a figure when he gave the Kentish genealogy, he claimed that it was a convention that signalled royalty.[43] His two other papers were specifically on the West Saxon royal genealogies, the first of which

[36] Kenneth Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953): 287 – 348.
[37] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 287 – 348, but particularly 288 – 298, 308 – 315, 322 – 331, 334 – 338.
[38] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 299 – 322.
[39] David Dumville, "The Anglian collection of royal genealogies and regnal lists," *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1976): 72 – 104.
[40] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 24 – 28, 38 – 50.
[41] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," pp. 72 – 104.
[42] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," pp. 72 – 77.
[43] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," 79. He agreed with an earlier article by Dr Molly Miller, who first made this claim. See Molly Miller, "Bede's Use of Gildas," *English Historical Review* 90:355 (1975): 254 – 255. Miller stated that this was a piece of Kentish propaganda, versus Dumville who believed that it may indicate an inclusion of Kent into the wider Anglian sphere.

discussed the West Saxon genealogies and the chronology of regnal dates.[44] The second paper, published in 1986, gave the genealogy itself along with a discussion of its manuscripts and transmission.[45]

The nature of Woden, other deities, and legendary figures that have been included in the genealogies have been revisited by Hermann Moisl, C.R. Davis, and R.D. Fulk. Moisl, in his 1981 article "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and Germanic oral tradition," explored the pre-Christian origins of the genealogy with a comparative analysis of Continental and North Germanic sources.[46] He argued that the genealogies, while being influenced by Christianity, were in fact products of a pre-Christian genealogical tradition.[47] His lengthy paper explored genealogies and descent from deities through a comparative analysis of continental and northern Germanic sources.[48] He went on to explore the oral transmission of these beliefs through the Germanic court poet known as the *scop*.[49] This article is valuable for demonstrating wider trends of divine descent and oral tradition amongst late antique and early medieval Germanic societies, although the paper does dedicate more of its analysis to continental sources rather than Early English ones. While the Early English evidence is scant, there remains other evidence that could have served the analysis well, such as place-name or archaeological evidence.

The function of deities in the genealogies was further examined by C.R. Davis, in his 1992 article "Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies."[50] He examined presence of deities and legendary figures in the genealogies and that the genealogies constantly added such individuals as each previous one had been sufficiently euhemerised.[51] Davis argued that the genealogies demonstrated a gradual attempt to assimilate the pre-Christian Germanic heroic age with a Biblical one.[52] Moreover, he made the case that the ideology behind the genealogies went

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[44] David N. Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex," *Peritia* 4 (1985): 21 – 66.
[45] David N. Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts," *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 104 (1986): 1 – 32.
[46] Hermann Moisl, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and Germanic oral tradition," *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981): 215 – 248.
[47] Moisl, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 215 – 216.
[48] Moisl, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 217 – 227.
[49] Moisl, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 236 – 245.
[50] C.R. Davis, "Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," *Anglo-Saxon England* 21 (1992): 23 – 36.
[51] Davis, "Cultural assimilation," 23 – 36.
[52] Davis, "Cultural assimilation," 35 – 36.

beyond "revisionist justification of current dynastic alliances or of contemporary ethnic and political configurations.[53] Davis' paper widens our view of the ideological framework behind the construction of the royal genealogies, but there remains further work to be done in this area. More recently, R.D. Fulk contributed a paper to the collection *Myth: A New Symposium*, published in 2002, where he examined the pagan deities in the Early English genealogies.[54] This was not a particularly lengthy article but Fulk explored how the Early English may have viewed these figures; he was critical of how historians often project our own feelings towards myth onto people in the past.[55] While he did not offer many conclusions, his paper reframed how historians should study belief and the writing of history in the past.

There have also been more specific studies on certain elements of the genealogies. Thomas A. Bredehoft analysed them from a literary perspective, evaluating the alliterative function of the names in genealogies.[56] He argued that the genealogies in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, based in part on the Anglian genealogies, were not alliterative as a result of an oral tradition but rather were a textual innovation.[57] His focus on the *ASC* did not necessitate a thorough examination of the earlier genealogies past their physical representation in the text and therefore we are left wondering about the nature of alliterative names in the Vespasian and *HB* texts. The genealogies have been used, to some extent, in studies regarding Old English names, such as Fran Colman's 2014 monograph *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*.[58] As one can see there have been few lengthy treatments of the role genealogies played in the ideology of kingship.

The role of deities and legendary figures has been a more popular area of discussion in English historiography compared to Irish historiography, likely because we have slightly more knowledge on pre-Christian English deities. Nevertheless, have been no in-depth comparisons between legendary ancestors in the Irish and English genealogies. In addition, the role of gender in legitimacy is an aspect of the Irish and English genealogies that has yet to be explored at length.

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[53] Davis, "Cultural assimilation," 35 – 36.
[54] R.D. Fulk, "Myth in Historical Perspective: The Case of Pagan Deities in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," in Gregory Schrempp & William Hansen (eds), *Myth: A New Symposium* (Bloomington, 2002), pp. 225 – 239.
[55] Fulk, "Myth in Historical Perspective," p. 235.
[56] Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 14 – 38.
[57] Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, pp. 37 – 38.
[58] Fran Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England: The Linguistics and Culture of the Old English Onomasticon* (Oxford, 2017); other studies include Leonard Neidorf, "Germanic Legend, Scribal Errors, and Cultural Change," in Leonard Neidorf (ed.), *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 37 – 57; Tom Shippey, "Names in *Beowulf* and Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Dating of Beowulf*, pp. 58 – 78.

This thesis will analyse the importance of legendary ancestors in the early medieval Irish and English genealogies to the legitimisation of kingship through a four-part discussion. The complex origins of the powerful Uí Néill dynasty the role of their eponymous ancestor Niall Noígíallach will be contrasted with the obscure Déisi Muman people the Uí Brigte in order to establish the role of legendary ancestors and to uncover the importance of gender in legitimising or delegitimising ancestors from kingship. Then, this thesis will examine the Anglian genealogical collection from early medieval England to understand its complex construction and political importance for the inclusion or exclusion of kings and the relationship of royal lines to one another. These genealogies offer a useful contrast with the Irish genealogies in both their scope and size. Then, a case study on the legendary ancestor and deity Woden will be undertaken, focussing on deconstructing received knowledge of this figure to understand why he was important for the legitimacy of the Anglian kings in early medieval England. Through this analysis, the role of genealogies in legitimising kingship will be revealed.

2.2 Niall Noígíallach – The Construction of an Irish Legend

Níall Noígíallach, or Niall of the Nine Hostages, is perhaps one of the most well-known legendary figures in Irish history: the eponymous ancestor of the Uí Néill dynasties, a branch of the Connachta that were powerful dynasties who throughout the early medieval period controlled territories in central and northern Ireland, and largely also held the Kingship of Tara from the seventh to the tenth centuries.[59] His epithet Noígíallach suggests he was known for taking hostages, but as this thesis will demonstrate, the sources reveal little about his origins. Despite the popular idea that Niall is the ancestor of modern men with Uí Néill surnames that was influenced by a recent genetic study that points to a single male ancestor for these people, Niall Noígiallach was largely a legendary figure and his descendants, the Uí Néill, were linked together through genealogical constructions.[60] We know little of the figure himself, as most of our knowledge has Through an analysis of key scholarship on the genealogical constructions of the Uí Néill and the myths relating to Niall

[59] Edel Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World, AD 400 – 1000: Landscape, kingship and religion* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 28 – 29, 120 – 121; Brian Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms, AD 500 – 800* (Dublin, 2006), p. 29.

[60] For the report on the DNA analysis, see Laoise T. Moore, Brian McEvoy, Eleanor Cape, Katharine Simms, and Daniel G. Bradley, "A Y-Chromosome Signature of Hegemony in Gaelic Ireland," *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 78 (2006): 334 – 338; for the media reporting on this study, see Aoife McLysaght, "The genetic imprint of Niall of the Nine Hostages," *Irish Times*, 24 April 2014.

Noígíallach, this thesis will assess the importance of Niall Noígíallach as a founder figure in early medieval Ireland.

In fact, the true rise of the Uí Néill is not well understood, and there is little scholarly consensus on their historical origins and development. There is obvious genealogical manipulation, but this too is unclear. The traditional Uí Néill genealogies assign Niall Noígiallach with a large number of sons, ranging from seven to fourteen. T.M. Charles-Edwards and Patrick Gleeson point to seven or eight sons respectively as the "traditional" account of the Uí Néill: Loíguire (Cenél Loíguire), Fiachu (Cenél Fiachach), Coirpre (Cenél Coirpri), Conall Gulban (Cenél Conaill), Éogan (Cenél nÉogain), Énda (Cenél nÉndai), Conall Cremthainn/Éirr Breg, and Máiné (Cenél Máiné).[61] Conall Cremthainne did not have one sub-dynasty attached to him, as his more famous grandson Diarmait mac Cerbaill was the progenitor of the sub-dynasties of Síl nÁedo Sláine, Clann Cholmáin, and Cáille Follamain.[62]

The Uí Néill were divided into two separate divisions. The Northern Uí Néill was made up of two major sub-groups, Cenél Conaill who were descendants of Conall Gulban mac Néill and Cenél nEógain who were descendants of Eógain mac Néill.[63] These two families were often in conflict for control over the Northern Uí Néill territories, namely what is now Donegal.[64] The Southern Uí Néill was largely dominated by Clann Cholmain and Síl nÁedo Sláine, who dominated the midlands of Ireland from the seventh century onwards, but at the expense of the other Uí Néill kindreds in the region like Cenél Fiachach, Cenél Coirpri, and Cenél Loíguire.[65] However, these divisions are not well-understood and may have changed over time.

For example, one small sub-dynasty that has been assigned to the Northern Uí Néill, the Cenél nÉndai, have been the source of some confusion. Charles-Edwards and Gleeson state that Cenél nÉndai was a Northern Uí Néill branch with little dscussion.[66] This is seemingly straightforward, but it is problematised by other scholarship. Brian Lacey calls them Cenél nÉnnai

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[61] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 442, 445; Gleeson, "Luigne Breg and the origins of the Uí Néill," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 117C (2017): 69 – 99, here 66 – 67; The Uí Máiné were not listed by T.M. Charles-Edwards, and they are likely to have been grafted to the Uí Néill at a later date. See F.J. Byrne, "Tribes and Tribalism in Early Ireland," *Ériu* 22 (1971): 128 – 166, here 148 – 147.

[62] Gleeson, "Luigne Breg," 67.

[63] Brian Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms, AD 500 – 800* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 31 – 32.

[64] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 32.

[65] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 16 – 20, 28.

[66] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 37; Gleeson, "Luigne Breg," 67.

but argues that they were originally a different group belonging to either the Airgialla or the Dál nAraidi who were conquered by the Cenél Conaill and eventually were absorbed into the Uí Néill.[67] He identifies a separate Cenél nÉndai in what is now Co. Fermanagh but does not discuss them.[68] Byrne is the only scholar to have questioned the historicity of the Cenél nÉndai/nÉnnai in Donegal, pointing to a genealogical tract in Rawl. B 502 that states a Clanna Énnai was a branch of Cenél Loíguire from Énna mac Loíguire.[69] Even this manuscript presents a confusing picture, as the saints' genealogies indicate descent of individuals from both Énna mac Loíguire and Énna mac Néill.[70] This kind of genealogical confusion is not uncommon in the genealogies, but it also demonstrates that what scholarship presents as historical fact regarding the descent and locations of historical peoples can be manipulated and changed. It is notable that the earliest annalistic reference to the Cenél nÉnnai is from circa 1011 and locates them in the north, which does not necessarily indicate that they recently established themselves there, but it should invite caution for assumptions they were Northern Uí Néill in the early medieval period.[71]

In a similar parallel, Cenél Coirpri controlled three different regions in the seventh century: areas in what are now the borders between Kildare and Meath, northern Co. Longford, and parts of Co. Sligo.[72] Byrne argues that they were originally based around the Longford area, and their territories in Kildare and Meath were a result of a push southwards: they seem to have been a powerful dynasty in the sixth century prior to the rise of Síl nÁedo Sláine and Clann Cholmáin.[73] The shifting territorial controls over the regions thus make the designations of Northern and Southern Uí Néill very complex. This is perhaps even further complicated by a theory proposed by Alibhe Mac Shamhráin that argues the Diarmait mac Cerbaill's genealogy was altered, and he was not Southern Uí Néill in origin. Mac Shamhráin notes that Diarmait's genealogy is a generation too short and that it is likely that his father was Cerball mac Fergus mac Conall rather than Fergus Cerrbél, which may

[67] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, pp. 120 – 131.
[68] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 144.
[69] Rawl B. 502 p. 166; the *Book of Leinster* has the Cenél nÉnnai from Énna mac Néill, but retains Cenél Loíguire from Énna mac Loíguire, see *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1467, 1486; Francis John Byrne, "A Note on Trim and Sletty," *Peritia* 3 (1984): 316 – 319.
[70] *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1530, 1536 – 1537, 1589
[71] *AU* s.a. 1011.3, 1011.4.
[72] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 20.
[73] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, pp. 90 – 91.

be an older tradition.[74] In addition, Diarmait was allegedly a descendant of Conall Cremthainne mac Néill, but Conall Cremthainne was possibly a double of Conall Gulban, the eponymous ancestor of Cenél Conaill.[75] What is interesting is that Diarmait's contemporaries St Columba and his cousin King Ainmere mac Sétnai, both of the Cenél Conaill, were the grandsons of Fergus mac Conall Gulban.[76] Thus, Mac Shamhráin argues that Diarmait mac Cerbaill was in fact a first cousin of Columba and Ainmere and thus was of the Northern Uí Néill.[77] In addition to this, he argues that Clann Cholmáin was a genealogical construct that was also based on the doubling of Diarmait's son Colmán Becc, who was allegedly the ancestor of Cáille Follamain.[78] This is not the only theory that suggests Diarmait's genealogy was a later contrivance, as Edel Bhreathnach has argued that Diarmait may have belonged to a north-midlands or north-eastern peoples that was eventually attached to the Uí Néill, but notes there is no evidence to support this speculation.[79] The genealogical reality of the early Uí Néill is unlikely to be unravelled because of the manipulations to the genealogies, but they demonstrate the complicated layers of the genealogies and efforts of kings and their genealogists to promote more prestigious and beneficial ancestry.

Some theories regarding the genealogical inventions are considerably more radical, with scholars like Brian Lacey arguing that Cenél nÉogain and Cenél Conaill were not "true" Uí Néill (meaning literal blood descendants from Niall Noígíallach) but rather Ulaid/Cruithin peoples who grafted themselves onto the Uí Néill in the eighth century to share in the Uí Néill prestige.[80] He follows from Mac Shamhráin's thesis that Diarmait mac Cerbaill was actually a descendant of Conall Gulban and thus argues the Síl nÁedo Sláine and Clann Cholmáin were also not "true" Uí Néill.[81] He postulates that the only "true" Uí Néill in the north was Cenél Coirpri, and in the south Cenél Loíguire and Cenél Fiachach.[82] This is a radical reinterpretation of the early Uí Néill and it does pose interesting implications for the genealogical contrivances but several scholars have criticised the

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[74] Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, "*Nebulae discutiuntur*? The emergence of Clann Cholmáin, sixth-eighth centuries," in Alfed P. Smyth (ed.), *Seanchas. Studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 83 – 97, here p. 94
[75] Mac Shamhráin, "The emergence of Clann Cholmáin," pp. 94 – 95.
[76] Mac Shamhráin, "The emergence of Clann Cholmáin," p. 95
[77] Mac Shamhráin, "The emergence of Clann Cholmáin," p. 95.
[78] Mac Shamhráin, "The emergence of Clann Cholmáin," pp. 89 – 91.
[79] Edel Bhreathnach, "*Níell cáich úa Néill nasctar géill*: The Political Context of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, pp. 49 – 68, here p. 57.
[80] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, pp. 155 – 157, 162 – 163.
[81] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 165.
[82] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, pp. 165 – 166.

evidentiary base and argument.[83] Cormac Bourke notes that Lacey's argument that Cenél nÉogain and Cenél Conaill were not Uí Néill is based on a reading in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* but that it is not supported by evidence from Adomnán elsewhere.[84] More specifically, it relates to how Adomnán refers to the relationship between the Cenél Conaill and St Columba (by kinship) versus how he refers to Comgall of Bangor and the Ulaid (according to the flesh) in regards to a battle between the two dynasties.[85] Lacey argues that this indicates that Adomnán did not consider Columba to be related by blood to the Uí Néill but rather was simply allied to them, but as Bourke notes this passage refers to a battle that involved Columba's cousin Domnall mac Áedo of the Cenél Conaill.[86] Thus, not only does Adomnán seem to refer to the Cenél Conaill as *nepotes Niall* (the Latin rendering of the Uí Néill), but that Columba was obviously related to them; he refers to the *nepotes Niall* as his kindred (*cognationes*) in the same passage.[87] Thus, while an interesting proposition, the contemporary evidence does not in fact support Lacey's argument.

The idea of uncovering the "true" Uí Néill and then taking apart the genealogical grafting and manipulation is a complex exercise, but much of the past scholarship remains bound up in the idea that amidst all of the fabrication there can be true blood-relationships uncovered. Lacey's argument, and previous scholarship, maintains the ultimate historicity of Niall Noígíallach. For example, T.M. Charles-Edwards' accepts that Niall was a historical figure, but not one of significant power, simply a king of a *túath*, which Lacey also repeats.[88] The major kindreds of the Uí Néill may well have fashioned a genealogical construct to attach themselves to Niall Noígíallach, but it does not follow that the kindreds that were ousted from power at an early stage like Cenél Fiachach, Cenél Coirpri, and Cenél Loíguire were "true" Uí Néill either. Scholarship has made *a priori*

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[83] Cormac Bourke, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms, AD 500 – 800* by Brian Lacey," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser., 65 (2006): 106 – 108; Benjamin Hudson, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms, AD 500 – 800* by Brian Lacey," *Speculum* 83:2 (2008): 453 – 454; Colmán Etchingham, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms, AD 500 – 800* by Brian Lacey," *Irish Historical Studies* 36:141 (2008): 100 – 102.
[84] Bourke, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*," 107 – 108.
[85] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, I.49 (Anderson & Anderson (eds), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 88 – 89); Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 151; Bourke, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*," 108.
[86] Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 151; Bourke, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*," 108.
[87] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, I.49 (Anderson & Anderson (eds), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 88 – 89); Bourke, "Review of *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*," 108.
[88] T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 441; Lacey, *Cenél Conaill and the Donegal Kingdoms*, p. 165.

assumptions about Niall's historicity and this has led to few attempts to understand the meaning of Niall and his role as a founding figure.

Much of our "knowledge" of Niall Noígíallach is informed by later saga texts like the eleventh-century *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin*, written well after the establishment of their power and likely represent a solidifying of their origin myths.[89] The relationship between the Uí Néill and the Connachta was elaborated in this text, which states that the Uí Néill were separated by the rest of the Connachta through different mothers. Niall was the son of Cairenn, an enslaved English princess while his half-brothers were the sons of Mongfind, who was their father Eochaid Mugmedóin's legal wife.[90] The tale is a propagandistic tale that retroactively explains the reason for the Uí Néill dominance over the Kingship of Tara and their considerable power over the other Connachta population groups. This tale is later fiction from the eleventh century and does not reflect the historical development of the Uí Néill or the Kingship of Tara. It is possible that part of the tale is based on an earlier story, as Gerard Murphy argues that a section of the tale can be found independently in MS Laud 610 amongst genealogical matter that he dates to the eighth century.[91] The section relates to an anecdote about Niall and his brothers who were placed in a smithy which was then burned to the ground: the items they chose to save were meant to prophesise their future.[92] Niall saves the smithy tools, anvil, and bellows which marked him for kingship, perhaps because these are the most valuable and heaviest objects within a smithy.[93] While objects like weapons may appear the more useful to save, the smith can only make more and thus contribute to strong warriors with proper implements. This excerpt does not indicate how early the rest of the tale is, and thus it cannot be used even to understand the myths about Niall for the time period this thesis covers. The role of Cairenn in the later saga may have more significance, which will be discussed in further detail in section 2.6.

Early sagas about Niall are not extant and were possibly superseded by tales like *Echta mac nEchach Muigmedóin*. An early reference to Niall is in the *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*, a

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[89] Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), "The Death of Crimthann son of Fidach, and the Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedóin," *Revue Celtique* 24 (1903): 172 – 203, 446; Amy C. Eichhorn-Mulligan, "The Anatomy of Power and the Miracle of Kingship: The Female Body of Sovereignty in a Medieval Irish Kingship Tale," *Speculum* 81:4 (2006): 1014 – 1054.
[90] Stokes, "The Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid," pp. 190 – 191.
[91] Gerard Murphy, *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland* (Dublin, 1955), pp. 48 – 49.
[92] Murphy, *Saga and Myth*, pp. 48 – 49.
[93] Kuno Meyer, "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 8 (1912): 291 – 338, here 304.

propagandistic king-list on the Kings of Tara possibly written during the reign of the Fínnachta Fledach (d. 695) or slightly later c. 720, King of Síl nÁedo Sláine and King of Tara, but it was still written several hundred years after his supposed *floruit*.[94] The text refers to various kings, legendary and historical, as visions seen by Conn Cétchathach, the eponymous ancestor of the Connachta.[95] Of Niall it says, "Níell will be celebrated, boar (?) of battle of boundaries (*Con- Níell -nóïfither, neirp catho crích*)."[96] This makes no reference to his epithet Noígíallach but it does indicate he was a warrior, and perhaps the reference to boundaries is meant to indicate conquest of land. Another early reference is in the late seventh-century text *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, a saga concerned with the origins of the Éoganachta but poised their ancestor Conall Corc as a foil to Niall Noígíallach:

> "I n-aimsir Neill maic Echach doluid Corc taris. Is and dofornic Angubai Már oc Temair .i. a mac ind rig romarbsat inna géill .i. Corco Daulai. Crescus Corc ni Niall di setaib ⁊ dobert hi tirib Muman Grigga ⁊ Dula ⁊ Mainne, diata Gregraighi ⁊ Corco Daelai ⁊ Muinnige."

> "In the time of Niall mac Echach, Corc came across [the sea]. Then the great lamentation took place (?) at Tara concerning the king's son whom the hostages, namely the Corco Daulai, had killed. With chattels Corc ransomed them from Niall and established in the territories of Munster Grigga and Dula and Mainne of whom are [descended] the Gregraighi and the Corco Daelai and the Muinnige.[97]

This episode seems to concern Niall's taking of hostages belonging to a clan that killed his son, whom Corc freed and then those hostages had lands established in Munster.[98] According to David Sproule, this presents Corc as the "mirror image" to Niall, the progenitor who dominated the

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[94] Bhreathnach, "The Political Context of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," pp. 62 – 63.
[95] Kevin Murray, "The Manuscript Tradition of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, pp. 69 – 72, here p. 71.
[96] Edel Bhreathnach and Kevin Murray, "*Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*: Edition," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, pp. 73 – 94, here 82 – 83.
[97] For the Irish edition, see Kuno Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," in O.J. Bergin, R.I. Best, Kuno Meyer, J.G. O'Keeffe (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 3 (1910), pp. 57 – 63, here p. 58; for the translation, see Vernam Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," *PMLA* 62:4 (1947): 887 – 909, here 895. The text is preserved only in the British Library MS Laud 610 amidst genealogical matter.
[98] Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," p. 895 n. 72.

south while Niall dominated the north.[99] More specifically, Corc is depicted as freeing hostages while Niall is one who takes hostages.[100] This implies that Niall was already known as a hostage-taker by the late seventh century. Hostage taking was an important aspect to enforcing royal power in early medieval Ireland. Jaski notes that it was imperative for kings to hold hostages, as it was emblematic of their political and military power over lesser kings and subject peoples.[101] Several references in the *Annals of Ulster* point to kings taking hostages after invasion victories over other peoples.[102] Thus, Niall's reputation as a man who takes hostages is indicative of his power as a king. In addition, if a saga text from a rival dynasty is referencing Niall like this, then it is likely Niall's reputation was already well-founded and his descendants (real or not) had already established their power over the Kingship of Tara, the midlands, and possibly the north also.

We have no early sources to explain the nine hostages referenced in Niall's epithet. F.J. Byrne suggested it was in reference to the Airgíalla ('hostage-givers'), another Connacht people who were subject to the Uí Néill but the Airgíalla were a federation of several different peoples and a genealogical link was created around the late seventh or early-eighth century.[103] It is possible that the Airgíalla name was used to reference Niall Noígíallach, but it is unlikely that Niall was so named because of the Uí Néill relationship with this other group. Thus, our early knowledge of how Niall's identity and importance coalesced is difficult to determine due to the later sources obscuring any early developments. Bhreathnach makes an interesting suggestion that the name Niall was a royal title, "the Irish equivalent of Caesar" and possessing such a title would confer legitimacy that was based on a relationship to antiquity.[104] This is also an interesting suggestion although the only early medieval evidence for the possible use of Niall as a title is from one line in *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*.[105] Thus, it is difficult to see how widely this applied and if Niall was truly a title in early medieval Ireland.

Other attempts to understand the genesis of Niall Noígíallach have turned to even more incidental evidence. For example, F.J. Byrne accepted uncritically that Niall was a historical figure,

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[99] David Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative in the Stories about Corc of Cashel," *Ériu* 36 (1985): 11 – 28, here 11.
[100] Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 15.
[101] Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, pp. 102 – 104.
[102] *AU* s.a. 721.8, 738.9, 779.10.
[103] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 73; Edel Bhreathnach, "*The Airgíalla Charter Poem*: The Political Context," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, pp. 95 – 99, here pp. 96 – 97.
[104] Bhreathnach, "The Political Context of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," pp. 65 – 68.
[105] Bhreathnach, "The Political Context of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," p. 66.

but he does note similarities between Niall and another legendary figure named Nia Noí nGráinne (Nia of the Nine Grains), who was a legendary hero associated with the Luigne and Gailenga peoples in North Connacht.[106] These peoples were ultimately subject to the Uí Néill, and Byrne postulates that the "ascendant Connachta may have taken over ancient hero-myths from the traditions of their subject tribes."[107] Ó Corráin discusses this without reference to Byrne's theory but notes the relationship between Cormac mac Airt (the grandson of Conn Cétchathach and another legendary ancestor of the Connachta) and the Gailenga and Luigne, with at least one saga stating that Cormac and Nia were uterine brothers.[108] Ó Corráin argues that this relationship between Cormac and Nia points to a stratum in the texts that dates to Uí Néill and these North Connacht peoples were more equal in status, prior to the seventh century.[109] There are other pieces of texts that point to an earlier origin for the Luigne and Gailenga that do not involve Cormac mac Airt but there are certain parallels in early legendary Luigne genealogies with Uí Néill legendary genealogies that Ó Corráin suggests that the Uí Néill were possibly very closely associated with the Luigne and Gailenga and were perhaps offshoots from these peoples.[110] Perhaps then Niall was a creation of a founding figure and ancestor based on earlier tales, but made in order to differentiate themselves from their more humble origins and to establish an ethnogenesis for what were likely a disparate group of peoples that eventually coalesced into the Uí Néill of the historical period. While this is a speculative hypothesis, the relationship between these early Connacht peoples and the Uí Néill through their saga texts presents interesting possibilities for the continued changing nature of the genealogies and legendary ancestors' origin stories and how they relate to changing politics in early medieval Ireland.

These genealogical manipulations demonstrate the fluid nature of origin stories in the early medieval period as they relate to rising or falling fortunes of various groups. While it is difficult to determine if Niall was based on a real historical king whose "real" career was eclipsed by the later myths about him or if he was entirely a legendary construction that was representative of non-biological group formation will likely never be answered. The focus of past scholarship to determine

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[106] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, pp. 68, 71.
[107] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 68.
[108] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," in D. Ellis Evans, John G. Griffith and E.M. Jope (eds), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies, held at Oxford, from 10th to 15th July, 1983* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 141 – 158, here pp. 147 – 148.
[109] Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," p. 150.
[110] Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," p. 151.

which Uí Néill groups were “real” versus which ones were simply attached at a later date ultimately miss the point in establishing these types of legendary figures and the roles they serve as lending prestige to their “descendants”. The early myths of Niall are difficult to understand, but he was evidently seen as a powerful ruler, emphasised through powerful actions like taking hostages. In addition, the early associations with the Kingship of Tara and sovereignty in the *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig* demonstrate that he was seen as a sacral king who was prophesied to rule at Tara by his own legendary ancestor Conn. This in turn underscores the sacrality of other Uí Néill kings of Tara. Thus, having powerful legendary ancestors, specifically kings whose rule in the distant past over symbolically important kingship sites like Tara were key to legitimising rule in early medieval Ireland. The Uí Néill are a useful model for discussing legendary ancestors in the genealogies because they were a prominent and powerful dynasty in early medieval Ireland. They are only one example of the importance of paternal ancestry, which will be contrasted in the next section, in which the role of female ancestors will be examined in detail, and their role in legitimising or delegitimising their descendants from kingship will be analysed.

2.3 Women in the Irish Genealogies

Genealogical sources throughout the early medieval period, both in the insular world and on the Continent, tend to not prioritise women to any extent. As we will see below, women are invisible in the early medieval English genealogies and their role is only implicitly suggested through the links between various lines. The various continental genealogies are brief, and only one contains women the genealogy of the Ostrogoth where women like Queen Amalasuintha and her daughter Matasuentha are mentioned.[111] Other continental genealogies like those of the Lombards are akin the English genealogies in that they only refer to patrilineal lines.[112] Perhaps as a result of the breadth of the Irish genealogical corpus, there are more women to be found in the genealogies, although they are still vastly outnumbered by men. For instance, there is a passage in the *Book of Leinster* regarding important seventh-century women of the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty of Leinster that Margaret E. Dobbs identified.[113] Each woman in the list is identified by their sons, husbands, and fathers, but the impetus for compiling such a list is unknown.[114] Dobbs argues that it was written in connection with one of the women, Concheann, the wife of Murchad mac Brain Mut (d. 727) in that

[111] Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, transl. Charles C. Mierow (Princeton, 1915), p. 25; Pohl, “Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective,” pp. 236 – 237.
[112] Friedrich Bluhme ed., *Edictus Langobardorum*, in MGH LL 4.1 (Hannover, 1868), pp. 2 – 3.
[113] Margaret E. Dobbs, “Women of the Ui Dúnlainge of Leinster,” *The Irish Genealogist* 1:7 (1940): 196 – 206.
[114] Dobbs, “Women of the Ui Dúnlainge,” pp. 196 – 201.

the list focusses on her ancestors and the female ancestors of her husband.[115] The list of women may have been written in the mid-eighth century, and was possibly subsequently updated in the ninth century.[116] In addition, famous women are often recorded in the genealogies, although they are present likely because of their famous fathers, husbands, and sons. A prime example of this would be Sadb, the daughter of the legendary figure and eponymous ancestor of the Connachta, Conn Cétchathach who was the wife of Ailill Aulum, legendary ancestor of the Éoganachta.[117] She is important because she is the daughter of a legendary king and the wife of another, while her descendants were also legendary. Her role in the genealogies is to connect and situate the Éoganachta as subject to the Connachta.

The role of women in the genealogies has not been examined thoroughly in the scholarship, which is to a degree unsurprising given the dearth of scholarship on the subject. Some scholars have been dismissive of their role, and thus their significance has rarely been highlighted. One of the first mentions of women in the genealogies was in John Mac Neill's 1911 article "Early Irish Population Groups: Their Nomenclature, Classification, and Chronology," in which he stated that there were no female eponyms in the "documentary period," and those that existed were of "religious, not a genealogical import."[118] He noted that a few dynastic names were feminine, such as Uí Bairrche and Uí Brigte.[119] Dobbs' aforementioned article on the Uí Dunlainge was one of the earliest and few studies to discuss women in the genealogies, but her analysis and discussion of the passage is brief, and thus does not provide much insight into these women. The only dedicated lengthy study of women in the genealogies is F.J. Byrne's 1995 article "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," in which he examined the presence of the female gentilic *dercu* ("daughter of") and its implications for women in the genealogies.[120] He made note that several scribes and copyists may have confused *dercu* with a male name as the word became obsolete as a gentilic early on, and thus there is the implication

[115] Dobbs, "Women of the Ui Dúnlainge," pp. 202 – 206.
[116] Dobbs, "Women of the Ui Dúnlainge," pp. 203 – 206.
[117] *Book of Leinster*, p. 1432.
[118] John Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population Groups: Their Nomenclature, Classification, and Chronology," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 29 (1911/1912): 59 – 144; here 103.
[119] John Mac Neill notes that Bairrche may have been manipulated in the genealogies, as the form is feminine, but the eponymous ancestor is a man, implying perhaps that the gender of the ancestor was altered. See Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population-Groups," 82 – 83; see also Eoin [John] Mac Neill, "The Earliest Lives of St Patrick," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Sixth Series, 18:1 (1928): 1 – 21, here 2, n. 2.
[120] F.J. Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," *Éigse* 28 (1995): 42 – 70.

that there are more women in the genealogies who are hidden as men through scribal errors.[121] In addition, he noted several instances of female dynastic heads or families named after women or at the very least had female forms: Uí Derco Chein, Síl Meldae, Síl nAngsae, and Síl Creide were among those he named.[122] This article is a very well-researched examination of women in the genealogies and their positions as eponymous ancestors in some cases. He also implies that female ancestors may have impacted the eligibility of these lines for kingship, but he does not make any concrete theories on this. Despite the importance of this article, it seems to have largely escaped notice of other academics.[123] Moreover, Byrne did not assess every female eponymous ancestor, and his focus was on identifying these lines rather than analysing their ideological implications for kingship.

There is one line with a female eponymous ancestor that has received more analysis than the rest, although they were not discussed in Byrne's article. The Uí Brigte were a sub-family of the Déisi Muman, a population group located in what is now Co. Waterford and Co. Tipperary.[124] This genealogy has been discussed by a few scholars, but rarely at length. Mac Neill's brief reference was likely the first, but the genealogy and their eponymous ancestor has been discussed by Hubert Butler in 1986 and more recently by Ailbe Mac Shamhráin in 1996 and David E Thornton in 2003, who all suggest this was evidence of a St Brigit cult among the Déisi.[125] Ó Corráin simply states that they were a rival leading family of the Déisi along with the Uí Briúin, and Edel Bhreathnach states that they were "probably linked to [a female deity]."[126] While these arguments are fascinating for the possible implications of claiming descent from a notable female virgin saint or a female deity, none of these studies dedicated a great deal of time or space to specifically analysing the primary

[121] For instance, a woman *Dercu Chon* "daughter of Conn" became *Oengusa Darcon* in a genealogical passage in Rawl. B 502. See Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 42, 67.
[122] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 45 – 47, 54 – 56.
[123] I have found few references to this article, and largely they only referred to the linguistic aspect that Byrne discusses or incidental information within his article. See for instance Thomas Owen Clancy, "Philosopher-King: Nechtan mac Der-Ilei," *The Scottish Historical Review* 83:216 (2004): 125 – 149; here 128; Edel Bhreathnach, "Temoria: Caput Scotorum?" *Ériu* 47 (1996): 67 – 88; here 72, 86; T.M. Charles-Edwards notes that Byrne's article was a significant contribution but only mentioned the female gentilic briefly. See T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 96.
[124] David E. Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies. Studies in the Political History of Early Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Oxford, 2003), p. 121 – 122.
[125] Hubert Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk," *Decies: Old Waterford Society* 31 (1986): 26 – 30; here 29; Ailbe Séamus Mac Shamhráin, *Church and Polity in Pre-Norman Ireland: The Case of Glendalough* (Maynooth, 1996), p. 54; Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 134.
[126] Ó Corráin, "The Irish Genealogical Tradition," 191; Edel Bhreathnach, "Clinging to Power: The Role of Vassal Peoples in Early Ireland," in Michael Ann Bevivino, Edel Bhreathnach, and Linda Shine (eds), *Discovery Programme Reports 9: A Research Miscellany* (Dublin, 2018), pp. 5 – 18, here p. 10.

sources or the past historiography of the Uí Brigte in great detail. Moreover, if this conclusion is true, then it holds several implications for the interpretation and use of genealogies. Thus, this genealogy and the scholarship surrounding it will be reassessed and contextualised within Byrne's discussion of other female eponymous ancestors as a case study for women and their relationship with kingship as it is depicted in the genealogical material.

The reason for focussing on this kin-group is two-fold: while they have received more analysis than other groups with eponymous female ancestors, the primary evidence has not been adequately scrutinised within the historiography. Moreover, the scholarship on women in medieval Ireland has been problematic to say the least; Elva Johnston noted that romanticisation of the Celts was detrimental to the study of Irish women, but that it has improved of late.[127] Discussions of women and their relationship to kingship has been examined from the perspective of the sovereignty goddess for several decades now.[128] The lack of studies on women in the Irish genealogies demonstrates that there remain areas of discussion for the role of gender in kingship. Analysing the role of women in the legitimisation of kingship will demonstrate many implications for societal status and structure and inheritance that have not been sufficiently discussed in the historiography.

2.4 Uí Brigte: A Reassessment of the Genealogies

As previously stated, the Uí Brigte were a part of the Déisi Muman peoples. The Déisi are a complicated population group in early medieval Ireland, with contradictory origins. Their group name is derived from the Old Irish *deis* meaning vassal, and thus they fall into wider group of subject peoples who are also called *aithechthúatha* ("rent-paying people") and *senchineóil* ("old kin-groups").[129] There were several separate sub-groups of the Déisi: the Déisi Muman, Déisi Temro/Breg, and In Déis Becc, which eventually split into the Déis Deiscirt and the Déis Tuiascirt (who would then later become the Dál Cais).[130] The saga text *Indarba na nDéisi* details their

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[127] Elva Johnston, "Powerful Women or Patriarchal Weapons? Two Medieval Irish Saints," *Peritia* 15 (2001), 302 – 310; here 302 – 303.

[128] Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, "Women in Early Irish Myths and Sagas," *The Crane Bag* 4:1 (1980): 12 – 19; Proinsias Mac Cana, "Women in Irish Mythology," *The Crane Bag* 4:1 (1980): 7 – 11; Máire Herbert, "Goddess and King: The Sacred Marriage in Early Ireland," in Louise Olga Fradenburg (ed.), *Cosmos: The Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, Volume 7: Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 264 – 275; Gregory Toner, "Macha and the Invention of Myth," *Ériu* 60 (2010): 81 – 109.

[129] Bhreathnach, "The Role of Vassal Peoples in Early Ireland," p. 5; Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, Genealogies*, pp. 121 – 122.

[130] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, pp. 121

expulsion from Tara to Leinster, Munster, and Dyfed in Wales and while it is a difficult and contradictory text, it may hold some important historical details of these peoples.[131] The different groups of the Déisi were unlikely to be related in truth, but *Indarba na nDéisi* seems to have been written to establish an ancient link between the Déisi Muman and the Déisi Breg.[132] In the tale, the lands were secured by Eithne Uathach, the wife of the Éoganachta king Óengus mac Nad Froích, as her mother was Déisi, and the text lists the many septs of the Déisi and where they settled.[133] The text has several internal problems, although it is useful for comparison with the Déisi genealogical tracts. The text is confused whether the Déisi Muman were a dynastic group, or a group linked through their vassal status. For example, the text states that the Déisi are ruled by the descendants of Fiachu Suidge (Dál Fiatach), and that they were not the same.[134] The Déisi Muman refers to both their kings who were linked through descent and the peoples they ruled, who were various groups from across Ireland.[135] For the purposes of this chapter, the Déisi Muman refers to the entire group, including the Dál Fiatach. Another valuable source for the Déisi Muman is the twelfth-century hagiography *Vita Sancti Declani*, regarding St Declan who was of the Déisi, which detailed some of their settlement as well, although the text is late and thus the historicity of the account is unknown.[136] The texts on the Uí Brigte themselves are few and are restricted to the genealogies and a brief mention in *Indarba na nDéisi*, which will be discussed below.

There are two conflicting versions of the Úi Brigte genealogy, one of which is longer and more complete. The longer and likely earlier version, called the L-group by Thornton, is present in several MSS: TCD MS 1298, LL, BB, Lec., and the Book of Uí Maine.[137] The version from MS 1298 is the best witness and the most complete, and will be used for this discussion:

> "NUNC HUI BRIGTE. Flaind mac Ruithniuil meic Conaing meic Marcan meic Cormaic meic Aeda meic Furtceirnd meic Fiarlathi meic Mane meic Ailella meic Rossa meic Anflaithi meic Eogan meic Bricc.

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[131] See Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 101 – 135; for the date of the text, see Heinrich Zimmer, *Nennius Vindicatus. Über Entstehung, Geschichte und Quellen der Historia Brittonum* (Berlin, 1893): p. 88; Kuno Meyer, "Gauls in Ireland," *Ériu* 4 (1910): 208.
[132] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, pp. 121 – 122.
[133] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 114 – 117.
[134] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 122 – 123.
[135] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 105 – 135.
[136] For the Latin text, see Charles Plummer, ed., *Vita sancti Declani episcopi de Ard Mor*, in *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae, partim hactenus ineditae*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1910), pp. 32 – 59; Thorton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 122 – 123.
[137] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies and Genealogies*, p. 127.

Cethri meic Brigti ingine Dubthach do Ultaib: Ros, Feidlimid, Clar a quo Ui Clar. Is e a carnd fuil i nEtairb iniu.

Cormac mac Coibdenaig meic Duib Cruindi meic Mail Udir meic Cilleni meic Cormaic meic Endai meic Coelboth meic Thoecthic meic Ailella.

.iii. familie Hua mBrigte: Aui Thigernach.

Fer De Lithe mac Fitemael meic Forondain meic Brocain meic Fiachnae meic Fergusa meic Tigernaig.

.iiii. meic Tigernaig: Ferhus, Fuitgern, Cremtand, Fiachnae.

Fiachnae mac Fidgnaeg meic Tommeni meic Fiachnae meic Eugain meic Furgern meic Thigernaig.

Huc usque Hui Brigte.[138]

Now Uí Brigte. Flann son of Ruithniul son of Conaing son of Marcan son of Cormac son of Aed son of Foirtchern son of Fiarlath son of Mane son of Ailill son of Ross son of Anflath son of Eogan son of Brecc.

The four sons of Brigit daughter of Dubthach of the Ulaid: Ros, Fedlimid, Clar of the Uí Clar. This is his cairn which is today in Etarba.[139]

Cormac son of Cobdenach son of Dub Crund son of Mal Udir son of Cillen son of Cormac son of Enda son of Coelboth son of Toicthech son of Ailill.

Three families from Uí Brigte: Uí Thigernach

The Man of Two Halves [?] son of Fitemael son of Forondan son of Broccan son of Fiachna son of Fergus son of Tigernach.[140]

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[138] Trinity College Library, Dublin, MS 1298, col. 82a13. LL provides a slightly different reading: "Fland mc Rothnuil mc Conaing mc Marcain mc Cormaic mc Aeda mc Fuirguirn mc Iarlathe mc Mane mc Ailella mc Rosa mc Anblothi mc Eogain mc Bricc. Uii mc Brigti ingine Dubthach de Ultaib, Irruis, Fedlimid, Clar a quo hui Chlare, issed a charn fil in Etarba iniu. Cormac mc Fomtenaig [in margin Foidenaig] mc Duib Cruinn mc Maeluidir mc Cilleni mc Cormaic mc Aennai mc Caelboth mc Thoicthig mc Ailella. Fer Da Lethi mc Fetamail mc Forannain mc Brocain mc Fiachnai mc Fergusa mc Tigernaig. Cethri mc Tigernaig .i. Fergus, Fuitgern, Fiachna, Cremthann," see *LL*, f. 328 a – b; I have consulted the edited edition, although my reading differs slightly from theirs. See *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1428 – 1429.

[139] I discuss this line below in more detail, see section 4.2.

[140] "Fer Da Lithe" is elsewhere as Fer Da Lethe, see LL f. 328a. For the translation, see eDil s.v. fíal; Fer Dá Lethe was also the second name for Berchán of Clúain Sosta in Co. Offaly, and Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's seventeenth-century *Martyrology of Donegal* notes that he was the descendant of Cairbre Rigfota, who has been linked with Dál Riata. The name Fer Dá Lethe was explained as representing half the saint's life in Scotland, the other in Ireland. See Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, *The Martyrology of Donegal. A Calendar of the Saints of Ireland*, transl. John

Four sons of Tigernach: Fergus, Foirtchern, Crimthann, Fiachna
Fiachna son of Fidgnaeg son of Tommen son of Fiachna son of Eogan
son of Foirtchern son of Tigernach.
Here thus is Uí Brigte"[141]

What is interesting about this passage is that while they are a Déisi sept that claim descent ultimately from Eogan mac Bricc (one of the leaders of the Déisi in *Indaba na nDéisi*), they are named after a female ancestor, Brigit, who was a member of the Ulaid. It is not necessarily out of the ordinary that an Ulaid line would be considered Déisi, as *Indarba na nDéisi* lists groups from all over Ireland that belong to different groups as Déisi.[142] It is initially unclear where Brigit fits into the genealogical scheme, but the genealogy lists Ross son of Anflath, and then later states he was one of Brigit's sons thus she must have been the wife of Anflath. *Indarba na nDéisi* corroborates this, as the text states she was the wife of Anflaith mac Eogain.[143] The line descending from Ailill mac Rosa to Cormac mac Coibdenaig must be relating a split in the line from Ross, but it is unclear how the rest of the lines in the passage fit into the wider scheme. The schema of the numbers of generations, either thirteen or fourteen, are consistent with other (and more well-known) Déisi Muman groups.[144] While the other Déisi Muman kindreds trace their genealogies back to Art Corp, while the Uí Brigte are thirteen or fourteen generations from Brecc, this seems to be a doctoring of the genealogies to make them fit together. The better-known and more historically successful Déisi lines end with individuals whose obits are from the mid-eighth century.[145] This suggests some doctoring of the genealogies in order to make them fit together chronologically, as well as to be mirroring the Biblical genealogies, specifically that of Jesus, whose genealogies (of which there are two) are separated into sections of fourteen, otherwise known as tesseradecads.[146] The similarities between the Irish and Biblical genealogies has been noted in the past, primarily by Ó Corráin, who

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O'Donovan, ed. James Henthorn Todd and William Reeves (Dublin, 1864), pp. 326 – 327. It is unlikely that this Fer Da Lithe is Berchán, although the reason why this unique epithet would be given to two different men.

[141] The translation and any errors here are my own.

[142] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," pp. 122 – 134.

[143] Anflath is also referred to in the texts as Anblath or Anblomath, the former being a very early form of the name. See TCD 1298 col. 84a16. Ó Corráin stated that this is the pre-syncope form of the name, and thus cannot be later than the middle of the seventh century. See Ó Corráin, "The Irish Genealogical Tradition," 191.

[144] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies and Genealogies*, p. 128. The better-known Déisi Muman kindreds

[145] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies and Genealogies*, p. 127.

[146] References to this term in English scholarship are rare. See Frederick William Farrar (ed. and transl.), *The Gospel According to St. Luke: With Maps, Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: 1890), p. 371. The word itself is derivative from the Ancient Greek word for fourteen, *τεσσᾰρεσκαίδεκᾰ*.

argued that the Irish genealogies were based upon those in the Bible.[147] While I think that the possibility that an oral genealogical tradition may well have existed prior to the introduction of Latin to Ireland, the tesseradecads is a theme seen in royal genealogies elsewhere.

The genealogy for Tigernach is difficult to interpret as they have no discernable links to the wider genealogy. Thornton postulates that Tigernach was a second husband of Brigit, and that Fergus, Foirtchern, Crimthann, and Fiachna were Brigit's other sons.[148] This interpretation is based on the *Book of Leinster* reading which states that Brigit had seven sons rather than four. The variant reading of the different numbers of sons may be a scribal error, as the Roman numeral for four was often represented as iiii but was frequently confused for the numeral for seven, uii.[149] TCD 1298 preserves generally older material than the *Book of Leinster* and perhaps it represents an older and perhaps more accurate exemplar, although it is impossible to know if this is the case. If Tigernach was Brigit's second husband, it remains strange that her second family would still be under the Déisi Muman, unless Tigernach was of the Déisi but his own ancestors are not listed. If we take this to be true, these two families would be under a dynasty but linked by a woman who was not linked to them through descent. If Tigernach was the second husband of Brigit, then there are two lines from different paternal ancestors that are linked under a dynastic heading with a female eponymous ancestor, which is very unusual and unique. I argue that it is more likely Tigernach was Brigit's fourth son missing from the initial list with the other three, as the line was named after him like the other lines were named after Brigit's other sons. This is further implied with the language of the genealogy which states that Uí Thigernaig was of three families from Uí Brigte, and while this genealogy is confusingly worded, I argue that the other two are the Uí Clar and the genealogy from Ross listed before Tigernach's descendants. The one son Fedlimid does not have any descendants listed, and thus there were three families branching from Brigit.

The second version of the Déisi genealogy is found in the *Great Book of Lecan* and Rawl. B 502. The *Lecan* version is more complete provides more information, and is as follows:

> "Ceithri meic Anbflaith meic Eogain meic Bricc meic Art Chuirb meic Fiachrach ocus Brigiti ingine Celtchair meic Uitheochair de Ultaib otait

[147] Ó Corráin, "Creating the Past," 201 – 206.
[148] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 138 – 139.
[149] These types of scribal errors have been identified in the scholarship for over a century. See George Hempl's discussion of the Old English Bede: George Hempl, "The Misrendering of Numerals, Particularly in the Old-English Version of Bede's History," *Modern Language Notes* 11:7 (1896): 201 – 202.

> Hui Brigdi na nDessi isin Rosa otait hui Rosa la Hibargleand ocus Feidlimid ocus Clar a quo Hui Clara ocus as e acharn fil an odarba cona sil ann (?).
>
> "Four sons of Anflath son of Eogan son of Brecc son of Art Corp son of Fiachrach and Brigit daughter of Celtchair son of Uithechair of Ulster from whom exists the Uí Brigti of the Déisi that is Ross from whom exists the Uí Rossa in Ibarglenn and Feidlimid and Clar from whom comes the Uí Clar and where his (?) family grave in Odarb is with the seed thus (?)."[150]

This version also states that she had four sons, although it only listed the three as in the former version of the genealogy. It is both shorter and has several differences with the genealogy in TCD 1298: namely that her father is listed as a certain Celtchair mac Uithechair of Ulster and that her son Ross's descendants lived on in a place known as Ibarglenn. Celtchair was a legendary warrior in the Ulster cycle, who was often depicted as grey and ugly and humbly dressed.[151] This version of the genealogy seems to potentially be a confused version of Celtchair's genealogy. His wife in the Ulster cycle was the legendary Brig Brethach (Brig of the Judgements), named in the tale *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*, although it is unknown if this text dates to the early medieval period.[152] Perhaps this was meant to be a more illustrious lingeage for Brigit, but as Margaret E. Dobbs noted, none of Celtchair's descendants held any power and were often seen as vassal peoples, with no notable kings as descendants.[153] The *Indarba na nDéisi* lists one of the septs, the Semni of Co. Waterford, as being his descendants from his grandson Sem, but the text makes no connection between them and Brigit.[154] There are also several saints who were said to be his descendants: Finnan of Clonard, Ailbe of Emly, Mo-Chuaroc, and Coeman mac Tacain.[155] This genealogy serves to link Brigit and the Uí Brigte more with her Ulster background than the Déisi, and while Celtchair's descendants do not seem to have been politically significant, besides a few saints who were well-

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[150] Lec., f. 100v, col. 3. Transcription and translation and any errors are my own.
[151] Margaret C. Dobbs (= Maighred Ní C. Dobbs), *Side-lights on the Táin Age and Other Studies* (Dundalk, 1917), p. 31
[152] For the text and translation, see Meyer, ed. and transl., *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, pp. 24 – 31; I have yet to find a discussion of the date, but Meyer noted that its earliest copy, although in a fragmentary state, exists in the *Book of Leinster*, see Meyer, *Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, p. vi.
[153] Dobbs, *Side-lights on the Táin* Age, pp. 36 – 38.
[154] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 122 – 123.
[155] *The Book of Leinster*, pp. 1445, 1148 – 1449, 1544, 1548, 1550; Rawl. B. 502, f. 71v, 76v.

known, it situates her within Ulster legend. Whether it is this genealogy or the one in *Indarba na nDéisi* and the L-group that are accurate is difficult to determine, but the L-group seems more complete and better attested in the source material.

The version of the Uí Brigte in Rawl. B 502 is very short and is not under the Déisi genealogies at all but rather the Uí Fairchelláin (an Osraige kin-group) and simply reads:

> "Dá ingen Celtchair .i. Brigit dia tát Úi Brigtén na n-Déissi ocus Ném ben Conganchnis meic Dedaid. Is dia chlann Corcraige ocus Bentraige ocus Gabraige ocus Cuachraige .i. Conall Glas ocus Buachall ocus Corc, tri mc Coemgin Conganchnis m Dedaid. Tri h-ingena Celtchair a tri mathri .i. Bil ocus Mac Daill ocus Scathdercc. Anga dano ingen Celtchair ocus ingen Daroma ingene Conchubair mathair Taiccthich ocus Donnain da mc Ennae mc Setnae. Do Sil Fir Mara mc Conchobuir ata sede co derb. Two daughters of Celtchair that is Brigit from whom comes [?] the Uí Brigtén of the Déisi and Ném the wife of Conganchnis son of Dedad. From her are the descendants of the Corcraige and Bentraige and Gabraige and Cuachraige, that is, Conall Glas and Buachall and Corc, three sons of Coemgin Conganchnis son of Dedaid. Three daughters of Celtchair who were three mothers, that is, Bil and Mac Daill and Scathdercc. Anga also a daughter of Celtchair and daughter of Daroma daughter of Conchobair, mother of Taiccthich and Doinnan, two sons of Enna son of Setna. Of the Sil Fir Mara son of Conchobhair were his in truth [?]."[156]

Like the passage in Lec., once again the legendary figure Celtchair is named as the father of Brigit of the Déisi. In addition, the number of daughters listed here is curious and perhaps it is linked to his descendants being excluded from kingship, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The differences between fathers of Brigit of the Uí Brigti are not uncommon as genealogical confusions appear throughout the corpus due to both deliberate padding and deleting of names as well as genuine errors. No attempt has been made to identify the Dubthach in the LL, TCD 1298, and

[156] O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, p. 116; Rawlinson B. 502, f. 71v. Translation and errors are my own.

Indarba na nDéisi, likely because Brigit of the Déisi has simply been viewed as a double of St Brigit. Perhaps he is meant to be Dubthach Dóeltenga mac Lugaid, another Ulster Cycle hero whose descendants the Corco Óche where exiled from Ulster and settled in Munster.[157] This is speculative, but Dubthach is another Ulster hero whose descendants never came into power, and the Corco Óche were also among the Déisi peoples listed in *Indarba na nDéisi*.[158] It is perhaps impossible to determine which genealogy is "true", or rather, which is the older tradition. Nevertheless, the genealogies assert Brigit's membership in the Ulaid and perhaps the genealogies in Lec. and Rawl. B 502 wanted to provide her with a more famous ancestor that would tie her to other female progenitors.

References to the Ulaid continue in another tract from TCD MS 1298, dating to sometime in the mid-seventh century or the early eighth century, which enumerates several families from Munster and Leinster, such as the Déisi as well as others who seem to have migrated there. Brigit's husband Anflath (the text reads Anblamath) is mentioned without reference to his descendants, but reads "Bruirige .l. Broenige mac rig Cruthentuathe dam-bert Anblamath mac Eogan" which can be translated to "Bruirige from Broenige son of the king of the Cruithin peoples is brought by Anblamath son of Eogan (or to whom Anblamath son of Eogan was brought)."[159] This seems to be a slightly earlier or alternate telling of a section from *Indarba na nDéisi* which has "fifty men of the sons of Fedlimid Brurir of which are the Brurige" and further on "Brurige from Bruru, son of Artharu, king of the [Cruthni]."[160] While the passage does not mention Brigit, Anflath's link to the Cruithin, who ultimately became known as the Ulaid, suggests that the Déisi relationship with the Ulaid was important and thus reiterated with the Uí Brigte genealogy. Thornton is sceptical of the Uí Brigte genealogies, arguing they were grafted to the other Déisi genealogies at a later stage because of

[157] For his appearance in the Ulster cycle, see William M. Hennessy (ed. and transl.), *Mesca Ulad or The Intoxication of the Ultonians* (Dublin, 1889), p. 39; For a discussion of him and his descendants the Corco Óche, see Eóin [=John] Mac Néill, "The Mythology of Lough Neagh," *Béaloideas* 2:2 (1929): 115 – 121, here 116. For the genealogical text, see Meyer, "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," 307 – 309.
[158] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," 135
[159] Translation my own, with the alternate text supplied by Sharon Arbuthnot via pers. comm, 28 Nov 2018; For the Irish text, see Dobbs, "Miscellany from H.2.7 (T.C.D.)," 307.
[160] Meyer, "Explusion of the Dessi," 124 – 125, 134 – 135. Meyer translated Cruithni as Picts, but the Cruithni have been equated with the Ulaid in Ireland. See T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 54 – 55; the Pictish king-list has a "Cruithne" as the ancestor of the Picts, which Nicholas Evans states was the Gaelic word for Pict, but that the Picts and the Irish Cruithin are two different peoples. See Nicholas Evans, "Ideology, Literacy and Matriliny: Approaches to Medieval Texts on the Pictish Past," in S.T. Driscoll, J. Geddes, & M.A. Hall (eds), *Pictish Progress: New Studies on Northern Britain in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 45 – 65, here pp. 49, 52 – 54, 56 – 57.

their "confused nature", claiming that their ancestor Brigit was "evidently some sort of doublet for St Brigit of Kildare."[161] The supposed religious significance of Brigit of the Déisi has been stated by most of the scholars who have discussed the Uí Brigte. While this is an attractive theory, it must be re-examined with respect to the above analysis. The only medieval evidence that I have located that ties St Brigit to the Déisi, but to my knowledge has not been cited by past scholars, is found in two versions of the ninth-century *Félire Óengusso*, or the *Martyrology of Óengus* (henceforth *FO*).[162] Under January 31 is the following entry:

> "…benait co mBríg romóir barr find for slúaig enair
>
> Brig .i. virgo cum eis i nDesib (Muman) ata Brig i fail Lismoir Mochuta, nó i Cairpri ua Ciarda i tuiascirt Mide. nó ic Loch Garman. nó i taeb Cille Dara… .i. remsamaigthi.
>
> Bríg ic Tig Brige, is lé tomlachta na bae fothrí i n-oenló dona episcopaib, 7 is lé topacht in lathe mbuana dia mbu anmech fon tír archena."
>
> "…they strike with mighty Bríg a fair end on January's host.
>
> Bríg that is a virgin *cum eis* in Déisi of Munster: near Mochutu's Lismore is Bríg, or in Cairbre úa Ciardai in the North of Meath: or at Loch Carman; or beside Kildare…i.e. a prioress.
>
> Bríg at Tech Bríge: 'tis by her that the cows were milked thrice in the same day for the bishops, and 'tis by her there was reaping on the harvest-day when a rainstorm was throughout the rest of the country."[163]

This text is the only one to refer to a St Bríg of the Déisi, but it seems that it was also unsure as to whom this St Bríg was, as it offers several other possibilities as to who this saint was and where she was from. We must be cautious when taking this to be evidence that Brigit of the Uí Brigte was

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[161] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 139.
[162] The specific date of the text, whether early ninth century or the 830s, has been subject to debate. See Pádraig Ó Riain, "The Martyrology of Óengus: The Transmission of the Text," *Studia Hibernica* 31 (2000/2001): 221 – 242; cf. David N. Dumville, "*Félire Óengusso*: Problems of Dating a Monument of Old Irish," *Éigse* 33 (2002): 19 – 48.
[163] Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé. The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London, 1905), pp. 39, 56 – 57.

a double of St Brigit of Kildare, as no other texts describe Brigit of the Déisi to be a saint, and moreover the texts are clear that she was Ulaid, not Déisi. In addition, the name Bríg is often confused with Brigit, but the two names are separate. The text likely postdates the Déisi genealogy for the L-group and certainly postdates *Indarba na nDéisi*, neither of which indicate that Brigit was to be interpreted in any other way than as a female progenitor. The calendar entry for St Bríg may simply be a confused reading of the genealogies and older texts by Óengus, who assumed perhaps that they were the same person because they share a similar name. The *Leabhar Brecc* has a slightly different reading than the ones above:

> "Benait combrig romoir .i. ochill brige itaeb liss moir ⁊ itaeb chille dara
> ⁊ i[ngen] cairpre h. ciardai."
>
> "They strike, with full great Brig, i.e. Cell Brige beside Lismore, and beside Kildare, and a daughter of Cairpre ua-Ciardai (was she)."[164]

This version of the text does not indicate she is a Déisi saint, but once again links her to Lismore, Kildare, and the Ua Ciarda of Cairpre. This may be a double of Brigit, especially given the proximity of the feast days and the association with Kildare, but any link with Brigit of the Uí Brigte is tenuous. What is interesting is that the other martyrologies, such as the *Félire Hui Gormáin* and the *Martyrology of Donegal* give different traditions for the other Brigit saints, and none are identified as being of the Déisi despite using the *Félire Óengusso* as a source.[165] In addition, there are no entries for a Brig on January 31st.[166]

This entry from the *FO* has not entered the discussion on the Uí Brigte, as the main argument provided by past scholars has rested mainly on place-name evidence. In 1907, Canon Patrick Power wrote a book titled *Place-Names of Decies*, which discussed the place-names of the areas thought to have been under Déisi rule in Co. Waterford, Tipperary, and Cork.[167] Powers

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[164] Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), *On the Calendar of Oengus*, The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy: Irish Manuscript Series, Vol. 1 (Dublin, 1880), p. xl.
[165] These sources are late, but they are useful for comparing with the older *Félire Oengusso*. See Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), *Félire Húi Gorman: The Martyrology of Gorman, edited from a manuscript in the Royal Library, Brussels, with a preface, translation, notes and indices* (London, 1895), pp. xxxix, 10 – 11, 28 – 29, 32 – 33, 50 – 51, 100 – 101, 156 – 157, 186 – 187; John O'Donovan (transl.), *The Martyrology of Donegal: A Calendar of the Saints of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), pp. xvii, 8 – 9, 34 – 37, 40 – 41, 68 – 69, 72 – 73, 134 – 135, 262 – 263.
[166] Stokes, *Félire Húi Gorman*, pp. 26 – 27; O'Donovan, *Martyrology of Donegal*, pp. 32 – 33.
[167] Canon Patrick Power, *The Place-Names of Decies*, 2nd ed., (Cork, 1952), p. 8.

identified a number of religious and landscape sites that had some kind of Brigit connection: the River Bride, several holy wells, an abbey, and a parish with an associated church and well.[168] Power did not refer to the Uí Brigte at any point in his text, as that connection was later made by Butler, who attempted to link Brigit etymologically with Brecc/Breac/Bricc, focussing on those place-names in the counties Waterford, Tipperary, and Cork.[169] He also endeavored to link the Uí Brigte with St Brigit and these place-names as well.[170] Butler concluded that the plethora of these place-names was indicative of a wider Brigit cult in the area, and that there was an evident pre-Christian element.[171] Place-name evidence can be very useful, but caution is required when using place-names as it is often difficult to assign a date to them. Other forms of evidence that Butler relies on, like holy wells, are also difficult to date.[172] While early medieval references to holy wells exist, assuming that modern holy wells are specifically rooted in early medieval practice is problematic.[173]

Churches and their associated place-names may often be less ambiguous, but the only definitive medieval ecclesiastical site associated with the Déisi Muman is Molough Abbey, but the earliest reference to it is from the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century *Vita Sancti Declani*, which states that the abbey was founded by Declan.[174] It seems as though its association with Brigit came later in the fourteenth century, when it was repurposed as a nunnery dedicated to St Brigit by the Butlers of Cahir.[175] Kilbride Parish and its associated ruined church and holy well present a similar problem, as we have no textual references to it, nor have there been any archaeological excavations to determine their ages.[176] Moreover, as St. Brigit was a very popular saint with foundations and dedications all over Ireland, we cannot assume that a church dedicated to St Brigit near the

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[168] Power, *The Place-Names of Decies*, pp. 20, 45, 58, 131, 143 – 144, 149, 178.
[169] Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk," 29.
[170] Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk," 29.
[171] Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk, 26 – 30.
[172] Finbar McCormick, "Struell: Bathing at midsummer and the origins of holy wells," in Christiane Bis-Worch & Claudia Theune (eds), *Religion, Cults & Rituals in the Medieval Rural Environment*, Ruralia XI (Leiden, 2017), pp. 69 – 77, here pp. 71 – 72.
[173] McCormick, "Bathing at midsummer and the origins of holy wells," 71 – 72.
[174] Plummer, ed., *Vita sancti Declani*, p. 56 n. 5. The site is referred to in Latin as "campus stagni," a direct translation of the Old Irish Irish Mag Laca, which is anglicised as Molough; for a discussion of the genealogy provided at the beginning of this text, see Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "On the genealogical preamble to *Vita Sancti Declani*," in John Carey, Kevin Murray & Catríona Ó Dochartaigh (eds), *Sacred Histories: A Festschrift for Máire Herbert* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 291 – 300, see pp. 291 – 292 for the dating of this text.
[175] Canon Patrick Power, *Waterford & Lismore: A Compendious History of the United Dioceses* (Cork, 1937), p. 231.
[176] Kilbride Parish, SMR No. WA017 – 050001-, https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/ (Accessed 10 April 2019).

supposed settlement site of the Uí Brigte are related.[177] As for Butler's etymological evidence, there are several issues with it. He states that "the Irish genealogies confirm that breac was a tribal word and did not in the first place mean speckled," and attempts to explain that this word is ultimately derivative of "brig", and that the Uí Brigte were once Phyrigians of Thrace.[178] This etymological explanation ignores that "breac" had a poetic meaning of "patterned, ornamented, variegated, sparkling," which are epithets that could logically be applied to legendary kings.[179] Moreover, the root of Brigit may be "bri" or "brig", but both of those words have different meanings: the first means flame while the second means power or strength.[180] It seems that "brig" is a false cognate of "breac/bricc/brecc" in Butler's analysis. Regardless of etymology, it should not be ignored that one of the ancestors of the Déisi was an Eogan Brecc (or Eogan mac Brecc) and so those names would not be out of place in Waterford. In addition, the Uí Bric that Butler refers to do not stem from the Uí Brigte but rather an alternate line from Brión mac Eogan.[181] Butler also made the argument that both Brigit of the Uí Brigte and St Brigit both had a father named Dubthach and were descended from the same man, Art Corp.[182] Butler's article has been cited uncritically for his analysis of the Uí Brigte, but in light of these issues it is even more important to reassess the evidence.

2.5 St Brigit(s) and their Place in the Genealogies

Scholarly interpretations of the Uí Brigte genealogy have rested largely on the idea that women with the name Brigit or Bríg must have been saintly doubles of Brigit of Kildare. Thus, it is necessary to analyse the genealogy of St Brigit of Kildare to assess how it compares with the Brigit of the Uí Brigte and to locate any possible similarities. The cult of St Brigit was widespread, located not only at her traditional foundation of Kildare but also among the lands of the people she belonged to: the Fothairt in Leinster.[183] The genealogy of St Brigit from the *Book of Leinster* is as follows:

> "Brigit ingen Dubthach m Demri m Bresail m Dein m Conlaida m Airt Cuirp m Corpri Niad m Cormaic m Oengusa Mind m Echach Find Fuath Airt m Fheidlimid Rectada m Tuathail Tectmair m Fhiachach

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[177] For example, I have located eighteen civil parishes and sixty-two townlands named "Kilbride" on http://www.townlands.ie (Accessed 10 April 2019) alone, and they likely range in dating from the early medieval period well into the sixteenth century.

[178] Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk," 26 – 28.

[179] eDIL s.v. 1 brecc, http://www.dil.ie/6620.

[180] eDIL s.v. 3 bri, http://www.dil.ie/6779; eDIL s.v. bríg, http://www.dil.ie/6813.

[181] Rawl. B. 502., f. 83v.

[182] Butler, "St Brigit and the Breac-folk," 29.

[183] T.M. Charles-Edwards, "Early Irish Saints' Cults and their Constituencies," *Ériu* 54 (2004): 79 – 102, here 82.

Findfholaid m Feradaig Find Fechtnaich m Cremthaind Niad Naire m Lugdach Riab n-Derg m na Tri Find Emna m Echach Feidlig m Find m Fintain m Rogen Ruad m Essamna Emna m Blathechta m Labraida L. m Enna Aignig m Oengusa Turbig."

"Brigit daughter of Dubthach son of Demri son of Bressal son of Den son of Conlaed son of Art Corp son of Coirpre Niad son of Cormac son of Óengus Mind son of Echach Find Fuath Art son of Fedlimid Rechtada son of Tuathal Techtmar son of Fiachach Findfholad son of Feradach Find Fechtach son of Cremthann Niad Naire son of Lugdach Riab n-Derg son of Tri Find Emna son of Echach Fedlech son of Find son of Fintan son of Rogen Ruad son of Essamna Emna son of Blathechta son of Labraid Lorc son of Enna Aignech son of Óengus Turbig."[184]

The only immediate similarities are in the names of Brigit's father, and as Brigit of the Uí Brigte is not of the Déisi line then descent from Art Corp is rendered meaningless. Thornton notes that Art Corp of the Déisi is frequently confused with Art Cerp mac Cairpri Niad of the Fothairt whom St Brigit is descended from.[185] While the similarities in the names is interesting, Art Corp of the Déisi has a very different genealogy and it is likely they are meant to be two separate individuals. Thus, the only real similarity is that they are both Brigit ingen Dubthach, and it has been demonstrated above that Brigit of the Uí Brigte's parentage is contradictory. Moreover, the problems around identifying correct parentage in the genealogies is difficult due to the issues of additions and deletions, as previously mentioned. Thus, the assumption that the Uí Brigte must be religious is based on more superficial readings of the genealogies. It seems that the attempt to link Brigit of the Uí Brigte with St Brigit is a foregone conclusion that has resulted from an attitude of peculiar exceptionalism towards women in early medieval Ireland, as exemplified by Mac Neill's statement, "I know of no instance of a sept-name derived from a female ancestor within the documentary period. Hence, the feminine sept-eponyms had a religious, not a genealogical, import."[186] His claim

[184] Book of Leinster, f. 347a2. Translation and errors are my own. Rawl. B. 502, f. 69v reads: "Brigit ingen Dubthaich m. Deimre m. Bresail m. Dein m. Conlaed m. Airttchirp."
[185] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, p. 58.
[186] Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population Groups," 83.

makes little sense when we consider that there were clearly other family groups named after female ancestors that were evidently not saints.

Moreover, Brigit may be a popular female given name that was perhaps influenced by the cult of St Brigit but did not necessarily indicate that women with that name must have been religious women. If Brigit of the Uí Brigte was a historical figure, she may have been named after St Brigit, but this does not mean that the family itself was a figurative representation of a religious cult. It suggests only that St Brigit was significant enough to have influenced naming traditions. It is also important to note that many secular men share the same names with saints, and male saints with one another. Names like Áed, Colum, Colman, Óengus, Tigernach, Nath Í, and Éogan were all common male names shared between saints and secular individuals, but no one has assumed that they are religious. Since women are rarer in the sources, it is difficult to undertake an onomastic study of female Irish names. However, Bri/Brig/Brigit as a name appears for over thirty women in the secular and saints' genealogies, Old Irish legal texts, sagas, and the *Banshenchas*.[187]

Perhaps some of these women are doublets of each other and several of them are not historical, but it is unlikely they are meant to be iterations of one woman. Certainly, many of the Brig/Brigit saints are doubles of St Brigit of Kildare, especially since several of them have associations with Kildare or St Brigit herself.[188] Ó Rian notes that saints often become segmented through confusion of name forms, and while that may not have necessarily occurred with Brigit of Kildare, her saintly doubles likely represent localisations of her cults.[189] He highlights that the large number of alternative genealogies for saints as well as saints with the same name but different traditions

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[187] *Book of Leinster*, p. 1341, 1542, 1560, 1567; Rawl. B. 502, f. 67r; *AL* i 18.26 – 27, 144.26 – 27, 150.14 – 16, 154. 28 – 29; *CIH* 209.12 – 28 = *AL* iv 14.29 – 31, 16.1 – 20; *CIH* 407.1 = *AL* i 250.28; Pádraig Ó Riain, *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), pp. 3, 29, 58, 112, 114 – 115, 117, 40 – 41, 43, 153 – 154, 185, 229; O'Donovan, *The Martyrology of Donegal*, pp. 68 – 69; Dobbs, "The Ban-Shenchus [Part 1]," 292, 297, 306 – 307, 319, 323, 331 – 332; Dobbs, "The Ban-Shenchus [Part 2]," 169, 173, 181 – 182, 205, 209, 218 – 219, 221; Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), "The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas," *Revue Celtique* 16 (1895): 31 – 83, 135 – 167, 269 – 312, here 78; Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), "The Bodleian Dinnshenchas," *Folklore* 3 (1892): 467 – 516, here 477 – 478; Meyer, *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, pp. 24 – 25; Kuno Meyer, "Gein Branduib maic Echach ocus Aedáin maic Gabráin inso sis," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 2 (1899): 134 – 137; Morgan Thomas Davies, "The somewhat heroic biography of Brandub mac Echach," in *Essays on the Early Irish King Tales*, ed. Dan M. Wiley (Dublin, 2008), pp. 170 – 212.

[188] For instance, Brigit ingen Dallbronach, who would have been Brigit of Kildare's aunt as Dallbronach was Brigit of Kildare's maternal grandmother according to the genealogies and was a saint herself. Very likely she was a double of Brigit of Kildare. See Ó Riain, *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae*, pp. 3, 29, 185.

[189] See Pádraig Ó Riain, "Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography," *Peritia* 1 (1982): 146 – 153 for a discussion of various saints whose segmentation was due to linguistic confusion among early medieval authors and scribes.

were those saints who had undergone segmentation and localisation, and said genealogies were attempts to justify those different cults. [190] We cannot discount the possibility that a number of these saints may very well have been separate people whose traditions were confused with one another simply because they shared a name. Nevertheless, the localised versions of Brigit of Kildare were saintly, not secular. Those secular women in the list above have no link to St Brigit of Kildare, past them potentially being from Leinster. Moreover, Ó Riain's study of localisations does not demonstrate that saints were turned into secular peoples as an attempt to still be a localisation of a cult. Evidently, when localisations occurred, they were still highlighted as saints, rather than being obscured by being transformed into secular ancestors. There is evidence of secular women named Brigit, and while it is strange that all the secular Brigits have an association with men of the Northern Uí Néill, it is much more likely that Brigit was a popular name.

The argument for the genealogy being figurative and religious also seems incredibly unlikely when we look at the how genealogy is presented in the text. It is structured as any other genealogy, depicting descent from a distant ancestor presented within other secular genealogies. While the genealogies cannot be taken to depict accurate records of descent, and were certainly doctored, the mentality behind the genealogies was meant to evoke direct descent all the same. Thus, if we assume that the eponymous ancestor is meant to be St Brigit, then we are confronted with the fact that a virgin saint is depicted as being married and having descendants. As stated previously, when considering other genealogies of saints in the texts, their status as a saint is made very clear. Depicting saints' cults in the genealogies is not elided to the extent where the saint is not depicted as a saint. This would be an unprecedented feature in the genealogies, and ultimately seems incredibly unlikely. Moreover, her descendants are not listed as bishops or religious men who have inherited ecclesiastical lands. If this was a representation of a cult of St Brigit among the Déisi Muman, it is not emphasised.

As for the legendary Brig/Brigit characters, namely Brigit ingen Dagda and the legendary jurists, they may be a part of pre-Christian tradition. The tradition of linking St Brigit (and by extension other St Brigits), with the pre-Christian deity Brigit has been a common hypothesis in the historiography.[191] Kim McCone argues in his 1990 monograph *Pagan Past and Christian Present* that

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[190] Ó Riain, "Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography," 157 – 158.

[191] Pádraig Ó Riain, "Traces of Lug in early Irish hagiographical tradition," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 36:1 (1978): 138 – 156, here 138 – 139; Dorothy Ann Bray, "Saint Brigit and the fire from heaven," *Études celtiques* 29 (1992): 105 – 113; Lisa Lawrence, "Pagan Imagery in the Early Lives of Brigit: A Transformation

the female jurists Brig Ambue, Brig Briugu, and Brigit of the Dagda were a triple goddess, and that St Brigit was a Christian euhemerization of her.[192] Is it possible that we are meant to interpret Brigit of the Uí Brigte to be one of these legendary women? As mentioned previously, Bhreathnach has suggested that this Brigit was "probably linked" to a female deity, which would align with many other genealogies where the legendary male ancestors have been interpreted as euhemerised deities, like Conn Cétchathach.[193] Once again little evidence for this, but it would fit the model of many other genealogies. Nevertheless, Brigit of the Uí Brigte was not a double of Brigit of Kildare and was not shown to have religious connotations in the genealogies. What is more apparent is her association with Ulster, which is a common thread in her genealogies as well as with her husband's association with the Cruithin king. The argument that the Uí Brigte is a depiction of a religious cult can be set aside, but it is important to assess the genealogy's role within the wider corpus and thus its role within the ideology of kingship.

2.6 Female Eponymous Ancestors and their Association with Kingship

The function of the Uí Brigte genealogy becomes clear when we compare it with other families with female eponymous ancestors. Thus, it is useful to return to Byrne's article on the gentilic *dercu* and his identification of these families and women. He identifies several of these women, although there are others that he does not mention, including the Uí Brigte. I have listed those that Byrne has identified along with others that I have located:

1. Síl Meldae/Mella, named after Meld ingen Ernbrand of the Déisi and primary wife of Crimthann mac Éndai Chennselaig of Leinster.[194]
2. Cenél nAngsae, a sept of the Eoganachta, named after Angas, the wife of Nad Froích, and daughter of the Airgíalla king Cairbre Damhairgaid.[195]

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from Goddess to Saint?" *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 16/17 (1996/1997): 39 – 54; Lisa M. Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 187 – 194.

[192] Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present* (Maynooth, 1990), pp. 162 – 163.

[193] Bhreathnach, "The Role of Vassal Peoples in Early Ireland," p. 10; Grigory Bondarenko, "Conn Cétchathach and the Image of Ideal Kingship in Early Medieval Ireland," *Studia Celtica Fennica* 4 (2007): 15 – 30, here 19 – 20.

[194] *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1358 – 1360; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 45 – 46.

[195] They appear in the saga text *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*. For a translation of this text, see Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 887 – 909. The reference to the Cenél nAngsae is at pp. 905 – 906; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 45 – 47.

3. Síl Créide/Uí Chréide, applied to the O'Connors of Connacht, descended from Créde mother of Muiredach.[196]

4. Uí Derco Chéin, descendants of a daughter of Céin of the Cíannachta. They are a branch of the Cruithin, but not of the ruling Dal nAraide among the Ulaid.[197]

5. Cenél Sodailbe, named after Sodelb derco Birnd, who was of the Dál Birn/Osraige, but her descendants were of the Éoganachta dynasty Uí Echach Muman.[198]

6. Cenél Conchinne, descendants of Conchenn, a subfamily of the Corco Loígde. Her own parentage is obscure, she may be of the Uí Chathboth Cuilne.[199]

7. Dál Mechon, descendants of a *dercu Chon* among the Déisi, and among whose descendants is St Declan of Ardmore.[200]

8. Uí Gabla Fine and Uí Gabla Roirend, descended from Eithne Gabulfhota ingen Chormac meic Con Corb of the Laigin.[201]

9. Cenél nEithne, descended from Eithne Uathach ingen Ernbrand, a sept of the Éoganachta.[202]

These families are largely obscure and for at least the Cenél Sodaible and Dál Mechon, their female ancestors have been altered to men in the genealogies. Moreover, most of these families never held significant political power. Byrne cautiously notes that "it may…be accidental that in the majority of the cases where matrilinear descent is mentioned it is to the detriment of their offspring" as they were excluded from the kingship.[203] For example, the ruling Dál nAraide were descended from the Dál Fiatach but the Uí Derco Chéin as a result of their Cíannachta origins were then not considered truly Ulaid.[204] The Cenél nAngsae were said to have not been eligible for

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[196] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 49.
[197] Rawl. B 502, f. 78r; Meyer, "The Laud genealogies," 308; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 54 – 55.
[198] Rawl. B 502, f. 81v; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 59 – 60.
[199] *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1411 – 1412; Rawl. B 502, f. 84r; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 65.
[200] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 67.
[201] *Book of Leinster*, p. 1335.
[202] Ibid., p. 1375. There is a pedigree for a Cenél nEithne elsewhere in the genealogies, but this seems to be listed in error as it is unrelated to Eithne Uathach and her descendants and should read Cenél nEdneand. See Holmberg, "The Milesian Genealogical Scheme," p. 134 n. 435; Bhreathnach states that this female ancestor was also probably a female deity. See Bhreathnach, "The Role of Vassal Peoples in Early Ireland," p. 10.
[203] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 68 – 69.
[204] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 69.

kingship in the *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde* text because they had only come to Cashel recently; their relationship to the ruling line is not acknowledged, and implies that they were descended from another son of Corc rather than Nad Froích (the ancestor of the ruling kindreds of Cashel).[205] *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde* also states that, while not defined by a matronymic, the descendants of Conall Corc's son Coirpre Cruithnechán was possibly excluded from kingship because of his Pictish mother.[206] It may also be possible that he was ineligible because he was considered an outsider to the túath.[207] Byrne suggests that women that were foreign to the túath of their descendants may have excluded them from kingship, while descendants of women that were local to the túath or region were preferred.[208]

This is suggested with the three kindreds Síl Mella, Uí Chréide, and the Cenél Conchinne who were, according to Byrne, the ruling families of their wider dynastic groups.[209] The ruling kindred of Uí Chennselaig of Leinster descended from Mella/Meld. She was a Déisi woman, but *Indarba na nDéisi* relates that the Déisi were settled in Leinster until the time of Crimthann mac Enna Chennselaig, the husband of Mella.[210] Rawl. B 502 and *LL* list her descendants under "Genelach Úa Ceinselaig", although *LL* notes that her son Eogan was "a quo Síl Mella."[211] The same genealogy is listed alternatively as Síl Mella and Meic Murchada in Lec. and BB respectively.[212] Eogan was the progenitor of several septs of the Uí Chennselaig, and the genealogies are unclear if all of his descendants were considered Síl Mella or if that was a branch of his descendants.[213] However, her status as the *cétmuinter* in the genealogies or the spouse of Crimthann mac Ennae Chennselaig would mean that her descendants were Crimthann's legitimate heirs that were eligible for kingship.[214] Notably, the manuscript that discusses Mella more at length was in the *Book of Leinster*,

[205] Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," pp. 905 – 906; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," pp. 46 – 47.
[206] Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," p. 898; Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 18.
[207] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "The Outward Look: Britain and beyond in medieval Irish literature," in Peter Linehan, Janet L. Nelson and Marios Costambeys (eds), *The Medieval World*, 2nd ed (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 456 – 472, here pp. 458 – 459, 462 – 463.
[208] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 68 – 69.
[209] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 69.
[210] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," pp. 106 – 109.
[211] Rawl. B. 502, f. 65r; *Book of Leinster*, p. 1360, 1477.
[212] Lec., 93r col. a; BB, f. 79v col. c – d.
[213] He was the progenitor of Síl Eogain, Síl Forannain, Síl Onchon, Síl Faelchon, and Síl Maeluidir. See *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1361 – 1362.
[214] Liam Breatnach has argued that *cétmuinter* does not mean the "primary wife" in a polygynous marriage, but rather "spouse" and can apply to wife or husband. See Liam Breatnach, "On old Irish collective and abstract nouns, the meaning of cétmuinter, and marriage in early mediaeval Ireland," *Ériu* 66 (2016): 1 – 29, but esp. 6 – 25.

penned under her descendant Diarmait mac Murchada, so while Síl Mella still has only a few references in the text, evidently it remained politically expedient to highlight her role in the Leinster genealogies.[215] The Uí Chréide, on the other hand, are very obscure and we only have late sources who claim that the O'Connors were called the Uí Chréide.[216] Cred herself appears in *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*, but her descendants are not enumerated in that text.[217] Thus, it is unclear how early the ruling kindreds of Connacht were claiming descent from Uí Chréide, although it is interesting that this was a later development, suggesting that in the late medieval and early modern period there was some prestige attached to this ancestry.[218] Cenél Conchinne encompasses several pedigrees of the Corco Loídge that seem to be the primary ruling septs, but as this group's history is difficult to understand fully and with few attestations to the Cenél Conchinne outside of the genealogies, it is difficult to assess their power as the possibly ruling kindreds.[219] Nevertheless, highlighting female descent and female eponymous ancestors did not unilaterally delegitimise kindreds from their right to rule, but it may have been dependent on the woman's own ancestors and her perceived foreignness.

Thus, because Brigit of the Uí Brigte was from the Ulaid but her people were settled in Munster, it is possible that her descendants were excluded from the kingship because she was an outsider among the Déisi. As stated previously, Dobbs also notes that the descendants of Celtchair mac Uithechair were families who had no political power themselves.[220] As stated previously, we cannot determine which parentage of Brigit is the most "correct", but Celtchair's descendants having little political power may have been used to explain why the Uí Brigte themselves had little power also. Far from being a depiction of a saint's cult, the Uí Brigte were a minor subfamily of the Déisi, whose invisibility from the annalistic material was very possibly due to the foreign origins of their eponymous female ancestor. Thus, the overall picture that we can glean from these

[215] For a discussion of Diarmait mac Murchada and his court scribe who penned the *Book of Leinster*, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The Education of Diarmait Mac Murchada," *Ériu* 28 (1977): 71 – 81.
[216] I have only found a transcription of a poem from Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson B 486, which refers to them as such. I have not been able to locate the manuscript page online. It was printed by George Petrie, but the transcription was done by W.M. Hennessy. See George Petre, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1872), pp. 4 – 5.
[217] See D.A. Binchy (ed.), *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (Dublin, 1963).
[218] Byrne also notes that an early poem composed about Muiredach's (the eponymous ancestor of the Síl Muirdaig and allegedly the son of Cred) son called him a "treasured descendant" of Muirenn, the daughter of Ragallach mac Úatach. See Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 49.
[219] *Book of Leinster*, pp. 1411 – 1412; Rawl. B 502, f. 84r.
[220] Dobbs, *Side-Lights on the Táin Age*, p. 37.

genealogies is that families who claim descent from a female ancestor often are not the ruling kindreds of their dynastic groups and that they were, according to texts like *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, were ineligible for kingship. Byrne notes that this may be influenced by the survivability of sources and that it could be a coincidence, but "where matrilinear descent is mentioned it is to the detriment of their offspring."[221] We cannot discount the possibility of those deemed ineligible to rule by these texts did in fact gain power of their own, a possibility discussed in the section on inauguration rituals at Cashel and the attempts to rule Cashel by Coirpre Cruithnechán's descendants.[222] Byrne's suggestion that foreign women from far outside of the túath are excluded from kingship is an attractive theory based on the evidence presented; however, there are compounding problems that demonstrate this cannot be assumed to be the strict model.

For example, the foreign English and British mothers, respectively, of legendary ancestors like Niall Noígíallach and Conall Corc, did not render either of them ineligible for kingship but rather the opposite.[223] In *Echtra mac nEchach Mugmedóin*, Niall's half-brothers are rendered ineligible for the Kingship of Tara and this transfers to their descendants, the other Connachta kindreds.[224] Why should this be the case, when the mother of Niall's half-brothers is the legal (and Irish) wife of Eochaid Mugmedóin while Niall's mother is a foreign English princess enslaved to Niall's father? This seems to be based on "hero's birth" literary tropes.[225] Máire Ní Mhoanaigh notes that this tale, written in the eleventh-century, may reflect different ideals regarding the status of the foreign mother after the establishment of the Hiberno-Norse dynasties in Ireland and the importance of the Milesian scheme to explain the peopling of Ireland.[226] The foreign mother motif is also present in the Conall Corc tales. Conall Corc's mother, Bolc Banbrethnach (a female satirist) was not the wife of Corc's father Luigthech, she was a foreigner who coerced Conall Corc's father into a sexual union that resulted in Conall Corc's birth.[227] As mentioned above, Conall Corc's son was ineligible for kingship possibly because of his foreign mother although it may also be because of his foreign status. Nevertheless, this demonstrates a problem with Byrne's suggestion regarding foreign

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[221] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 68.
[222] See below, section 3.3.
[223] Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 18.
[224] Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 18.
[225] Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 12.
[226] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "The Outward Look: Britain and beyond in medieval Irish literature," in Peter Linehan, Janet L. Nelson and Marios Costambeys (eds), *The Medieval World*, 2nd ed (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 456 – 472, here pp. 464 – 465.
[227] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 57; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 892.

women. They do not unilaterally delegitimise their descendants, at least in the heroic births of Conall Corc and Niall Noígíallach. Rather, it seems to be applicable only to families named after their female ancestors.

It seems possible that many descendants of foreign women were not worthy successors and ineligible for kingship, but the sources are limited, and this seems restricted to families named after women. Alternatively, it may be used as a retrospective reasoning for their lack of success by the genealogists and scribes that worked for the ruling kindreds, as these texts were written after certain kindreds established their power over others. There were inheritance rules for "full sons", the sons of a legal marriage and they had more rights over sons borne from extramarital relations but that may or may not be applicable in the cases above when there is no evidence of multiple spouses.[228] Nevertheless, this suggests a heavily gendered aspect to kingship that has to date only been suggested by Byrne, where while it was important to have both the right male and female ancestors.

We must then interrogate the purpose and origin of these sept names. Were they chosen and used by their descendants, or were they applied to them by their dynastic rivals as a method of discounting them from the kingship? What was the purpose of highlighting the female ancestors over the male ancestors? These families with female eponymous ancestors may represent an older tradition where, while not necessarily equal, these families could compete for kingship, and it happened that many of them did not have successful descendants. It may also be possible that there are more female eponymous ancestors that have been changed in the genealogies to men. The genealogies with female eponymous ancestors tend to be from an older tradition as *dercu* became an obsolete gentilic within the Old Irish period. Moreover, many of them are genealogies that contain some of the oldest material. Thus, as the processes for kingship solidified through the early medieval period it may be that these families were further pushed out. These examples also make one reconsider how the genealogies are constructed. Alternative traditions may appear if genealogists had cause to modify the genealogies of dynastic rivals, enemies, and subjected peoples. Moreover, these genealogies also show that legendary ancestors are not always illustrious. Celtchair mac Uithechair is good evidence of this: a legendary figure of repute, but his descendants held no political power, and his own depiction is not a positive one. Evidently, genealogies also held

[228] Breatnach, "On old Irish collective nouns," 15 – 16.

antiquarian use for the compilers, as the reason for preserving the genealogies of families who have died out could not simply be for propaganda purposes.

Sacral kingship required a powerful male ancestor, as demonstrated by Niall Noígíallach, but female ancestors played a significant role as well. So female ancestors who are from outside the tuath or kingdom do not have legitimate sons because their own ancestry is not valued but for the legal spouse of a king whose own ancestry is illustrious and powerful in her own right then that only makes their children more powerful, such as the Sil Mella line of the Ui Chennselaig family in Leinster. However, if he had descendants through a concubine or a foreigner it is possible that they were not considered eligible for kingship. This was not a universal attitude as it is clear that for legendary ancestors like Niall Noígíallach and Conall Corc that their mothers' foreign nature was not a detriment to their eventual succession, but this was a literary construction. My analysis has deconstructed the idea that this Brigit discussed was a doublet of St Brigit or Brigit the goddess, but she may have still been a legendary ancestor.

The significance of legendary ancestors will be highlighted through the analysis of the Anglian genealogies of early medieval England, where male deities and legendary figures appear as the progenitors of the Anglian kingdoms. Moreover, we will analyse genealogies where women are invisible, thus highlighting the male gendered component of sacral kingship in early medieval England.

2.7 The Anglian Collection – Background

In contrast to the Irish genealogies, the early medieval English genealogical texts are short and undetailed. Genealogical lines, usually presented in the format of father-son descent with a few variants, are extant for eight kingdoms: Bernicia, Deira, Mercia, Kent, Lindsey, East Anglia, Wessex, and Sussex.[229] My focus will be primarily on the Anglian genealogies (the first six kingdoms), as they are the earliest attested genealogies, and the Saxon genealogies (Wessex and Sussex) contain elements that are beyond the scope of this project.[230] The earliest extant genealogy is found in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, in which he gave the full genealogy of the kings of

[229] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 288 – 298.
[230] Dating the Wessex genealogy is difficult, as the earliest record of it is in the *ASC*. For a discussion of the date, see Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts," 5.

Kent.[231] The earliest non-narrative early medieval English genealogical lists are in a series of manuscripts known as the Anglian collection.[232] The manuscripts are as follows:

1. London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian B. vi, ff. 109r – v, (c. 814).[233]
2. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 183 (c. 934 - 937).[234]
3. London, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B. v, vol. 1, ff. 22v – 23r (early 11th to 12th c.).[235]
4. Rochester, Cathedral Library, A.3.5, *Textus Roffensis*, ff. 102r – 104r (c. 1122).[236]

The text of Vespasian B VI will be the focus of this study, as it is the earliest, and the differences with the other manuscripts are not of consequence for the purposes of this thesis. The manuscript was produced in ninth-century Mercia based on the script while the names in the episcopal lists date to 805 – 814, but the genealogical lists themselves are likely based on an early exemplar, dated circa 796.[237]

This exemplar, which forms the basis of all the Anglian genealogies, has a disputed origin. Henry Sweet, in his collection of early English documents, claimed that it was possibly Northumbrian, contradicting the New Palaeographical Society's own description of the manuscript,

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[231] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, I.15, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 31 – 32, 90; For the English translation, see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, transl. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. ed. (London, 1990), pp. 63, 112. This thesis will rely on these two editions of Bede's text, although occasionally Colgrave & Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History* will be used.)

[232] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 290 – 292; Dumville reproduced the entirety of the genealogies, see Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 24, 30 - 37. The collection was known as the Vespasian group when Sisam wrote his lengthy articles on the genealogies, but Dumville had since renamed it to the Anglian collection which he deemed to be more accurate a description.

[233] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 289; Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 24 – 25. These folios have been digitised by the British Library and are available online at the British Library Digitised Manuscripts (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Vespasian_B_VI/1) (10 December 2017).

[234] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 289; Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 25 – 26. In addition to the Anglian genealogies, there are also regnal lists provided for Northumbria and Mercia along with a West Saxon genealogy, and episcopal lists. It was likely produced in Durham or Glastonbury, but the latter is more likely due to the episcopal lists. The manuscript is available online at Stanford's Digital Manuscripts Index (http://dms.stanford.edu/catalog/CCC183_keywords) (4 April 2018).

[235] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 290; Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 26 – 28, 39. This manuscript also produced in southern England, possibly at Canterbury. This manuscript, along with CCCC 183, were likely based on an exemplar that differed slightly from Vespasian, due to the spelling errors and the inclusion of the West Saxon pedigree. It is available online at the British Library Digitised Manuscripts (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_V/1) (9 April 2018).

[236] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 28. It does not contain material that is significantly different from the previous three manuscripts. It may derive from a common exemplar with Tiberius.

[237] Michelle P. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage, and Power in Ninth-century England* (London, 1996), pp. 170 – 172; Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 24.

which ascribed it a Mercian origin.[238] He stated that although the most recent king recorded in the genealogies was Coenwulf of Mercia (d. 819), the fact that the Anglian genealogies begin with Northumbria and are preceded by works of Bede give "an equally strong argument in favour of the assumption of a Northumbrian scribe."[239] Sisam claimed that it was of Mercian origin, composed during the reign of Offa (r. 757 – 796).[240] In response, Dumville argued that Sweet's earlier assessment for a Northumbrian origin was more likely, as the genealogy of Northumbria was given first, and the compiler would have not used this structure if working in Mercia during Offa's reign.[241] Dumville also stated that while the inclusion of Lindsey in the lists suggests a Mercian origin (as Lindsey was under the control of Mercia by that stage), it would have been dangerous to provide an extended pedigree to Lindsey (as seen below) and not to Mercia.[242] He supposed that the genealogy could then be dated to Alhred of Bernicia (r. 774 – 779) as he was the most recent Northumbrian king given in the genealogies.[243] By Dumville's same argument, one can wonder why the Bernician genealogy was not listed first, but was in fact listed after Deira. Moreover, why would any compiler working in Mercia or Northumbria extend the Lindsey line? Dumville stated that it might have been added in error and was supposed to be attached to the Kentish kings, whose line was extended past Woden in the *Historia Brittonum*, discussed below.[244] That further complicates the problem, as it suggests perhaps a Kentish origin. It is possible that the compiler might have rearranged the order of the genealogical lines, but the other three manuscripts depict the same order and thus it is unlikely, given that the later manuscripts were not based on Vespasian. Perhaps there were political dimensions to their production that we are yet unable to determine given a lack of Northumbrian and Mercian sources from the late eighth and early ninth centuries and the succession problems in both kingdoms from the early eighth century onwards.[245] Moreover, there are similarities and links between the Mercian and Bernician genealogies that may shed light on their production, which will be discussed below.

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[238] Henry Sweet, *The Oldest English Texts*, Early English Text Society (London, 1883), pp. 167 – 171.
[239] Sweet, *The Oldest English Texts*, p. 167.
[240] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 329 – 330.
[241] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 45 – 50. He refuted Sweet's argument that the evidence that it was preceded by Bedan material, as the genealogical fragment does not have a connection with the preceding material and was bound together at a later date.
[242] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 47 – 48.
[243] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 49 – 50.
[244] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 47 – 48.
[245] Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 86 – 94, 111 – 123.

The other significant early source of the Anglian genealogies is found in the *Historia Brittonum*, written around 829 – 830 (henceforth known as *HB*).[246] The earliest extant copy of *HB* is in British Library MS Harley 3859, ff. 174v – 193r, 195r – 198r, dating to the early twelfth century.[247] The Anglian genealogies included in the *HB* seem to be based on an earlier exemplar than which Vespasian is based.[248] Dumville have argued that its exemplar was likely Northumbrian, as it included an obscure Northumbrian pedigree that is otherwise unrecorded.[249] In addition, Sisam argued for an earlier date because the genealogies in Vespasian gave Woden's father as Frealaf, whereas in *HB*, Woden was the ultimate progenitor.[250] He stated that the after the descendants of Woden were made tradition, there remained space to add more legendary figures by appending them as Woden's ancestors.[251] His claim that this was a later innovation is based on the fact that there is nothing in Continental Germanic sources, Bede, or the *HB* that indicate a tradition of ancestors of Woden as provided in Vespasian.[252] This is contradicted by the fact that Woden's genealogy was extended in the *HB* when given for Hengest and Horsa, the former being a progenitor of the Kentish line in the genealogies, and who were said by Bede to have been the first leaders of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to arrive in Britain.[253] Sisam believed that the extension past Woden for Hengest and Horsa was a later addition from around the ninth century, although I do not believe that it can be entirely ruled out as being part of an earlier tradition.[254]

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[246] David Dumville, "Some Aspects of the Chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972 – 1974): 439 – 445, here 445.

[247] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 124 – 126. Dumville edited and translated several versions of the *Historia Brittonum* for his PhD thesis. His edition and translation of the Harleian recension of the *Historia Brittonum* is largely accurate, although some errors persist. Richard Rowley published a more recent edition in 2005 based on an 1838 edition of the *Historia Brittonum* by Joseph Stevenson, and this too has been consulted. See Richard Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum. The History of the Britons attributed to Nennius* (Lampeter, 2005). While this is based on Harley 3859, it contains also errors. Where it was necessary, I consulted the manuscript: London, British Library MS Harley 3859, ff. 174v – 193r, 195r – 198r, available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Harley_MS_3859 (accessed 2 April 2018). The chapters in Rowley do not align with the chapters in Dumville, so both texts will be referenced in subsequent footnotes with relevant page numbers.

[248] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 40, 45. This text has been attributed to a writer named Nennius, but Dumville has refuted this, stating that it must be considered anonymous. See David Dumville, "'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*," *Studia Celtica* 10 – 11 (1975 – 1976): 78 – 95.

[249] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 48 – 49.

[250] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 308 – 309.

[251] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 308.

[252] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," 308.

[253] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 198 – 199, 238 – 239.

[254] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 309 – 311.

The work done on the genealogies by Sisam and Dumville has been essential for our understanding of the genealogies. Nevertheless, there remains a great deal of assessment that needs to be undertaken. It is understood that genealogies provide legitimacy to a ruling line, but we must consider the historical context behind the genealogical lines in order to establish why certain individuals were included and to understand the historical and legendary content. Moreover, it is important that we attempt to understand the significance of pre-Christian deities and legendary figures, and what role did these individuals have in understanding kingship at the time. In addition, it is important to determine why genealogical lines that demonstrate (more-or-less) single lines from father to son were significant in a society where rule was not strictly patrilineal.[255]

2.8 Historical Contexts of the Anglian Collection

The Anglian genealogies are deceptively straightforward. The Vespasian material is in reverse chronological order, with the most recent king listed first. The material in *HB* is given in prose style, and thus for the sake of clarity they will be reproduced in reverse chronological order for comparative purposes with Vespasian. Moreover, the schematic listing of the genealogies in Vespasian will be adhered to in this chapter, as their ordering was potentially significant. In addition, certain genealogies contain links with each other that will be discussed after each genealogy is discussed separately.

Readers will also notice that names may appear slightly different between Vespasian and *HB* because the author of *HB* changed several of the names to suit a Welsh orthography and the names were likely corrupted through the manuscript transmission.[256] The tabular format will include the names as they appear in the narrative genealogies from Vespasian, the Harley 3859 manuscript of the *Historia Brittonum* are cross-referenced from individuals mentioned in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede has, by the nature of his text, considerably more information about the royal families and members of each line where they are not listed in the genealogies. Thus, these discrepancies and additional people require the use of several tables. Where the narrative deviates heavily from Vespasian, this will be explained in the text.

VESPASIAN B vi., f. 109v	HARLEY 3859, f. 188r	HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA
Eduine Aelling	Aedguin	Edwin

[255] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms,* pp. 167 – 172.
[256] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," p. 42.

Aella Yffing	Ulli	Aelle
Yffi Uufcfreaing	Iffi	
Uuscfrea Uilgilsing	Usfrean	
Uilgils Uestorualcning	Guilgils	
Uestorualcna Soemling	Sguerthing	
Soemel Saefugling	Soemil	
Saefuegel Saebalding	Zegulf	
Saebald Siggeoting	Sebald	
Siggeot Suebdaeging		
Suebdaeg Siggaring		
Siggar Uegdaeging	Siggar	
	Brond	
Uegdaeg Uodening	Beldeyg	
Uuoden Frealafing	Woden	

Fig. 1: Genealogy of Deira

The first genealogy to be given in Vespasian is the kingdom of Deira, which ceased to be a separate kingdom by 664 and it was officially merged with Bernicia to create the kingdom of Northumbria in 679.[257] The Deiran line is particularly obscure, with very few historically attested individuals. The most recent name in the Vespasian genealogy is Edwin of Northumbria, although in *HB* the author also lists his two sons Osfrið and Eadfrið, and Bede also noted several other children: Æthelhun, Æthelthryð, and Wuscfrea.[258] The earliest historical figure that can be identified in the text is Edwin's father Ælle, although he remains an obscure figure. Bede relates little of Ælla, only referring to the fact that he was king of Deira in an anecdote about Gregory the Great seeing Anglian boys for sale in a slave market.[259] He did not elaborate on Ælle's relationship with the rest of the Deiran line, as he never explicitly stated that he was Edwin's father. Miller noted that Bede discussed Edwin's paternal uncle Ælfric and his line, along with his siblings and their lines, and his

[257] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms,* p. 79.
[258] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 240 – 243; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 58 – 59; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.14 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 114; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 131).
[259] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.1 (Plummer (ed.), *Historia Ecclesiastica*, pp. 79 – 81; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 103 – 104).

own descendants.[260] She argued that it is possible that Ælle was excluded because he was not baptised, and Bede's narrative was focussed on conversion; as Edwin was the first of his line to receive baptism, naturally the narrative revolved around him.[261] Nevertheless, while Bede chose to focus on the era after conversion, he did not deny linking non-Christian fathers with their converted sons.[262] Perhaps it is possible that Bede did not think Ælle and Edwin were of the same line, or had conflicting sources on Edwin's parentage.

The other sources on Ælle do not go into much detail about him, but his brief mentions in other sources indicate that their relationship as demonstrated in the genealogies was likely accurate. The *ASC* does mention Ælle's succession (and genealogy) in 559/560 and his death in 588, and Edwin was referred to at least once as the son of Ælle.[263] The Irish annals record that Edwin, who was described as the son of Ælle, was killed circa 634, which may have been added from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which records the death of *Edwin* at Hatfield Chase in 633.[264] While we cannot be sure that these annalistic entries were contemporaneous, given Edwin's fame it is likely that his father too was historical. It has been suggested by Charles Oman in his 1913 monograph *England before the Norman Conquest* that Wuscfrea and Yffe were historic persons, as Edwin's son and grandson were named after them, respectively; it would not have been out of the ordinary for Edwin to have known or had knowledge of his grandfather and great-grandfather.[265] The only other potentially historical figure in the genealogy is Soemel, who was described in the *Historia Brittonum* as the one "who first separated Deur from Berneich (Deira from Berncia)."[266] Barbara Yorke stated that this may refer to the conquest of Deira from British rule, as both kingdoms seem to have Brittonic names and were surrounded by other British kingdoms.[267] If this was a historical event, it

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[260] Molly Miller, "The dates of Deira," *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 37 – 38.
[261] Miller, "The dates of Deira," 37 – 38.
[262] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.1. See also his discussions regarding Raedwald of East Anglia and the genealogy of Æthelbert of Kent, ibid., II.5, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 127 – 128; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 143 – 144).
[263] *ASC* s.a. 559/560, 588, 616.
[264] *AU* s.a. 631; *ATig* s.a. 633; *ASC* s.a. 633.
[265] Charles Oman, *England Before the Norman Conquest: Being a History of the Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Periods down to the Year A.D. 1066*, *A History of England*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (London, 1913), p. 241; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.14 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 114; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 131).
Miller agreed with this assessment, see Miller, "The dates of Deira," 39.
[266] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 240 – 243; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 58 – 59.
[267] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 74.

is not possible to know at the present. This would have taken place in a time when we have very little information regarding the early medieval English kingdoms.

There is strong alliteration in the names of the Deiran kings, the purpose of which has yet to be determined. Bredehoft analysed the alliterative forms of the genealogies in the *ASC* as well as the Vespasian, *HB*, and *HE* genealogies, but in terms of the significance, he stated "the more or less obvious conclusion [was] that the alliterating ancestral genealogies were used to indicate political legitimacy."[268] In addition, he argued that the alliterative nature of the names in the genealogies was not indicative of a substratum of orality, as they relied on the visual columns as seen in Vespasian. While I agree that the genealogies were used as a legitimising factor for kingship, I argue that there is a potentially wider significance to these names that goes beyond the need for a striking visual and metrical presentation of dynastic lines. Fran Colman and Cecily Clark noted that alliteration was common not only in the early genealogical matter but also among definitively historical royal individuals and their families, and may have been deliberately chosen for their relationships with heroic deeds, individuals, and events.[269] Nor was it restricted to male descendants; daughters were often given alliterative names, which could stem from either their father or mother.[270] While this does not necessarily indicate that the alliterative names in the early Deiran genealogy are indicative of historicity, their alliterative function is not necessarily for legitimising a line of kings, but rather was a common feature of naming conventions for both male and female children among royals in early medieval England.

The differences between the Vespasian MS, *HB*, and Bede for the genealogy of the Deiran line must also be discussed. Sisam stated that whoever wrote the genealogies down confused the Deiran and Bernician lines as they were likely written next to each other as they are in the Vespasian genealogy.[271] Dumville did not discuss the confusion in the Deiran line, but his ascription of the genealogies in *HB* to a Bernician source suggests that perhaps the Bernician scribe attempted to link the two Northumbrian genealogies together.[272] As stated above, Bede gives very little information on the Deiran kings before Edwin, only briefly mentioning Ælle. It is possible that Bede's sources on

[268] Bredehoft, *Textual Histories*, p. 32.
[269] Colman, *The Grammar of Names*, pp. 104 – 109; Cecily Clark, "Onomastics," in Richard M. Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 458.
[270] Henry Bosley Woolf, "The Naming of Women in Old English Times," *Modern Philology* 36:2 (1938): 113 – 120. This article is very dated, but it does demonstrate alliterative trends in the various royal families.
[271] Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 292 – 293.
[272] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 48 – 47.

Deira had little information prior to Edwin. Moreover, Deira as a separate entity ceased to exist in Bede's lifetime.[273] There may be a lack of historical sources due to the frequent changes in rule in Deira as well as repeated conflicts between the Bernician and Mercian kings. Thus, it is difficult to assess the nature of the Deiran line given a lack of material on the individuals that preceded Edwin.

VESPASIAN B vi., f. 109v	**HARLEY 3859, ff.187v – 188r**
	Oslaph
	Echun
	Adlsing
	Alhun
	Oslach
Ecgfrið Osuing	Ecgfird
Osuio Eðilfriðing	Osguid
Eðilfrið Eðilricing	Aelfret[274]
Eðilric Iding	Ealdric
Ida Eopping	Ida[275]
Eoppa Oesing	Eobba
Oesa Eðilberhting	Ossa
Eðilberht Angengeoting	Edilbrith
Angengeot Alusing	
Alusa Ingibranding	Inguec
Ingibrand Wegbranding	Aluson
Wegbrand Bernicing	Gechbrond
Beornic Beldaeging	Beornec

[273] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 74.
[274] According to the *HB*, Æthelfrið was known as Æthelfrið Flesaur, see Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 236 – 238; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 56 – 57.
[275] The *HB* states that Ida had twelve sons: Adda, Ædldric, Decdric, Edric, Deothere, Osmer, and by one queen Bearnoch, Ealric. The text is confused here, and some of the names seem very similar, i.e. Ædldric, Edric, Ealric. Moreover, the text is confused when referring to Bearnoch. The text reads "et unam reginam, Bearnoch" and thus it is unclear if it is truly relating to his wife, or perhaps a daughter. Dumville amended his text to read "bearn, och" as two sons of Ida. He does not explain clearly why he made this change, stating "Bearn" was a name, and also meant child. One can see that Ocg was listed as a son of Ida in Vespasian, although if this was a misreading of Bearnoch, we do not know. Bearnoch is otherwise unknown. See Dumville, "Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 237 – 238, 695; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 56 – 57.

Beldaeg Wodning	Beldeg
Uoden Frealafing	Uuoden

Fig. 2: Line of Bernicia (I)

VESPASIAN B. vi f.109v	**HISTORIA BRITTONUM**
Ceoluulf Cuðuining	
Cuðwine Liodualding	
Lioduald Ecgualding	Liodguald
Ecguald Edelming	Ecgulf
Edhelm Ocgting	Eadric
Ocg Iding	
	Ida

Fig. 3: Line of Bernicia (II)

VESPASIAN B. vi f.109v	**HISTORIA BRITTONUM**
Eadberht Eating	Eadbyrth
Eata Liodualding	Ætan
Lioduald Ecgualding	Liodguald

Fig. 4: Line of Bernicia (III)

VESPASIAN B. vi f.109v
Alhred Eanuining
Eanuine Byrnhoming
Byrnholm Bofing
Bofa Blaecmoning
Blaecmon Edricing
Edric Iding

Fig. 5: Line of Bernicia (IV)

The Bernician line, as we can see from the tables above, is considerably lengthier than the Deiran line. The most recent king in the above lists is Alhred of Northumbria (r. 765 – 774). Although we know little of his reign, there are some recorded entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*:

"765. Her feng Alhred to Norðhymbra rice. and rixade eahta winter."

> "A.D. 765. In this year Alhred succeeded to the kingdom of Northumbria, and ruled for eight winters.[276]
>
> "774. Here Norðhymbra fordrifon heora cining Alhred of Eoferwic on Eastertid. and genamon Æðelred Molles sunu heom to hlaforde, and se rixade iiii gear."
>
> "A.D. 774. In this year the Northumbrians drove their king Alhred from York on Easter-tide and took as their lord Ethelred son of Moll, and he reigned for four years."[277]

A letter sent by him and his wife Osgifu to Bishop Lul in A.D. 773 also exists, and there is a reference to him sending St Willehad to convert the Frisians and Old Saxons in the *Vita sancti Willehadi*.[278] However, this period in Northumbrian politics seems to have been very confused and marked by succession difficulties. Around 759, Æthelwald Moll (r. 759 – 765) seized power in Northumbria after the murder of Oswulf, son of Eadberht.[279] It is unknown if he was at all connected with the Bernician dynasty, as no genealogy recording his descent survives.[280] He was then deposed by Northumbrian nobles, who they then replaced with Alhred in 765, who was a distant cousin of Oswulf and Eadberht.[281] Alhred was summarily removed and then replaced with Æthelwald Moll's son Æthelred I (r. 774 – 779), before he himself was deposed in favour of Ælfwold (r. 779 – 788), who was then murdered and succeeded by Alhred's son Osred II (r. 789 – 790).[282] Osred too was forced out and replaced with Æthelred I, who ruled again from 790 to 796.[283] Æthelred was assassinated in 796 when he was replaced by Osbald, who ruled for only a few months before being replaced by Eardwulf, who was otherwise unconnected with any of the previous kings.[284] Evidently,

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[276] *ASC* s.a. 765.
[277] *ASC* s.a. 774.
[278] "Letter of Alhred, king of Northumbria, and his wife Osgifu to Lul (773)," in Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1955), pp. 767 – 768; Georg Heinrich Pertz (ed.), *Anskarii vita sancti Willehadi*, in MGH SS 2 (Hannover, 1829), pp. 378 – 390, here p. 380; *Early Medieval Corpus of Coin Finds*, available at http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/emc/ (Accessed 10 April 2018). There were records of twenty-two coins minted in Alhred's name.
[279] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88; *ASC* s.a. 757/758.
[280] Dumville stated that Æthelwald Moll and Æthelred "were noblemen of unknown but almost certainly non-royal descent." See Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 49. See also York, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88 – 89.
[281] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88; *ASC* s.a. 765.
[282] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88; *ASC* s.a. 774, 778, 788/789.
[283] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88; *ASC* s.a. 790, 792, 794/796.
[284] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 88 – 89; *ASC* s.a. 796.

there was a clear problem with kingly succession in Northumbria at this time. Dumville suggested that the exemplar of the genealogies was written during the reign of Alhred, which may be possible if Alhred was concerned about asserting his royal power at a time when Northumbrian kings lacked the power to choose their successors, as it seems the Northumbrian nobles were in control at that point.[285]

The first Northumbrian king recorded in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is Ida (d. circa 559), who was named as the first king of Bernicia, from whom the royal line was derived.[286] He did not elaborate on Ida's reign, but although Ida was listed in the Northumbrian regnal list in the Moore MS.[287] The *HB* related that Ida had twelve sons, although the text only lists seven.[288] The *HB* also related the following about Ida's reign:

> "Ida, filius Eobba, tenuit regions in sinistrali parte Brittannie (id est, Umbri maris) et regnauit annis duodecim; et [i]unxit Din [Guayroi] guurth Berneich."
>
> "Ida son of Eobba held the region in the northern part of Britain, that is, by the Humber sea, and ruled for twelve years, and united Din Guayroi to Bernicia."[289]

In this passage *Dinguayrdi* refers to Din Guayroi, which the *HB* related in a later passage was renamed to *Bebbanburgh*, or Bamburgh, which was historically located in Deira.[290] This passage

[285] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 49 – 50.
[286] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 353; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 326).
[287] Cambridge, University Library Kk.5.16, f. 128v.
[288] The *HB* states that Ida had twelve sons: Adda, Ædldric, Decdric, Edric, Deothere, Osmer, and by one queen Bearnoch, Ealric. The text is confused here, and some of the names seem very similar, i.e. Ædldric, Edric, Ealric. Moreover, the text is confused when referring to Bearnoch. The text reads "et unam reginam, Bearnoch" and thus it is unclear if it is truly relating to his wife, or perhaps a daughter. Dumville amended his text to read "bearn, och" as two sons of Ida. He does not explain clearly why he made this change, stating "Bearn" was a name, and also meant child. One can see that Ocg was listed as a son of Ida in Vespasian, although if this was a misreading of Bearnoch, we do not know. Bearnoch is otherwise unknown. See Dumville, "Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 237 – 238, 695; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 56 – 57.
[289] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 242 – 243; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 58 – 59.
[290] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 244 – 246; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 60 – 61.

states that Ida had joined Deira and Bernicia together. This is interesting considering the note in *HB* regarding Soemel, who was said to have been the first to separate Deira from Bernicia.[291]

The first king whose historicity is more certain is Ida's grandson Æthelfrið, the first Northumbrian king of whom we have detailed information. For example, his invasion of Deira and his victories over the Dál Ríatan king Áedán mac Gabráin and the Britons were recorded by Bede.[292] His reign was contemporary with that of King Edwin of Deira, and he may have driven Edwin into exile.[293] Therefore, while the earliest definitively historical individuals in the Bernician and Deiran genealogical lists were contemporaneous, as Bernicia eventually annexed Deira, there were more rulers to include.[294]

The Bernician genealogy differed considerably between Vespasian and *HB*. For instance, Vespasian listed several branches of the Bernician kings after Ida. By contrast, *HB* listed the line from Woden to Ecgfrið and provided an otherwise unattested genealogy of Ecgfrið's descendants as seen above. This is perhaps suggestive of the author of *HB*'s genealogical exemplar, in that this obscure line would have most likely been derived from a Northumbrian source. These individuals are otherwise unattested, outside of Ecgfrið, whom we know ruled Northumbria after Oswiu's death. Furthermore, there are some inconsistencies with order of the individuals in the list as well. Gechbrond/Wegbrand correspond correctly, but Alusa/Aluson and Ingibrand/Inguec are in reverse order. Moreover, *HB* omits Angengeot from its list, and most of Ida's twelve children. Furthermore, Liodualď's father and grandfather were different in either source, although it is possible that this was a scribal error, as Edric son of Ida appears elsewhere in the Bernician genealogy provided in Vespasian. *HB* also listed several children of Æthelfrið and Oswiu:

> "Nam et ipse habuit filios septem quorum nomina sunt: Anfrid, Osguald, Osbiu, Osguid, Osgudu, Oslapf, Offa."

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[291] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 240 – 243; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 58 – 59.
[292] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.34, II.2, III.1 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 71 – 72, 83 – 85, 127 – 128; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 97, 106 – 107, 143 – 144).
[293] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.12 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 106 – 111; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 125 – 128); Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 77, 84.
[294] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 74. Yorke suggests that Bede was the one who coined "Northumbria" which was then popularised through the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

"And he also had seven sons who were named Eanfrith, Oswald, Oswio [sic], […], Oswudu, Oslaph, and Offa. Oswio begat Alchfrith and Aelfwine and Egfrith."[295]

When we consider why the *HB* contained more information on Bernicia than was included in Vespasian, it is likely because the narrative nature of *HB* allowed for more information to be included rather than the tabular format. Moreover, when we consider the separate lines included for Bernicia, they all contained at least one king, whereas most of the sons of Æthelfrið listed above are not recorded as rulers. It is interesting to note that Vespasian omits Eanfrið and Oswald, who were both rulers of Bernicia before Oswiu.[296] Bede narrated that Eanfrið, who reverted to paganism, and was subsequently defeated in battle by Cadwallon ap Cadfan of Gwynedd and Penda of Mercia.[297] He was, according to Bede, expunged by those who keep the regnal lists and assigned the year that he ruled to his successor, Oswald.[298] Thus, it is logical why he was not included in the genealogies here: he was an apostate king who was killed in battle by a British king. It is strange while Oswald was not included: although he had no son to succeed him, he was venerated as a saint and altogether perceived as a good king, who ruled from 634 to 642 until he was killed at the Battle of Maserfelth against Penda.[299] It is possible he was not included for the sake of room, but certainly he remained a well-known figure in Northumbria and England in the ninth century. Although his successor Oswiu was perhaps more famous because of his role in the Easter Controversy and the Synod of Whitby, Oswald's exclusion remains a mystery.

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 1	**HARLEY 3859 f. 188r**	**HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA**
Aeðilred Peding	[A]dlrit	Ethelred
Penda Pypbing	Penda	Penda

[295] Dumville, "Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," p. 236 – 237. There seems to be an error in the manuscript, as it reads thus: "…Anfrid, Osguald, Osbiu, Osguid, Osgudu, Oslaph, Offa" where Osbiu and Osguid are both variants for Oswiu. Dumville has stated that he believes the name Oslac has been displaced from the manuscript, whereas Rowley translated Osbiu as Oswald, Osguid as Oswiu, and Oslaph as Oslac. See Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 56 – 57. I believe that Dumville's reading of this text is more accurate.
[296] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 78.
[297] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.1 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 127 – 128; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 143 – 144); Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 78.
[298] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.1 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 127 – 128; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 143 – 144).
[299] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.2, III.3, III.6, III.9 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 128 – 133, 137 – 139, 144 – 146; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 144 – 147, 152, 157 – 159).

Pypba Crioding	Pubba	
Crioda Cynewalding		
Cynewald Cnebbing		
Cnebba Icling		
Icil Eamering		
Eamer Angengeoting	Eamer	
[…]gengeot Offing	Ongen	
Offa Uermunding	Offa	
Uermund Uihtlaeging	Guerdmund	
Uihtlaeg Weoðulgeoting	Guithleg	
	Gueagon	
Weoðulgeot Wodning	Guedolgeat	
Woden Frealafing	Uoden	

Fig. 6: Line of Mercia (I)

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 2	**HARLEY 3859 f. 188r**
Aðelbald Alwing	Eadlbald
Alwih Eowing	Alguing
Eowa Pybbing	Eua

Fig. 7: Line of Mercia (II)

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 2	**HARLEY 3859 f. 188r**
Ecgfrið Offing	Ecgfrid
Offa Ðincfriðing	Offa
Ðincfrið Eanuulfing	Duminfert
Eanuulf Osmoding	Eandulf
Osmod Eowing	Ossulf
Eowa Pybbing	Eua
	Pubba

Fig. 8: Line of Mercia (III)

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 2
Coenuulf Cuðberhting

Cuðberht Bassing
Bassa Cynreowing
Cynreou Centwining
Centwine Cunwaling
Cundwalh Coenwaling
Coenwalh Pybbing

Fig. 9: Line of Mercia (IV)

The Mercian genealogy provides several of its own difficulties, not least in part due to a lack of Mercian source material. The most recent king listed is Coenwulf, son of Cuðberht, whose accession was in 796 and therefore the earliest possible date for the composition of the exemplar for the Vespasian manuscript.[300] Coenwulf's rule is poorly attested, although he was an incredibly powerful king who took pains to install his close relatives in strategic positions, such as his brother Cuthred, who was made sub-king of Kent, along with other relatives who were made ealdormen and heads of religious houses.[301] It was after Coenwulf's rule that Mercia had begun its decline, as he was succeeded by his brother Ceolwulf, who was deposed only a few years later.[302] He seems to have been involved in Northumbrian politics, as he housed Northumbrian exiles that led to hostilities with Eardwulf and had sponsored a cult for the Alhmund, son of the Bernician king Alhred who was murdered by Eardwulf.[303] He may also have had a hand in an attempted assassination of Eardwulf.[304] This suggests, perhaps, a link with Alhred, and further a link with the Bernician line that has hitherto been unexplained.

These two lines were both twice the length of the other four lines, all of them being fourteen to fifteen generations, while the other two sat at twenty-nine. More significant than that is the inclusion of the man named Angengeot in the ninth position of both the Bernician and the Mercian lines.[305] If this Angengeot was in fact the same individual in both genealogies is unknown, as he does not have the same father in either line. In the Bernician line, he is the son of Alusa, who is otherwise unknown. In the Mercian line, he is given as the son of Offa and the father of Eomer,

[300] Dumville, "The Anglian collection," 39.
[301] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 118. For example, many ealdormen at the time seem to have the element "Ceol".
[302] *ASC* s.a. 819/821, 821/823.
[303] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 95.
[304] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 95.
[305] MS Vespasian B VI/1, ff. 109r, col. 3, 109v, col. 1.

who were figures in *Beowulf*.[306] It may have been a corruption of a different name, and the scribe got it wrong in copying from the exemplar. It may also have been an epithet: Norman E. Eliason argued that due to the discrepancy between the lines in Beowulf and the Mercian genealogy may indicate that Angengeot was an epithet of Eomer, as he was the son of an Anglian man and (possibly) a Geatish woman in *Beowulf*.[307] Nevertheless, the name suggests a possible connection between the two dynasties. There were several marital links between the Mercian and Bernician kings. King Oswiu's daughter, Alhflæd, married King Peada of Mercia in 653, Peada's sister Cyneburh married Oswiu's son Alhfrið.[308] Damian Tyler suggests that Oswiu wanted control over Mercia and arranged the marriage between Peada and Alhflæd, while Penda perhaps arranged the marriage between Cyneburh and Alhfrið so as to assert influence over who was seen as the likely heir to Bernicia.[309] Alhflæd's sister Osthryð, later married King Æthelred of Mercia in the mid to late seventh century.[310] Closer to the date of the conception of the genealogies saw Ælfflæd, daughter of King Offa of Mercia, married to Æthelred I of Northumbria in 792.[311] Whether these marriages had affected the genealogies of these two kingdoms is unknown, for Mercia and Bernicia (and Northumbria) were often enemies, and it seems that political marriages did little to stop conflict between the two kingdoms, as Alhflæd was accused of plotting her husband's death in 655 and Osthryð was killed by Mercian nobles in 697.[312] These marital ties, despite their poor endings, may have resulted in links between the two dynasties. The potential links between Coenwulf and Alhred may be more suggestive of why these lines were linked and share similarities. While the regnal dates of Alhred and Coenwulf do not align, it is possible perhaps that Coenwulf and his immediate ancestors had otherwise unknown ties to Alhred and his descendants. Thus, it is possible that under Coenwulf's rule, the exemplar of the genealogies was written, and the lines of Mercia and Bernicia were linked

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[306] *Beowulf*, lines 1949 – 1962 (George Jack (ed.), *Beowulf: A Student Edition*, reprint (Oxford, 2009), pp. 141 – 142).

[307] Norman E. Eliason, "The Story of Geat and Mæðhild in 'Deor'," *Studies in Philology* 62:4 (1965): 495 – 509, here 505.

[308] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.21 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 169 – 171; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 177 – 178).

[309] Damian Tyler, "An Early Mercian Hegemony: Penda and Overkingship in the Seventh Century," *Midland History* 30:1 (2005): 1 – 19, here 8.

[310] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastical*, IV.21 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 249; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 240).

[311] *Symeonis Dunelmensis Opera et Collectanea*, vol. 1, The Publications Stanford Library Surtees Society (Durham, 1968), p. 30.

[312] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.24, V.24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 180, 355; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 185, 327;).

together. This would also explain the chronological difficulties with the genealogies being written during Alhred's reign.

Pybba may be the earliest historical king, as he is the branching point in the genealogies for all subsequent Mercian kings. However, the founder of the dynasty was likely Icel, as the Mercians were called Iclings.[313] The first king in the genealogies that we have any information for is Penda, as Bede wrote extensively on Penda's activities; he was actively at war with Northumbrian kings Edwin and Oswald, whom both met their deaths in battle against him.[314] Bede says little about Penda and what we do know is largely from a hostile perspective, as Penda was not Christian. Nicholas Higham notes that Oswald's death at the hand of Penda may have reinforced belief in Woden over Christianity as Oswald's status as a holy king did not save him in battle.[315] What is interesting is that despite Penda's non-Christian affiliation, he is the apparent father and grandfather of several saints.[316] After Penda, he was succeeded by his son Wulfhere who was not included in the genealogies.[317] Wulfhere was succeeded by Æthelred, who was listed in the genealogies, who ruled Mercia until he abdicated and entered a monastery, passing the rule to his nephew Coenred, the son of Wulfhere.[318] After Coenred himself abdicated, there was quick succession between kings, none of whom are listed in the genealogies.[319] His rule passed to his cousin Ceolred, son of Æthelred, then to his brother Ceowulf, during whose reign Bede stated was filled with disturbances.[320] Around this time there was a shift away from the descendants of Penda. Æthelbald, a descendant of Eowa, brother of Penda became king in 716 and reigned until 757.[321] He was killed by members of his own

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[313] Felix of Crowland, *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of St Guthlac*, ed. and transl. Charles Wycliffe Goodwin (London, 1848), pp. 8 – 9. St Guthlac was a member of the Mercian royal family, and a descendant of Icel.
[314] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.20, III.9 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 124, 144 – 145; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 140, 157).
[315] Nicholas Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997), p. 220.
[316] Alan Thacker, "Kings, Saints, and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia," *Midland History* 10:1 (1985): 1 – 25.
[317] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 180; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 185).
[318] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 13 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 311; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 290).
[319] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 356; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 328).
[320] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 19, 23 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 321, 349; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 299, 323); Yorke also mentions another successor listed in the Worcester regnal list named Coelwald, who may have been another brother of Coelred. See York, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 111.
[321] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 112.

household and was succeeded by an otherwise unknown Beornred, whose genealogy or relationship to the ruling family of Mercia was unknown.[322] He was removed by Offa (d. 796) who also claimed descent from Eowa, son of Pybba (and thus Penda's brother).[323] Offa's grandfather Eanwulf was a noble who established a monastery at Bredon, Worcestershire.[324]

Offa was a powerful king who had conquered Kent and Sussex, and had installed a puppet onto the throne of Wessex, and was likely responsible for the building of the defensive structure of Offa's Dyke that lies roughly along the border between England and Wales.[325] He was evidently concerned with the succession of his son Ecgfrið to the kingship, and he had his son consecrated as king while he [Offa] was still alive, which will be discussed in the section on inaugurations below.[326] His own attachment to the Mercian genealogy is potentially suspect. While Æthelbald was also apparently a descendant of Eowa, Offa may have constructed his relationship to the Mercian kings or fashioned that he was more closely related to the line from Pybba in order to secure his rule. The sharing of his name with Offa of Angeln, a legendary ancestor of the Mercian line may have been a name he assumed to promote his line, although there are other kings named Offa, so it may be a coincidence (see below). It is also possible that there were several claimants to Mercia's rule that were more closely related to the previous kings, and thus Offa had to construct various forms of legitimisation to secure his rule and his son's rule. Offa's wife Cynethryð may have been a descendant of Penda because of her name; Penda's wife was possibly named Cynewise and his daughter Cyneburh, and thus it may be an example of alliterative female names.[327] His marriage to Cynethryð may have been another important aspect of legitimising his kingship.[328] Moreover, Stafford notes that a "full and legitimate" marriage to Cynethryð legitimised Offa's heirs more so

[322] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 112.
[323] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 112.
[324] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 112.
[325] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, fig. 6, pp. 113 – 117.
[326] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 785/787; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 115.
[327] Cynewise is mentioned only once as the "Queen of the Mercians" after Penda's death, so their exact relationship is unclear, but Pauline Stafford has argued she was Penda's wife. See Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III. 24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 178; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 183); Pauline Stafford, "Political Women in Mercia, Eighth to Early Tenth Centuries," in Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (eds), *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 35 – 49, here p. 36.
[328] Stafford, "Political Women in Mercia," p. 36.

than Offa's cousin and past king Æthelbald whose actions indicate he did not have a legitimate marriage.[329]

As stated above, Offa shares his name with Offa of Angeln and who also appears in *Beowulf* and *Widsið*.[330] Other kings or members of royal families were also named Offa, like Oswiu's son Offa named in the *HB* above, and Offa son of Sigehere who was to become King of the East Saxons but instead entered ecclesiastical life.[331] There may have been a particular cultural importance with Offa of Angeln, but it is unclear what these legends and myths may have been in the early medieval period as the only references to him outside of the genealogies are in the Old English poems *Beowulf* and *Widsið*. There is no scholarly consensus on the dates of these poems, but it remains possible that they date to the eighth century or earlier or contain early strata incorporated at a later date.[332] It is possible that all three of these men were so named to generate a link with this legendary king.

There are noted differences between the Mercian genealogy in Vespasian and *HB* through the addition of Gueagon between Weoðulgeot and Wihtlaeg, and that Eomer is the father of Pybba in *HB*, which cuts out four names including Icel. The *HB* also stated that Pybba fathered twelve sons (like Ida, seen above), but the author stated that familiarity with two: Eowa and Penda.[333] Coenwulf was also omitted from the *HB*, likely because it was composed before Coenwulf succeeded Ecgfrið, as Ecgfrið is the most recent king listed in the text. Regarding the other differences, it is possible that this was due to a difference in traditions of the Mercian line that were circulating at the time.

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[329] Stafford, "Political Women in Mercia," p. 37.
[330] *Beowulf*, lines 1944 – 1962 (Jack (ed.), *Beowulf*, pp. 141 – 142); *Widsith*, lines 35 – 44 (R.W. Chambers (ed. and transl.), *Widsith: A Study in Old English Heroic Legend* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 202 – 204).
[331] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 19 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 322; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 299 – 300).
[332] The dates of these poems have been subject to an extremely large debate in the field. For the discussion on *Beowulf*, see R.D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Metre* (Philadelphia, 1992), pp. 164 – 168, 381 – 391; Colin Chase (ed.), *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto, 1997); B.R. Hutcheson, "Kaluza's Law, the Dating of 'Beowulf', and the Old English Poetic Tradition," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 103:3 (2004): 297 – 322; Craig R. Davis, "An ethnic dating of 'Beowulf'," *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006): 111 – 129; Patrick Wormald, "Bede, Beowulf and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," in Patrick Wormald, *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early English Christian Society and Its Historian*, ed. Stephen Baxter (Malden, 2006), pp. 30 – 105, but esp. 71 – 81; Leonard C. Neidorf (ed.), *The Dating of Beowulf: A Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2014); *Widsið* has been discussed less than *Beowulf*, but there has been a similar debate. See Leonard Neidorf, "The Dating of *Widsið* and the Study of German Antiquity," *Neophilologus* 97 (2003): 165 – 183; Eric Weiskott, "The Meter of *Widsith* and the Distant Past," *Neophilologus* 99 (2015): 143 – 150; Rafael J. Pascual, "Old English Metrical History and the Composition of *Widsið*," *Neophilologus* 100 (2016): 289 – 302.
[333] Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 240 – 241; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 58 – 59.

There are several instances of alliteration in the Mercian genealogies, such as Woden to Wermund, Cnebba to Crioda, Pybba and Penda, and Coenwalh to Coenwulf (apart from Bassa), and possible alliteration between Eowa and Eanwulf, Alwih, and Aeðelbald. In addition, Coenwulf's daughter was named Cwoenthryð, and his son Cynehelm.[334] As stated above, alliterative names were popular but not necessarily the rule. Nevertheless, they still may provide insights into genealogical lines that are otherwise obscure.

Vespasian B. vi, f. 109v, col. 2
Alfrið Eatting
Eatta Eanferðing
Eanferð Biscoping
Biscop Beding
Beda Bubbing
Bubba Caedbaeding
Caedbaed Cueldgilsing
Cueldgils Cretting
Cretta Uinting
Uinta Wodning
Uoden Frealafing
Frealaf Frioðulfing
Frioðulf Finning
Finn Goduulfing
Godulf Geoting

Fig. 10: Line of Lindsey

The genealogy for the kings of Lindsey is perhaps the most difficult to situate historically, as Lindsey itself is incredibly obscure and poorly attested.[335] The genealogy is odd as it gives a genealogy back before Woden to Geat, which was not given for the rest of the genealogies in the Vespasian collection. The Lindsey genealogy is also completely absent from the *HB*. The reason for this is unknown, but it is possible that it was a scribal error; Dumville suggested that it may have

[334] Stafford, "Political Women in Mercia," p. 41.
[335] Sarah Foot, "The Kingdom of Lindsey," in Alan Vance (ed.), *Pre-Viking Lindsey* (Lincoln, 1993), pp. 128 – 140, here p. 128.

been an error in which the author of the *HB* had transferred the Geat to Woden line from Lindsey to Kent, as seen below.[336] Although it should be noted that Geat is mentioned in the *HB* is several passages earlier than the rest of the genealogies.[337] Dumville also postulated that perhaps the line from Woden to Geat was added to bring the Lindsey line up to fourteen generations.[338] It is equally possible that the author of the *HB* was unaware of the genealogy of Lindsey, and it was unintentionally omitted. Even Dumville suggests that the line from Woden to Geat was accidently omitted from the other genealogical lines in Vespasian, so it perhaps represents a wider tradition that goes beyond that of the Lindsey kings.[339] Dumville argued that these names belonged to all the lines, which is logical given that they are given as Woden's ancestors.

The Lindsey kings are generally unknown and determining a historical horizon for any of them is difficult. Sisam noted that Aldfrið, the most recent name in the Lindsey line, was possibly the same Aldfrið who was a witness to a Sussex charter by Offa.[340] This has since been refuted, as it is likely that this charter refers to Ecgfrið of Mercia, although Sarah Foot still argues that Aldfrið was likely a historical king.[341] Caitlin Green also goes so far as to state that the Lindsey genealogy may have legitimate early ancestors listed, such as Caedbaed.[342] This is because Caedbaed seems to be an anglicisation of the Brittonic name **Catuboduos*, and implies intermarriage between the Early English and local British nobility.[343] It would be unlikely that this was a fiction designed for prestige purposes. Moreover, the lack of standardisation of fourteen generations back to Woden seen in the other genealogical lines suggests a genuine tradition.[344] Therefore, given the probable legitimacy of the Lindsey line, it is entirely possible that the other genealogies, standardised or no, may also have legitimate early ancestors included.

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 3	**HARLEY 3859, f. 180r, 187v**	**HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA**
Aeðelbehrt Uihtreding		Aedilberct

336 Dumville, "Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," p, 873, n. 2.
337 Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*," pp. 198 – 199; Rowley (transl.), *Historia Britonum*, pp. 30 – 33.
338 Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," 90.
339 Dumville, "The Anglian Collection," 48, n. 6; Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," p. 90.
340 Frank M. Stenton, "Lindsey and its Kings," in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England, Being the Collected Papers of Frank Merry Stenton* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 127 – 135, here pp. 129 – 130.
341 Foot, "The Kingdom of Lindsey," p. 133.
342 Caitlin Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons: Lincolnshire AD 400 – 600* (Lincoln: History of Lincolnshire Committee, 2012), pp. 100 – 101.
343 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 100.
344 Green, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons*, p. 101.

Uihtred Ecgberhting		Uictred[345]
Ecgberht Erconberhting	Ecgberth	Ecgberht[346]
Erconberht Eadbalding	Ercunbert	Earconberct
Eadbald Eðilberhting	Eadbald	Eadbald
Eðilberht Iurmenricing	Ealdbert	Aedelberct
Iurmenric Oes[…]	Eormoric	Irminric
Oese Ocging	Ossa	Octa
Ocga Hengesting	Octha	Oeric Oisc
Hengest Uitting	Hengist	Hengist
Uitta Uihtgilsing	Guictgils	Uictgils
Uihtgils Uegdaeging	Guitta	Uitta
Uegdaeg Uodning	Guectha	Uecta
Uoden Frealafing	Uuoden	Uoden
	Frealaf	
	Fredulf	
	Finn	
	Folcpald	
	Geta	

Fig. 11: Line of Kent

The Kentish genealogy is the oldest attested genealogy of an Early English kingdom that listed legendary ancestors. The descent was first given in Bede, after which it appeared in both the *HB* and Vespasian. In addition, the genealogical line for Kent has a longer line of kings that can be reliably considered historical. Although Æthelberht I is perhaps the most famous of Kentish kings because of his conversion to Christianity and his set of laws, it is possible that his father Eormenric

[345] Bede narrated that Wictred shared the rule of Kent with Swaebhard, but it is unknown what relationship Swaebhard had with Wictred. In addition, Bede related that Wictred had left his kingdom to his three sons, Æthelbert, Eadbert, and Alric. See Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.8, V.22 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 217; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 322).

[346] Bede recorded that Ecgberht had a brother, Hlothhere, who succeeded him as king, and a son named Edric who usurped Hlothhere. See Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV.5, IV.26 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 348; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 215).

was also a historical figure.[347] Æthelberht was mentioned, albeit not by name, by Gregory of Tours in his *Historia Francorum* as "a King of Kent."[348] Although this is an incredibly vague reference, Bede also named him in the Kentish genealogy he provided.[349] Given Æthelbert's historicity, it is likely that his father Eormenric was also a genuine tradition.

There are some inconsistencies between the three lines given above. The son of Woden in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is given as Wecta, whereas in Vespasian he is Wegdaeg. It is possible that Wecta was simply a shortening of the name Wegdaeg, as suggested by Dumville, which seems highly possible.[350] Witta and Wihtgils in Bede are reversed in Vespasian, whereas this order is maintained in *HB*. There is also some confusion between the three versions of the son of Hengist. In Bede, the son of Hengist is Oeric Oisc, from whom the term *Oiscingas* is derived (a collective term used to refer to the Kentish royal line).[351] Bede then stated his son, and the father of Eormenric, was named Octa.[352] These names were given in reverse order in Vespasian and *HB*. This may have been a scribal error, given the similarity of the names, or it may have been a result of differing traditions. After this, the genealogies largely align.

It is also interesting that in Vespasian, Kent and Deira are listed as being descended from Wegdaeg. This was most likely because of a political alliance that necessitated a genealogical link. Edwin of Deira married Æthelburh of Kent, daughter of Æthelbehrt I in AD 625.[353] This facilitated the Christianisation of Deira, as it was a condition of the betrothal and marriage that Edwin allow the conversion of his people by the Bishop Paulinus.[354] Therefore, linking the two genealogies was

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[347] For Æthelberht's conversion to Christianity, see Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I.25 – I.26 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 44 – 47; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 74 – 77).

[348] Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison (eds), *Gregorii Turonensis Opera, Teil 1: Libri historiarum X* in MGH SS. rer. Merov. 1,1 (Hannover, 1951), p. 445; Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, transl. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1974), p. 513.

[349] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 90; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 112).

[350] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," p. 79, n. 46. Dumville does not definitively state this, but he suggests this contra Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 325, who states that "Uegdaeg in the Vespasian group is not philologically equivalent to Bede's Uecta [or] Nennius's Guechta…"

[351] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 90; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 112).

[352] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 90; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 112).

[353] MS Vespasian B VI/1, ff. 109r, col. 3, 109v, col 3; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.9 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 97; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 118).

[354] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.9 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 97 – 98; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 118).

logical, in that it represented a political alliance rather than a perceived line of descent.[355] Dumville "[suggests] that descent from Woden expresses an Anglian origin, or perhaps – more cautiously – belief in an Anglian origin."[356] This may very well be true, but it is significant that the most "ancient" genealogy provided by Bede was the Kentish one, with only a vague statement that from Woden "sprang the royal house of many provinces."[357] Bede's emphasis on Kent and their origins may imply a prestige in being linked with Kent, the first of the Early English kingdoms to be Christianised and (allegedly) the first Christian king to have overlordship over other kingdoms.[358] Nevertheless, this linking of the genealogies demonstrates an active role that kings and their families played in constructing the genealogies. It was not simply a scribe or monk who was writing down a tradition, but rather these were actively evolving documents.

VESPASIAN B. vi, f. 109v, col. 2	**HARLEY 3859, f.188r**	**HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA**
Aelfwald Alduulfing	Elric	
Alduulf Eðilricing	Adul	
Eðilric Ening	Edric	Eorpwald
Eni Tyttling	Ecni	Rædwald
Tyttla Wuffing	Tydil	Tyttla
Wuffa Wehing	Guffan	Wuffa
Wehha Wilhelming	Guecha	
Wilhelm Hyrping	Guilem Guechan	
Hryp Hroðmunding	Rippan	
Hroðmund Trygling	Rodmunt	
Trygil Tyttmaning	Trigil	
Tyttman Casering	Titinon	
Caser Uodning	Casser	
Uoden Frealafing	Uoden	

Fig. 12: Line of East Anglia (I)

[355] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," pp. 79 – 80.
[356] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," p. 79.
[357] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 31; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 63).
[358] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, p. 89; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 111).

HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA
Rægenhere
Rædwald
Tyttla
Wuffa

Fig. 13: Line of East Anglia (II)

HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA
Sigbert (?)
Rædwald
Tyttla
Wuffa

Fig. 14: Line of East Anglia (III)

The last genealogy listed is that of East Anglia, which differed the most from the narrative in Bede. As we can see, only two kings from Vespasian and the *HB* can be corroborated with the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. This may be due to the confused state of succession and descent that is evident from Bede's accounts of East Anglia. Bede does provide a genealogy for the East Anglian kings up to a certain King Raedwald, who "was a man of noble descent but ignoble in his actions: he was the son of Tytila, and grandson of Wuffa, after whom all kings of the East Angles are called Wuffings."[359] Raedwald has been linked with the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.[360] It is possible that the reason why Rædwald and his sons Eorpwald, Rægenhere, and Sigbert were excluded from the Vespasian and *HB* genealogies was because their line had died out, although this model did not apply to Bernicia or Mercia. It may be that Rædwald was excluded due to his apostasy, as Bede related that after he converted to Christianity, "he had in the same shrine an altar for the holy Sacrifice of Christ side by side with a small altar on which victims were offered to devils."[361] His son Eorpwald had converted to Christianity and was possibly killed for it, as Bede stated that he "was killed by a pagan named Ricbert, and for three years the province relapsed into heathendom.[362] He

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[359] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).
[360] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 9, 158.
[361] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).
[362] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).

was succeeded by his brother Sigbert, who was not said to have had any descendants, and was succeeded by Ecgric, his "kinsman," whom Bede did not elucidate upon.[363] Ecgric and Sigbert were killed in battle against Penda, and the descendants of Eni then ruled East Anglia thereafter.[364] Sigbert may not have been the son of Rædwald, but rather the half-brother of Eorpwald from a different father.[365]

Bede does provide the descendants from Eni, although he does not explicitly link Eni with the line of Wuffa, only stating that he was "an excellent man of royal stock, and father of a distinguished family."[366] He listed three sons of Eni: Anna, Æthelwald, and Æthelhere, none of whom appear in the Vespasian or *HB* genealogies either. Æthelric, who is listed as a son of Eni in Vespasian and *HB*, is not mentioned by Bede, and it is unknown if he was a fourth brother or if his name is a corruption of one of the other three brothers. Sam Newton suggests that Æthelric and Ecgric may in fact be the same individual, but Barbara Yorke argues that the "first-name elements are two distinct forms, both well-attested among the Anglo-Saxons."[367] In addition, it is likely that the Alduulf listed in the genealogies was Aldwulf, the "king of that province [East Anglia]" who seems to have been a source for Bede's information on Rædwald's "paganism" and apostasy.[368] The confused state of the East Anglian genealogy may simply be due to Bede's lack of sources as well as the lack of any extant material from East Anglia itself because of Viking raids on monasteries.

What is significant here is Bede's highlighting of Eni's descent as "distinguished" even though it is not explicitly provided. This is indicative of a wider perspective in the *HE* that Bede's perception of legitimate kingship was rooted in descent. Foot notes that Bede consistently situates kings within their wider familial relations and descent, but perhaps more significantly he situates kings as they relate to those important for the establishment of Christianity in England.[369] Thus, even though kings in Bede's day and well through the ninth century claimed descent from pre-

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[363] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15, III.18 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 116, 162; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 133, 172).
[364] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.18, III.22 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 163, 174; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 172, 180).
[365] Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 62.
[366] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.18 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 163 *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 172).
[367] Sam Newton, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald: The Story of the King linked to the Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial* (Colchester, 2003), p. 44; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 68.
[368] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).
[369] Foot, "Bede's Kings," pp. 34 – 36.

Christian deities and legendary figures, within Bede's Christian ideals of kingship, descent remains a significant factor. Akin to the Irish genealogies and succession, direct descent from father to son was prioritised in the genealogies, even if true succession did not occur in that fashion. Those who had distant ties to the ruling lines or usurpers could achieve rule, but it seems that for those individuals, assertion of their legitimacy was stressed even further.

Another important aspect to discuss here is the presence of Caser, son of Woden. This is clearly meant to be Caesar, but what are we to make of his place in the genealogies for the East Anglian kings and the son of a pre-Christian deity? Perhaps it was a tacit comment on a perceived *romanitas* of the East Anglian kingdom, an attempt to link themselves to either a pre-Christian imperial past or the Byzantine kingdom. We do not know of specific ties that the East Anglian kings had to the Roman Empire, but it is worth noting that the Sutton Hoo burial (discussed below) contained Byzantine goods. Thus, it is possible that the Roman emperors were held up as models of kingship for East Anglian kings.

Through a systematic analysis of the figures listed in the Anglian genealogies, a number of features become apparent. The first is that the thirteen and fourteen generations per genealogy follows the same tesseradecad formula that the Déisi genealogies follow which indicates the influence that the genealogy of Jesus had upon the construction of these genealogies. While a late-eighth or early-ninth century date was established for these genealogies already, it is evident they were produced in a Christian context even with the inclusion of pre-Christian figures, whom we will discuss in more detail below. In addition, another aspect is the invisibility of women. While it is probable that some of the genealogies were artificially tied together through the sharing of the same ancestor, suggesting marital ties between kingdoms like Bernicia and Mercia, descent from specific queens is not highlighted. The legitimacy of kings is demonstrated from a retrospective view, with the lack of mention of certain kings and their descendants indicating that it was not politically prudent to declare descent from these men or even to list that they once ruled. The best example here is Rædwald and his sons' exclusion from the genealogies, and it is very possible this was Rædwald's apostasy influencing later opinions of him. This is further exemplified by the evidence that his sons were Christian, and thus there would be no specific reason to exclude them otherwise. Another evident aspect of these genealogies is the inclusion of legendary figures. We have already discussed Offa of Mercia's links to the legendary Offa of Angeln, but it is important to discuss a few of the other figures listed in the genealogies.

2.9 Where is Woden? A Reconsideration of a Ancestor Deity

As we have seen above, the genealogies reflected political ties and dynastic shifts. Nevertheless, the genealogies represented more than family lines and politics. There were significant individuals, namely pre-Christian deities and legendary figures, included in each line of the Anglian kings that served not only to provide prestige to their descendants but to function as a larger part of the ideology of kingship. The key to understanding how these deities contributed and reinforced this ideology is to identify them and their characteristics and legendary deeds in the source material.

The sources are not limited to early medieval England. There are continental, Scandinavian, and English sources that record tales of these deities that should be considered when attempting to understand their significance in the genealogical material. This process falls under the danger of promoting pan-Germanism that was popular before and during the Nazi regime, and since scholars have been careful to state that Germanic-speaking groups did not have a shared sense of culture or identity.[370] This is an important aspect to consider when we analyse these figures, and that a possible shared worship of deities across several cultures tied by similar languages does not mean there was a sense of a wider shared community or ethnic affiliation.

Nevertheless, elites among the early medieval English perpetuated and maintained a distant past on the Continent, and this idea informed belief structures and cultural markers. Bede stated clearly that the origins of the English lay on the continent in a passage regarding the pagan peoples who remained unconverted to Christianity:

> "[…] quarum in Germania plurimas nouerat esse nationes, a quibus Angli vel Saxones, qui nunc Brittaniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur; unde hactenus a uicina gente | Brettonum corrupte Garmani nuncupantur. Sunt autem Fresones, Rugini, Danai, Hunni, Antiqui Saxones, Boructuari; sunt alii perplures hisdem in partibus populi paganis adhuc ritibus seruientes[…]"
>
> "[Bishop Ecgbert] had learned that there were many such nations in Germany, of whose stock came the Angles or Saxons now settled in

[370] For a discussion on the racist background of Pan-Germanism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Kim Su Rasmussen, "Foucault's Genealogy of Racism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28:5 (2011): 34 – 51; for a discussion on the politicisation of history and archaeology during the Nazi regime, see Bettina Arnold, "The Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany," *Antiquity* 64:244 (1990): 464 – 478.

> Britain, who are called 'Garmans' by their neighbours the Britons. These nations include the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Boructuars besides many other races in that region who still observe pagan rites."[371]

It is clear from this passage that Bede was aware of a past on the Continent, which is also reaffirmed through his passages on the coming of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to Britain.[372] This was a view shared by St Boniface (d. 754), missionary to the Frisians and other Continental peoples, who mentioned the "Old Saxons" in his correspondences and referred to their shared origins with the Christianised Saxons in England.[373] While we do not have written accounts from the non-Christian peoples to corroborate these attitudes, there seem to be some shared cultural elements between groups like the Continental Saxons, Norse, and other groups. It is also necessary to state that while there may have been some shared cultural aspects, each group was still very distinct. Thus, it is difficult to interpret aspects of a deity in one culture based on how that deity was worshipped elsewhere. While similarities exist, there remain significant cultural differences that likely influence the conception of deities across cultures that have some shared language and belief systems.

As we have established the historical context for the genealogical tracts, the aim is to examine certain deities and legendary figures that have appeared in the genealogical tracts. The focus will be on analysing Woden and his role in the genealogies as he is the most recognisable deity in the genealogies. There are of course other figures that can be discussed, like Geat and Beldaeg, but the surviving early medieval evidence for these figures is even more scant than what exists for Woden. Moreover, Woden is a progenitor figure in all of the Anglian genealogies, and while Geat is referenced it seems that he did not hold the same level of import as Woden did.

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[371] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V.9 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 296; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 278).

[372] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 30 – 32; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 62 – 63).

[373] "Letter of Boniface to the whole English race, appealing for the conversion of the Saxons (738)," transl. Edward Kyle, reprinted in *English Historical Documents*, pp. 747 – 748; "Letter of Boniface and seven other missionary bishops to Æthelbald, king of Mercia, urging him to reform (746 – 747)," transl. Kyle, in *English Historical Documents*, p. 753; for a discussion on the conversion of the Frisians, see Rob Means, "With One Foot in the Font: the Failed Baptism of the Frisian King Radbod and the 8th-Century Discussion about the Fate of Unbaptized Forefathers," in Pádraic Moran & Immo Warntjes (eds), *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship: A Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 577 – 596.

Perhaps one of the most well-known of the "Germanic" gods, Woden is in fact a difficult figure to understand within the context of the early medieval period due to the lack of contemporary and reliable sources on pre-Christian religions.[374] Most of the source material on this figure is highly problematic, much of it being written from a Christian perspective. The material is not beyond usefulness, as elements of the narratives can be used comparatively with one another and with archaeological and linguistic material to extract useful information for a cult of Woden in early medieval England and elsewhere in Europe. First the Early Medieval English evidence will be assessed in order to understand the extent of the cult of Woden in England at the time. This will be compared against Continental evidence for Woden, to see if these sources can shed more light on this figure.

The earliest attribution of Woden in Early Medieval England is Bede, although his reference to Woden is very brief. He is only mentioned in the account of the arrival of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to Britain:

> "Aduenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis. De Iutarum origine sunt Cantuarii et Uictuarii, hoc es tea gens, quae Uectam tenet insulam, et ea, quae usque hodie in prouincia Occidentalium Saxonum Iutarum natio nominator, posita contra ipsam insulam Uectam. De Saxonibus, id est ea regione, quae nunc Antiquorum Saxonum cognominatur, uenere Orientalies Saxones Meridiani Saxones, Occidui Saxones. Porro de Anglis, hoc est de illa patria, quae Angulus dicitur, et ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus inter prouincias Iutarum et Saxonum perhibetur, Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merei, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenes, id est illarum gentium quae ad Boream Humbri fluminis inhabitant, ceterique Anglorum populi sunt orti. Duces fuisse perhibentur eorum primi duo fratres Hengist et Horsa; e quibus Horsa postea occisus in bello a Brettonibus, hactenus in orientalibus Cantiae partibus monumentum habet suo nominee insigne. Erant autem filii Uictgilsi,

[374] He was known as Oðinn in Old Norse and Wuotan in Old High German.

> cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum prouinciarum regium genus originem duxit."
>
> "These newcomers were from the three most formidable [people] of Germany, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent and the Isle of Wight and those in the province of the West Saxons opposite the Isle of Wight who are called Jutes to this day. From the Saxons – that is, the country now known as the land of the Old Saxons – came the East, South and West Saxons. And from the Angles – that is, the country known as Angulus, which lies between the provinces of the Jutes and Saxons and is said to remain unpopulated to this day – are descended the East and Middle Angles, the Mercians, all the Northumbrian stock (that is, those people living north of the river Humber), and the other English peoples. Their first leaders are said to have been the brothers Hengest and Horsa. The latter was subsequently killed in battle against the Britons, and was buried in east Kent, where the monument bearing his name still stands. They were the sons of Wictgils, whose father was Witta, whose father was Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock sprang the royal house of many provinces."[375]

This is a relatively detailed account of the arrival of the ancestors of the English peoples, and as discussed previously, Bede linked the line of Hengest with the Kentish kings in a separate section. The identity of those figures beyond Hengest and Horsa are unknown, and Bede does not explain who these figures are. We can see that Woden is listed as the ultimate progenitor here, in contrast with Vespasian where Woden was the son of Frealaf, although Bede's silence on any figures past Woden should not be indicative that they did not exist.

[375] Sherley-Price has translated "populis" as "races" but in my view it is more appropriate to translate it as "peoples". Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, pp. 31 – 32; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 63).

Kenneth Harrison argued that Woden was not considered a deity at all, but only a hero and a mortal man, and thus his inclusion would be unproblematic for Bede.[376] In a slightly different vein, Molly Miller stated the following about Woden's inclusion in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*:

> "[…] the deeply Christian Bede was unperturbed by the fact that most of the Anglo-Saxon kings of his time claimed descent from the pagan god Woden: he knew (and relied on his readers' knowledge) that this was merely a conventional means of defining royalty."[377]

For Miller, Bede knew that Woden was a pagan god, but was otherwise not troubled about including him. Dumville agreed, maintaining that "[Woden's] inclusion at least is not intended to be taken literally in any reading of the genealogy" asserting that Woden was a marker of kingship and potentially Anglian dominance in England at the time.[378] It is important to acknowledge that we cannot view Bede as we would a modern historian.[379] Patrick Wormald was right to note that Bede was not one to spend much time discussing the pagan past of his peoples as Bede was very much a fundamentalist and focussed on Christianity; moreover, he was not forgiving of those who seemed to combine different faiths.[380] Bede may very well considered Woden to be an ancient king deified by his people, a devil or demon, or entirely fictional.[381] Nevertheless, it would likely not be politically expedient for him to condemn this figure, especially if the current king of Northumbria, Ceolwulf (r. 729 – 737) claimed descent from Woden as seen above in the Bernician genealogy. Thus, it is difficult to assess any particular reasoning why Woden himself was deemed to be the progenitor of several royal lines in England from this short passage, and thus it is necessary to view other types of evidence for Woden in early medieval England.

The other narrative Old English sources that mention Woden are either in tenth or eleventh century sources, or in manuscripts from this period: The *Nine Herbs Charm*, and it is included in the *Lacnunga* manuscript, the *Chronicon* by Æthelweard, a homily titled *De falsis diis* by Ælfric of Eynsham, and a poem known as *Maxims I* in the *Exeter Book*. The *Nine Herbs Charm* is a charm for the treatment of poisoning, and invokes both Woden and Christ; while it may very well have old

[376] Kenneth Harrison, "Woden," in Gerald Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), pp. 351 – 356.
[377] Miller, "Royal Pedigrees of the Insular Dark Ages," 212.
[378] Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists," p. 79.
[379] Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," pp. 30 – 31, 60 – 61.
[380] Wormald, "Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," pp. 60 – 61.
[381] Davis, "Cultural assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies," 25 – 26.

origins, the charm cannot be dated earlier than the manuscript.[382] Æthelweard was composing at the end of the tenth century, while Ælfric was writing circa 1000, and thus their works are too late for the purposes of this thesis.[383] *Maxims I*, although being from a tenth-century manuscript, may possibly be from the eighth century.[384] Its usefulness for understanding a cult of Woden must be assessed. The text is lengthy, and only a small part refers to Woden:

> "woden worhte weos
> wuldor alwalda
> rume roderas þæt is rice god
> sylf soð cyning."
>
> "Woden wrought idols,
> the Glorious Almighty
> the spacious heavens
> he is a powerful God,
> the true King himself (ll. 28 – 31)."[385]

The text denigrates Woden and compares him with the Christian God, and while this is a hostile text, it does indicate that Woden was viewed as a deity. That the text would chose to mention Woden is possibly indicative of his popularity, and thus the need to demote him and elevate the Christian God. While this text may signal that the cult of Woden was popular in the

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382 London, British Library MS Harley 585, ff. 160r – 163v, available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_585_f130r) (Accessed 12 April 2018); For a translation of the charm, see Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill, 1996), pp. 125 – 127.

383 Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, I.2, 4, 5, II.2, 19, III.4 (A. Campbell, *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962), pp. 9, 12 – 13, 18, 25, 33); Ælfric of Eynesham, "On the false gods," in John C. Pope (ed.), *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, vol. 2, Early English Text Society 260 (London, 1968), pp. 667 – 724; Æthelweard's references are due to his copying on the *ASC* but was likely also influenced by Scandinavian beliefs after their settlement in England. In addition, Ælfric's work seems to be a comment on Scandinavians also due to the deity being called "Othin" rather than "Woden". See Audrey L. Meaney, "Æthelweard, Ælfric, the Norse Gods and Northumbria," *Journal of Religious History* 6:2 (1970): 105 – 132; see also Audrey L. Meaney, "Woden in England: A Reconsideration of the Evidence," *Folklore* 77:2 (1966): 105 – 115, esp. 105, 109.

384 Dennis Cronan, "Poetic Words, conservatism and the dating of Old English poetry," *Anglo-Saxon England* 33 (2004): 23 – 50, esp. 46 – 50.

385 For the text with facing translation, see "Gnomic verses, I – III," in Benjamin Thorpe (ed. and transl.), *Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry from a Manuscript in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter* (London, 1842), p. 341.

seventh and eighth centuries, it does not lend insight into why Woden specifically was important. It is clear from the Old English narrative material that we cannot understand any particular characteristics of Woden, past his association with royal houses and that he was perceived as a rival to God. To understand this figure further, attestations from Continental narrative sources will be examined to see if they can shed more light on this individual.

Before a discussion on the contemporary Continental sources, it is necessary to discuss what has been known as the earliest attributed mention of Woden. It has been assigned to Cornelius Tacitus (c. 56 – c. 120 AD) in his work *Germania*, written in 98 A.D. (sometimes referred as *De Origine et Situ Germanorum*). In describing the religion of the Germanic peoples, he states:

> Deorum maxime Mercurium colunt, qui certis diebus humanis quoque hostiis litare fas habent. Herculum ac Martem concessis animalibus placant, pars Sueborum et Isidi sacrificat."
>
> "Mercury is the deity whom they chiefly worship, and on certain days they deem it right to sacrifice to him even with human victims. Hercules and Mars they appease with more lawful offerings. Some of the Suevi also sacrifice to Isis."[386]

Scholars have interpreted this section as describing the worship of Woden (Mercury), Thunar/Þorr (Hercules), and Tiw (Mars) at least since Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (first published 1835).[387] Many scholars such as H.R. Ellis Davidson, Einar Haugen, Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., Bernadette Filotas, and Nicholas J. Higham have accepted with little issue that Tacitus was referring to Woden.[388] The justification for this view is based on the idea of the *interpretatio romana*, which

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[386] Cornelius Tacitus, *de Origine et Situ Germanorum Liber*, in *Opera Minor*, ed. Henry Furneaux (Oxford, 1990); For the English translation see Cornelius Tacitus, *Germany and its Tribes*," in *Complete Works of Tacitus*, transl. Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb, reprint (New York, 1942), 9.1 – 2.

[387] Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, pp. 108 – 137, 150 – 157, 179 – 188, 337 – 339. For the English translation, see Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, transl. by James Steven Stallybrass, vol. 1 (London, 1882), pp. 119 – 137, 147 – 154, 198 – 208, 363 – 365. Grimm is skeptical of the link between Hercules and Þorr, but otherwise accepts the attribution of Woden to Mercury and Mars to Tiw.

[388] H.R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Harmondsworth, 1964), pp. 56, 140; Einar Haugen, "The *Edda* as Ritual: Odin and His Masks," in Robert J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason (eds), *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg, 1983), pp. 2 – 24, here pp. 8 – 9; Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., "Hermes-Mercury and Woden-Odin as Inventors of Alphabets: A Neglected Parallel," in Alfred Bammesburger (ed.), *Old English Runes and their Continental Background* (Heidelberg, 1991), pp. 415 – 416; Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures* (Toronto, 2005), pp. 72 – 73; Nicholas J. Higham, "The Origins of

was an identification of Roman writers with gods of another culture with their own.[389] The relationship between Mercury (or his Greek counterpart Hermes) and Woden has been explained through a comparison of the Roman texts on Mercury and the thirteenth-century Icelandic material that describes Oðinn (Woden's Old Norse counterpart). They have been depicted as psychopomps (guides of the soul to the land of the dead), related to commerce and trade, inventors of writing, and associated with travelling, and carrying a staff.[390] Moreover, the middle day of the week, which was *dies Mercurii* in Latin (later *mercredi* in Modern French) and *Wodnesdæg* in Old English (Wednesday in Modern English), has been taken as proof of this link in Tacitus.[391]

There are several problems with these interpretations. The earliest extant record of the phrase *interpretatio romana* is from the *Germania* but relying on this as proof or an explanation of the Mercury/Woden attribution does not acknowledge how the process of *interpretatio romana* worked.[392] More specifically, how were these deities equated with one another? Was it through main characteristics of either deity, etymologically based, or some other factor that we are unaware of? Our understanding of the Germanic deities is largely based on the Icelandic sagas, and while these sources may be used carefully in understanding Scandinavian (and possibly Early English) belief systems, assuming their veracity in depicting Germanic beliefs on the Continent in the first century is more suspect. The length of time between when Tacitus was writing and the extant Icelandic sagas were written is over a one-thousand-year span, and while it may be possible for a substratum of Iron Age Germanic beliefs to be preserved in these texts, understanding what that may be is incredibly difficult. Tacitus never explicitly stated which Germanic gods of whom he was speaking, nor did he specify geographic areas or his sources. Moreover, it seems that he was directly quoting Julius Caesar from his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, although Caesar was speaking of the Gauls rather than the Germans.[393] Tacitus likely never travelled to Germania, and he imposes a broad and over-encompassing culture upon groups that were diverse and spread-out over large

England," in Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, 2013), pp. 70 – 111, here p. 102.

[389] Clifford Ando, "Interpretatio Romana," *Classical Philology* 100:1 (2005): 41 – 51, here 41.

[390] Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths*, pp. 140 – 141; Haugen, "The *Edda* as Ritual," pp. 8 – 9; Bremmer contests the identification of Woden as an inventor of runes, although he accepts that Woden and Mercury were linked. See Bremmer, "Hermes-Mercury and Woden-Odin," pp. 409 – 419.

[391] Haugen, "The Edda as Ritual," p. 8.

[392] Tacitus, 43.4; Ando, "Interpretatio Romana," 41 – 42.

[393] "Deum maxime Mercurium colunt." See C. Julius Caesar, *C. Iuli Commentarii Rerum in Gallium Gestarum VII A*, *A. Hirti Commentarius VIII*, ed. T. Rice Holmes (Oxford, 1914), VI.17.1.

distances.[394] In addition, the selective comparison used to make the connections between the Roman and Germanic deities is based on flawed assumptions. For example, the argument that Mercury and Woden were both gods of commerce is only useful if Woden was chiefly understood as such a deity. Woden has over two hundred other names in the Eddic material and skaldic verses that describe his various aspects, and of those very few relate to wealth or travel.[395] He is largely more associated with war and violence, but wisdom, madness, death, divinity, and magic are also significant. One could just as easily associate Woden with other Roman deities based on these names.

Scholars Peter Buchholz, Eve Picard, Ian Wood, and Philip A. Shaw have also been critical of this approach.[396] Picard notes that the similarities between Mercury/Hermes and the Germanic god Njörðr indicate that the Mercury-Woden interpretation is not even the most likely or valid one, and that by the same analysis scholars have used to compare Mercury/Hermes with Woden/Óðinn, one can also compare Mercury/Hermes with Loki and Freyr.[397] In reviewing the evidence, it is clear that Tacitus cannot be used to understand the Germanic belief systems. Thus, Tacitus' account is not useful for our understanding of Woden and his cult in early medieval England; it is too far removed from a historical context and attempting to find some link results in potential fallacies.

The other early sources that discuss Woden date to at least the seventh and eighth centuries, although there is later evidence from the ninth and tenth centuries that may refer to earlier practices and beliefs. Most of the sources are Continental, which present several difficulties in how we may use them for interpreting a cult of Woden in early medieval England. The earliest of these sources is Jonas of Bobbio's (c. 600 – 659) *Vita Sancti Columbani*, written between 640 and 643. In the *vita*, Jonas relates an incident during Columbanus' efforts to convert the Alamanni:

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[394] Alfred Gudeman, "The Sources of the Germania of Tacitus," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 31 (1900): 93 – 111.

[395] Neil S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala, 2002), pp. 100 – 107.

[396] Peter Buchholz, "Perspectives for Historical Research in Germanic Religion," *History of Religions* 8:2 (1968): 111 – 138, here 119 – 120; Eve Picard, "Germanisches Sakralköningtum? Quellenkritische Studien zur Germania des Tacitus und zur altnordischen Überlieferung" (PhD Thesis, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität zu Frankfurt am Main, 1991), pp. 82 – 88; Ian Wood, "Pagan Religions and Superstitions East of the Rhine from the Fifth to the Ninth Century," in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 253 – 279, here p. 254; Philip Andrew Shaw, "Uses of Wodan: The Development of his Cult and of Medieval Literary Responses to It," (PhD Thesis, The University of Leeds, 2002), pp. 20.

[397] Picard, "Germanisches Sakralkönigtum?" p. 86.

> "Quo cum moraretur et inter habitatores loci illius progrederetur, repperit eos sacrificium profanum litare velle, vasque magnum, quem vulgo cupam vocant, qui XX modia amplius minusve capiebat, cervisa plenum in medio positum. Ad quem vir Dei accessit sciscitaturque, quid de illo fieri vellint. Illi aiunt se Deo suo Vodano nomine, quem Mercurium, ut alii aiunt, autumant, velle litare. Ille pestiferum opus audiens vas insufflat, miroque modo vas cum fragore dissolvitur et per frustra dividitur, visque rapida cum ligore cervisae prorumpit; manifesteque datur intelligi diabolum in eo vase fuisse occultatum, qui per profanum ligorem caperet animas sacrificantum."

> "While he was staying there and was going among the inhabitants of this place, he discovered that they wished to perform a profane sacrifice. They had a large cask called a *cupa*, which held about twenty measures. It was full of beer and had been placed in their midst. When the man of God approached it he asks what they wanted to do with it. They tell him that they want to make an offering to their God, Woden, whom, as others say, they affirm to be Mercury. When Columbanus hears about this pestilential work, he blows on the cask. Astonishingly, it breaks with a crash and pieces shatter everywhere, and the great force of the explosion causes the beer to spill out. Then it is clear that the Devil had been concealed in the cask and that he had ensnared the souls of the participants with the profane drink."[398]

While Jonas equates Woden with Mercury, this does not necessarily lend any insight into a Germanic cult of Woden. The votive offering of beer may be more significant, although it does not offer specificity to the cult of Woden past that people gave offerings to him. In addition, we cannot be sure of the veracity of this narrative, although food (and possibly drink) offerings as well as possible ritual drinking vessels have been found in Iron Age and early medieval burials in England,

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[398] Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, I.27 (For an edited edition of the text, see Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani abbatis discipulorum eius libri II*, ed. Bruno Krusch, in MGH SS rer. Germ. 37 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1905), pp. 1 – 294, here p. 102; For the English translation, see Jonas of Bobbio, "Life of Columbanus," in Alexander O'Hara & Ian Wood, transl., *Life of Columbanus, Life of John of Réome, and Life of Vedast* (Liverpool, 2017), pp. 159 – 160. The text says *Suevi* here, but O'Hara & Wood state that *Suevi* is often used for several different groups, and the text here is referring to the Alamanni).

Denmark, Sweden, and Germany that speak to their ritual functions.[399] Moreover, other references to votive food offerings and drunkenness in relation to un-Christian attitudes have been recorded in early medieval canons, penitentials, and hagiographies.[400]

What other evidence do we have to consider for Woden? Other scholars have looked to place-name evidence as evidence of his cult. Several places have been identified in England as preserving Woden in some form, although some are now lost.

1. Woodnesborough "Woden's Tumulus", Kent.[401]
2. *Wodnesbeorh*, "Woden's Tumulus", now known as Adam's Grave, Wiltshire.[402]
3. Wenslow Hundred, "Woden's Hill", Bedfordshore.[403]
4. Wednesfield, "Woden's field", Staffordshire.[404]
5. Wednesbury, "Woden's fortified place", Staffordshire.[405]
6. Wansdyke, "Woden's Ditch", Wiltsire/Somerset.[406]

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[399] J.M. Bond, "Burnt Offerings: Animal Bone in Anglo-Saxon Cremations," *World Archaeology* 28:1 (1996): 76 – 88, here 82; R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," *Scientific American* 184:4 (1951): 26; Thomas Eriksson, "Suttung's Mead and Jugs with Tubular Handles in Sweden," in Paul Eklöv Petterson (ed.), *Prehistoric Pottery Across the Baltic: Regions, Influences and Methods*, British Archaeological Reports S2785 (Oxford, 2016), pp. 59 – 74; Vera I. Evison, "Germanic Glass Drinking Horns," *Journal of Glass Studies* 17 (1975): 74 – 87; Anne Hoffman, "Drinking Horns in Old Norse Culture: A Tradition under Examination," in Leszek Gardeła & Agnieszka Půlpánová-Reszczyńska (eds), *Analecta Archaeologica Ressoviensia, Vol. 10: Rituals in the Past* (Rzeszów: Institute of Archaeology, Rzeszów University, 2015), pp. 241 – 270, here pp. 241 – 257.

[400] For example, see Canon 20 from the Second Synod of Orléans: "Catholics who return to the worship of idols or eat food offered to idols, must be dismissed from Church membership," see "Second Synod at Orléans," in Right Rev. Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*, vol. IV, transl. William R. Clark (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 187; "Catholici qui ad idolorum cultum, non custodita ita integrum accepti gratia, reverentur, vel qui cibis idolorum cultibus immolates gustu illicitae praesumptionis utuntur, ab ecclesiae coetibus arceatur," from Giovanni Domenico Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum Conciliorum: Nova, et Amplissima Collectio* (Florence, 1762), p. 838; Landowners were forbidden to accept "what was given to idols" as payment in the ninth-century *Penitential of Pseudo-Gregory*: "Prohiberi placuit, ut cum ratione suas accipient possessores, quidquid ad idolum datum fuerit, accepto non ferant […]," from "Poenitentiale Pseudo-Gregorii," in F.W.H. Wasserschleben (ed.), *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche, nebst einer rechtsgeschichtlichen Einleitung* (Halle: Ch. Grager, 1851), p. 540; St Vedast destroyed a vat of beer at a banquet that was set out for pagan rites by blowing on it, see Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Vedastis episcopi Atrebatensis*, 7, ed. Bruno Krush in MGH SS rer. Germ 37 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1905), pp. 295 – 320 here pp. 314 – 315.

[401] Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 148 – 149.

[402] Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 148; Meaney, "Woden in England," p. 106.

[403] Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 180; Meaney, "Woden in England," p. 106.

[404] Gelling and Cole, *Landscape of Place-Names*, p. 276; Meaney, "Woden in England," p. 106.

[405] Meaney, "Woden in England," p. 106.

[406] Tim Malim, "Grim's Ditch, Wansdyke, and the Ancient Highways of England: Linear Monuments and Political Control," *Offa's Dyke Journal* 2 (2020): 160 – 199, esp. 163.

7. *Wodnes dene*, “Woden’s valley”, near Overton, Wiltshire.[407]
8. *Wodnesfeld*, “Woden’s field”, in Widdington, Essex.[408]
9. *Wedynsfeld*, “Woden’s field”, in Theydon, Essex.[409]

Do these places indicate sites of pre-Christian worship? It is very difficult to say why these places are named as they are. The *ASC* has a reference to a *Wodnes beorg*, sub annis 592, and while the contemporaneity of this annal cannot be determined, it is possibly a very early reference to a site named after Woden.[410] Margaret Gelling argues that these sites indicate belief in Woden, implying perhaps a pre-Christian origin for them.[411] She has noted the spread of these names along with others that indicate a deity’s name or perhaps a place of a shrine or site of worship, pointing out that there are few in areas that were later settled by the Danes while others are along kingdom borders.[412] She also notes that Wednesbury, Staffordshire is the site of a church and it may be situated on top of an older pre-Christian site of worship.[413] While this would only be potentially confirmed with archaeological excavations below the foundations of the church, it is an intriguing possibility. Nevertheless, what these places tell us alongside the sparse but still important evidence of Woden as an ancestor deity is that there was a cult of Woden in early medieval England and that it was very likely widespread. Thus, kings and their families claiming descent from this figure even after conversion to Christianity may have had relevance for a wider populace. It is unknown how much regular people would have engaged with cults like these before conversion to Christianity, and how much figures like Woden would enter into popular folklore on a conscious level. It is very possible that even if Woden was euhemerised as an ancient legendary king or perhaps a supernatural figure (but not a deity), royal association with him was important and necessary for claiming kingship.

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[407] J.S. Ryan, “Othin in England: Evidence from the Poetry for a Cult of Woden in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Folklore* 74:3 (1963): 460 – 480, here 463; Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England*, 2nd ed., (Chichester, 1988), pp. 148 – 149.

[408] F.M. Stenton, “Presidential Address: The Historical Bearing of Place-Names Studies: Anglo-Saxon Heathenism,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (1941): 1 – 24, here 19; Meaney, “Woden in England,” 106.

[409] Stenton, “The Historical Bearing of Place-Name Studies,” 19; Meaney, “Woden in England,” 106.

[410] *ASC* s.a. 592; Chaney states that there is a reference to *Wodnes dene* in the *ASC* s.a. 792 (MS E), but it is not recorded in Plummer’s edition or the translation by Whitelock, Douglas, and Tucker, both of which include this manuscript. See Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 36 – 37.

[411] Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, pp. 148 – 150.

[412] Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, pp. 158 – 161, fig. 11.

[413] Gelling, *Signposts to the Past*, p. 161.

2.10 Conclusion

Genealogies played a key role in the legitimisation of sacral kingship in both early medieval Ireland and early medieval England. Descent from legendary ancestors and deities is demonstrated in the genealogies of both Irish kings and English kings, and it is apparent that genealogies were constructed documents that were not markers of biological descent. Rather, they reflected political allegiances, rivalries, territorial changes, and above all were meant to promote the rule of a king and his descendants. Descent from deities like Woden establish these kings and their descendants as having a direct link to a sacral figure. Even if he was eventually turned into an ancient king, there was still a sense that there was an inherent quality he possessed that would set his descendants apart. Niall Noígíallach was never depicted as a deity in the texts, but his association with Tara and his preeminent status as a king of Tara indicates that he was viewed as a sacral king.

The role of female ancestors has been more difficult to understand. It is impossible to determine if the descendants of the Uí Brigte were seen as sacral in the same sense as the Uí Néill kings or the English kings were. The Uí Brigte may still have ultimately claimed descent from another deity or legendary figure that would still elevate them over regular people, but the extent to which the petty kings were set apart as sacral figures is still unknown. Brigit of the Déisi may have been a legendary figure herself. This thesis does not agree with the argument that she was a double for St Brigit, but it may be possible that she was still legendary in her own right. She also may have just been seen as an elite woman. There was quite possibly some prestige attached to her that would lead to a family named after her, but it is also possible that the name was given to her descendants because they never ruled the Déisi. This does not mean they were peasants or never had control of a túath but it is likely they were low on the ladder of petty kings in Co. Waterford. Nevertheless, we have seen that it is a strong possibility that these female eponymous ancestors may have been delegitimising factors for kingship in early medieval Ireland, depending perhaps on her own origins. Thus, in early medieval Ireland, descent from powerful kings from the right wife was important for establishing and explaining the right to rule. Like figures like Woden, these kings held inherent qualities that were imparted upon their descendants.

The Anglian genealogies may be short and provide little information about all of the men named within past who we can cross-reference with other sources. Nevertheless, genealogies were evidently important for kings and their families. Even Bede, whose own views on kingship are often not readily apparent in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, kings tracing their histories back to the founding

fathers of their kingdoms and to pre-Christian deities elevated their status and marked them out as having the right to rule. The genealogies also demonstrate that the ancestry of kings can be dubious or modified, and that many kings had to link themselves back to ancestors from several generations previous when they usurped power or during a power struggle when previous lines failed. It was important to include legendary figures in the genealogies to bolster their status, and thus we see legendary figures like Offa of Angeln, Caesar, and Woden.

What is also apparent is the stark differences between these genealogies and the Irish genealogies. The Irish genealogies have centuries of accumulated material and conflicting sources and exist in manuscripts that are far removed from the early medieval period. There were perhaps additional goals in the Irish genealogies that we do not see in the English genealogies, like an antiquarian desire to preserve lines in the texts for families whose political power either faded or held none at all. It is possible that the compiler of the Anglian genealogies had an antiquarian interest in the Kingdom of Lindsey, a kingdom of no political relevance by the time these were compiled but perhaps whose descendants still existed as petty kings or nobles under Mercian or Northumbrian rule. There is little we can know about them without corroborating sources, but this also demonstrates the complexities and nuances of a short and brief text like the Anglian genealogies. The Uí Néill genealogies, based on the lines from Niall's sons are roughly similar in lines as the entirety of the Anglian genealogies, but are considerably more confused and contradictory. The other ruling families elsewhere in Ireland have even more complex branches. This mass of textual information thus presents interpretive difficulties because the layers are very difficult to separate. Even smaller genealogies for less-important dynasties are complex. The Uí Brigte genealogy is of a line whom we have no historical records to compare with, only a saga text. The place-name evidence for their settlement is extremely tenuous. It is clear that even obscure genealogies can present interesting venues of exploration for sacral kingship and the role of genealogies in the promotion of royal lines.

The genealogies were evidently important texts that emphasise the role of descent in the legitimisation of sacral kingship in early medieval Ireland and England. Kings had to demonstrate their descent from the legendary founding member of their line, around whom legends and myths are constructed. While this thesis has demonstrated that many of these myths and legends are later constructions and early myths on these figures are obscure, they were evidently necessary for

legitimising rule. Descent remains a significant factor with other forms of legitimisation as this thesis will demonstrate with the next chapter on inauguration rituals.

Chapter 3. Legitimacy through Ritual – Inauguration Rites

The process of investing a ruler with power through elaborate ceremonies, special clothing and items within a sacred space and often with the involvement of high-status religious individuals is a widespread phenomenon known as an inauguration ritual. Defining ritual is complex and nebulous; several different definitions have been proposed, together encompassing a wide range of activities.[1] For the purposes of this thesis, ritual is defined as a series of actions imbued with meaning informed by the beliefs of the agents involved with the ritual. For the majority of rituals discussed, belief may be more codified as religious practices, but it may also be more abstract as rituals become tradition and are thus continued out of tradition.[2] As Christina Pössel states, "the difference between ritualized and non-ritualized therefore has to lie in the framing of the event: ritual is not so much a category of action as of intention and perception."[3] This chapter will focus on a specific kind of ritual: inauguration. Inauguration rites are defined as an initiation ritual for investing an individual with a new societal, cultural, or religious role from their previous status, although for the purposes of this thesis, inauguration rites will cover the range of rituals that invest an individual with the

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[1] Christina Pössel, "The magic of early medieval ritual," *Early Medieval Europe* 17:2 (2009): 111 – 125, here 114.

[2] Rituals have largely been the purview of anthropologists, although the study of ritual has by and large moved past ritual in that field and towards semiotics. The study of ritual has been influenced heavily by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, even though their perspectives were still couched within an ethnographic Western gaze; Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, transl. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London, 1960), originally published as Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, 1909); See also Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 2nd ed., pp. vii – xliii; for more recent engagements with Van Gennep's life and work, see Rosemary Zumwalt, "Arnold Van Gennep: The Hermit of Bourg-la-Reine," *American Anthropologist* 84 (1982): 299 – 313; Wouter W. Belier, "Arnold Van Gennep and the Rise of French Sociology of Religion," *Numen* 41:2 (1994): 141 – 162; Victor Turner modified Van Gennep's theories on liminality within the ritual process, focussing specifically on the Ndembu people in Zambia. See Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithaca: 1967), pp. 93 – 111; Turner continued to explore these concepts in his later publications. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York, 1969); Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978); For responses to Turner, see Mathiew Deflem, "Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:1 (1991): 1 – 25; Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis. With a New Introduction* (Boston, 1993), pp. 93 – 99, 139 – 143; Donald Weber, "From Limen to Border: A Meditation on the Legacy of Victor Turner for American Cultural Studies," *American Quarterly* 47:3 (1995): 525 – 536; Tim Olaveson, "Collective Effervescence and Communitas: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner," *Dialectical Anthropology* 26 (2001): 89 – 124; Harry Wels, Kees van der Waal, Andrew Spiegel & Frans Kamsteeg, "Victor Turner and liminality: An introduction," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 34:1&2 (2011): 1 – 4; Graham St John (ed.), *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (New York, 2008); for more recent discussions on semiotics and ritual, see Rupert Stasch, "Ritual and Oratory Revisited: The Semiotics of Effective Action," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 159 – 174; Robert A. Yelle, *Semiotics of Religion: Signs of the Sacred in History* (London, 2013).

[3] Pössel, "The magic of early medieval ritual," 117.

special power to rule. They may be variously referred to as ordination or coronation, but as this thesis will demonstrate, these terms denote specific aspects of inauguration rites that are not widely applicable. We may ask ourselves why these rituals are so important, why for instance the filming of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was heavily opposed by "the Archbishop, the Earl Marshal and the Dean and Chapter of Westminster."[4] The anxiety surrounding a potential change in ritual is emblematic of the importance of these rituals. The fear of filming the coronation was to do largely with the idea that it was a mysterious event that the general populace should not view directly, and that it would detract from the sacrality and mystery of the event.[5] The removal of the mystery of the coronation did not work against the coronation but in fact was likely a useful tool in reiterating the British monarchy to the general public. These rituals provide an important aspect of the conferring of power within hierarchical structures, designed to demonstrate legitimacy and power.

The study of ritual in the medieval period has been discussed at length by historians such as Philippe Buc, who was highly critical of the study of ritual in the medieval period and more broadly the use of applying anthropological theory to the study of the middle ages.[6] He states that the historians who use social sciences to understand rituals are attempting to find the "truth" within the medieval texts, but that ultimately we cannot begin to understand reality or truth of these rituals as the texts which describe them are interpretive and subject to bias.[7] He goes on to argue that "there can be no anthropological readings of rituals depicted in medieval texts. There can be only anthropological readings of (1) medieval textual practices or perhaps (2) medieval practices that the historian has reconstructed using texts, with full and *constant* sensitivity of their status as texts."[8] This is largely the issue with interpreting any source from the medieval period. Moreover, in his conclusion, he accepts that some description of rituals (although he does not refer them as

[4] Wesley Carr, "This Intimate Ritual: The Coronation Service," *Political Theology* 4:1 (2002): 11 – 24, here 11.
[5] Carr, "The Coronation Service," 12.
[6] Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001), pp. 1 – 12; Philippe Buc, "Ritual and interpretation: the early medieval case," *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000): 183 – 210. Buc's perspective was largely informed by what he saw as a nebulous definition of ritual and the reduction of ritual to encompass such a broad range of actions that it is rendered meaningless, as well as a reliance on terminology without entire understanding of it. I would like to thank my colleague Dr Niall Ó Súilleabháin for alerting me to this debate.
[7] Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, p. 3.
[8] Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, p. 4.

such) were in fact useful within society and the textual descriptions of these acts do not need to be disposed of entirely.[9]

His interpretation of ritual has been subsequently critiqued by several other historians, such as Geoffrey Koziol, Alexandra Walsham, and Janet L. Nelson, who reject Buc's polemical criticisms of historians and social scientists.[10] Koziol notes in his review of Buc's monograph that neither medievalists nor ethnologists "[practise] naïve functionalism".[11] Moreover, he states that medievalists and social scientists have been very critical of the colonialist mid-twentieth century ethnographic studies.[12] Koziol points out that the study of ritual has shifted towards semiotics rather than discussions of ritual as discrete acts; in other words, "ethnologists stopped asking what any given ritual means and began asking instead how the meaning of rituals is constituted."[13] Buc is correct in that we should not accept the description of a ritual within a text uncritically, but the study of rituals within a medieval context can help historians understand how medieval peoples experienced and re-interpreted these rituals within textual material and how these rites were afforded further semiotic meaning through their depictions within text as they underwent evolution with subsequent practice. Moreover, analysing these rituals and how they informed the broader conception of kingship, the transference of power, and their function as part of a wider need to legitimise kings can aid our understanding in power relationships within early medieval Ireland and Britain.

Compared with the elaborate details regarding modern coronations, our knowledge of early medieval inaugurations, as well as what the ceremonies entailed, is scarce. That is not to say that inauguration rituals did not occur, simply because we do not have much surviving evidence. To quote Janet Nelson:

> "[T]he significance, political and symbolic, of inauguration rituals arose largely from the fact that no early medieval king ever simply succeeded

[9] Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, p. 256.
[10] Geoffrey Koziol, "Review article: The dangers of polemic: Is ritual still an interesting topic of study?" *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 367 – 388; Alexandra Walsham, "Review: The Dangers of Ritual," Review of *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*, by Philippe Buc, *Past & Present* 180 (2003): 277 – 282; Janet L. Nelson, Review of *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*, by Philippe Buc, *Speculum* 78:3 (2003): 847 – 851.
[11] Koziol, "The dangers of polemic," 373.
[12] Koziol, "The dangers of polemic," 373 – 374.
[13] Koziol, "The dangers of polemic," 386.

to his kingdom as a matter of course. A man might be born king-worthy, but he had to be made a king. In no kingdom of the early medieval West was there quickly established a very restrictive norm of royal succession."[14]

Primogeniture was not the standard form of succession in the early medieval period, and thus inauguration was used in order to establish legitimacy. A good example of this is Pippin, King of the Franks, who installed himself as king (after his deposal of Childeric III) through his anointing in 751 and subsequent re-anointment by Pope Stephen II in 754 also included the anointment of his wife Bertrada and his sons Carloman and Charlemagne.[15] Although Nelson points out that the

[14] Janet L. Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," in P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), p. 51; She has published extensively on inauguration rituals since the 1960s. See Janet Nelson, "The Problem of King Alfred's Royal Anointing," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18:2 (1967), pp. 145 – 163; Janet Nelson, "National Synods, Kingship as Office, and Royal Anointing: An Early Medieval Syndrome," in G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds), *Studies in Church History 7: Councils and Assemblies. Papers Read at the Eighth Summer Meeting and the Ninth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 41 – 59; Janet Nelson, "Ritual and Reality in the Early Medieval Ordines," in Derek Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History 11: The Materials Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History. Papers Read at the Twelfth Summer Meeting and the Thirteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 41 – 51; Janet Nelson, "Symbols in Context: Rulers' Inauguration Rituals in Byzantium and the West in the Early Middle Ages," in Derek Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History 13: The Orthodox Churches and the West. Papers Read at the Fourteenth Summer Meeting and the Fifteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 97 – 119; Nelson, "Inauguration Rituals," pp. 50 – 71; Janet Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*: Some Liturgical and Historical Aspects," in Brian Tierney and Peter Linehan (eds), *Authority and Power: Studies on Medieval Law and Government Presented to Walter Ullmann on his Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 29 – 48; Janet Nelson, "The Second English *Ordo*," in Janet Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), pp. 361 – 374; Janet Nelson, "Hincmar of Reims on King-making: The Evidence of the Annals of St. Bertin, 861 – 882," in János M. Bak (ed.), *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 16 – 35; Jinty (Janet) Nelson, "Carolingian Coronation Rituals: A Model for Europe?" *The Court Historian* 9:1 (2004): 1 – 13. There are several early studies on royal ordination and coronation with studies from German scholars. See G. Waitz, *Die Formeln der deutschen Königs- und der römischen Kaiserkrönung vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*, *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttengen* 18 (Göttingen, 1872); Eduard Eichmann, "Königs- und Bischofsweihe," in *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil. Hist. Klasse*, Abh. 6 (Munich, 1928); Percy Ernst Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, transl. L.G. Wickham (Oxford, 1937); Eduard Eichmann, *Die Kaiserkrönung im Abendland: Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, 2 vols. (Würzburg, 1942); Percy Ernst Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1954 – 1956); Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Könige und Päpste*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart, 1968).

[15] It is unclear who anointed Pippin in 751. Rosamond McKitterick is sceptical of the event and has argued that the previous explanations that the first anointment was at the behest of Pope Zacharias was a narrative constructed after Pippin established power. Rosamond McKitterick, "The Illusion of Royal Power in the Carolingian Annals," *English Historical Review* 115:460 (2000): 1 – 20; The evidence for Pippin's second anointing, and the anointing of his sons and wife are attested three texts; see Bruno Krusch (ed.), *Clausula de unctione Pippini* in MGH SS rer. Merov, 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 15 – 16; Frederick Kruze (ed.), *Annales Regni Francorum*, s.a. 754 in MGH SS rer. Germ. 6 (Hannover, 1895), p. 13; L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis*,

Frankish aristocracy, at least as seen in text, were not impressed with the ordination, nevertheless, Pippin's usurpation of the throne of Francia necessitated a ritual in order to demonstrate he was the rightful ruler.[16] The use of an inauguration ritual to legitimise the rule of a new king, especially an usurper, was not limited to Francia. Succession rites within early medieval Ireland and Britain were similarly complex, as there were several factors influencing succession to kingship, and even still there are aspects that are obscure. Succession practices will be discussed below for each respective place.

3.1 Irish Inauguration Rites

The historiography on Irish inauguration rituals has often focussed on the most (in)famous Irish inauguration rite is the one described by Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Topographia Hiberniae* (c. 1188), which is presented in a manner that is meant to demonstrate that the Irish people were uncivilised and unchristian:

> "Est igitur in boreali et ulteriori Ultoniae parte, scilicet apud Kenelcunnil, gens quaedam, quae barbaro nimis et abominabili ritu sic sibi regem creare solet. Collecto in unum universo terrae illius populo, in medium producitur jumentum candidum. Ad quod sublimandus ille non in principem sed in beluam, non in regem sed exlegem, coram omnibus bestialiter accedens, non minus impudenter quam imprudenter se quoque bestiam profitetur. Et statim jumento interfecto, et frustatim in aqua decocto, in eadem aqua balneum ei paratur. Cui insidens, de carnibus illis sibi allatis, circumstante populo suo et convescente, comedit ipse. De jure quoque quo lavatur, non vase aliquo, non manu, sed ore tantum circumquaque, haurit et bibit. Quibus ita rite, non recte completis, regnum illius et dominium est confirmatum."

> "There is in the northern and farther part of Ulster, namely in Kenelcunill, a certain people which is accustomed to appoint its king with a rite altogether outlandish and abominable. When the whole

vol. 1 (Paris, 1886), p. 448); McKitterick, "The Illusion of Royal Power in the Carolingian Annals," 4 – 8; See also Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," pp. 56 – 57; Nelson, "Carolingian Coronation Rituals," 3.

[16] Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," p. 57.

> people of that land has been gathered together in one place, a white mare is brought forward into the middle of the assembly. He who is to be inaugurated, not as a chief, but as a beast, not as a king, but as an outlaw, has bestial intercourse with her before professing himself to be a beast also. The mare is then killed immediately, cut up into pieces, and boiled in water. A bath is prepared for the man afterwards in the same water. He sits in the bath surrounded by all his people, and all, he and they, eat of the meat of the mare which is brought to them. He quaffs and drinks of the broth in which he is bathed, not in any cup, or using his hand, but just dipping his mouth into it round about him. When this unrighteous rite has been carried out, his kingship and dominion have been conferred."[17]

Despite the polemical and moralist tone of the text, several scholars have noted its similarities with the ancient Indian kingship rite, the Ashvamedha.[18] Katharine Simms' 1987 monograph *From Kings to Warlords* is a seminal monograph on the shifting political environments in late medieval Ireland, and her chapter on inauguration rituals has heavily influenced this thesis even though its focus is on the late period.[19] Nevertheless, Simms argues that some of these rites, namely the one described by Giraldus Cambrensis, may represent older traditions within early medieval Ireland.[20] While it is a useful exercise to examine how an inauguration ritual from the twelfth century may have its roots in older traditions, it does present an interpretive problem. We cannot know how old these traditions are in Ireland or the historicity of Giraldus' account.

Scholarship has also centred around the sovereignty goddess and the relationship with the king, either with the *banais rige* (the "wedding-feast of kingship") or the offering of a drink from the goddess to the king. It is clear from the textual material that the sovereignty goddess does not feature explicitly within the early texts that describe inaugurations, although evidently there is an

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[17] Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hiberniae*, 3.25. (J.S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner, (eds), *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*. *Volume 5: Topographia Hibernica, et Expugnatio Hibernica* (London, 1867), p. 169; Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, transl. John F. O'Meara, rev. ed (Oxford, 1982), p. 110. O'Meara numbered the chapters differently to the edition, who lists this passage under Book 3, Chapter 102).

[18] Myles Dillon, "The Consecration of Irish Kings," *Celtica* 10 (1972): 1 – 8.

[19] Katharine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1987), esp. ch. I – III.

[20] Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, pp. 21 – 22.

association between this figure and kingship. The *banais rige* has only been referenced in a few sources: a Middle Irish recension of *Tochmarc Emire*, the *Annals of Loch Cé*, and the *Annals of the Four Masters*.[21] The motif of the sovereignty goddess and the drink of sovereignty features in earlier texts along with etymological evidence. For instance, the early Uí Néill king-list *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig* (*BCC*), dated to the late seventh century, contains several references to kings drinking "it", which may reference the drink of sovereignty.[22] The later *Baile in Scáil* (*BiS*), dated to the late ninth century and reworked in the eleventh century, is a narrative reworking of *BCC* that describes the legendary ancestor king of the Connachta Conn Cétchathach meeting the god Lugh and his wife the sovereignty goddess, who pours Conn a drink for each of his descendants who become King of Tara.[23] There have been several publications on the theme of the sovereignty goddess in the textual material for decades, notably by T.F. O'Rahilly, Proinsias Mac Cana, Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, Bernhard Maier, Máire Herbert, Michael Enright, and Daniel Bray.[24] These articles are very useful examinations of the relationship between women and the feminine elements of sovereignty and kingship, although the relevance of this rite to early medieval Ireland and its realities of kingship have been criticised by Bart Jaski.[25] Jaski is right to be critical of this motif and its historicity, but we should not reject the concept of "sacral kingship" wholesale because of this. The sacrality of kingship in early medieval Ireland does not hinge upon the motif of the sovereignty goddess.

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[21] The later version of *Tochmarc Emire* is through its language a later text, although I have yet to find a specific date. For the text, see Kuno Meyer, "Mitteilungen aus Irischen Handschriften," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 3 (1901): 226 – 263, for the edition of the text see pp. 229 – 263, for the reference to *banais rige*, see p. 244; For a discussion of the dates of the recensions, see Gregory Toner, "The Transmission of 'Tochmarc Emire'," *Ériu* 49 (1998): 71 – 88; The *Annals of Loch Cé*, s.a. 1310; *AFM* s.a. 1475.

[22] Bhreathnach and Murray, "*Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*: Edition," esp. pp. 82 – 85, 89.

[23] For an edition and translation of the text, see Kevin Murray (ed. and transl.), *Baile in Scáil – The Phantom's Frenzy* (London and Dublin, 2004), pp. 33 – 67. The eleventh century additions appear to be sections added as propaganda for Cenél nEógain; for a discussion of the text and its dating, see Máire Herbert, "Goddess and King: the sacred marriage in early Ireland," in Louise O. Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 264 – 275; See also Kevin Murray, "The Manuscript Tradition of *Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig* and its Relationship with *Baile in Scáil*," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, pp. 69 – 72.

[24] T.F. O'Rahilly, "On the Origin of the Names Érainn and Ériu," *Ériu* 14 (1946): 7 – 28; Proinsias Mac Cana, "Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature," *Études celtiques* 7 (1955): 76 – 114; Proinsias Mac Cana, "Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature (suite et fin)," *Études celtiques* 8 (1958 – 1959): 59 – 65; Proinsias Mac Cana, "Women in Irish Mythology," *The Crane Bag* 4:1 (1980): 7 – 11; Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, "Women in Early Irish Myths and Sagas," *The Crane Bag* 4:1 (1980): 12 – 19; Bernhard Maier, "Sacral Kingship in Pre-Christian Ireland," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 41:1 (1989): 12 – 32; Herbert, "Goddess and King," pp. 264 – 275; Michael Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age* (Dublin, 1996); Daniel Bray, "Sacral Elements of Irish Kingship," in Carole M. Cusack and Peter Oldmeadow (eds), *This Immense Panorama: Studies in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe* (Sydney, 1999), pp. 105 – 116.

[25] Bart Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000), p. 63 – 72.

In addition to the textual analysis of references to inaugurations and sovereignty tropes, the archaeological evidence for possible inauguration sites has also been a focus of past scholarship. Perhaps the most significant recent literature on inauguration sites is Elizabeth Fitzpatrick's 2004 monograph *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c. 1100 – 1600: A Cultural Landscape Study*.[26] Fitzpatrick's study is focussed on identifying inauguration sites used in the high and late medieval periods, with some brief discussion of the early medieval usages of these sites. Nonetheless, she is sceptical of the historicity of the saga evidence and how it compares with the archaeological evidence of sites such as the Hill of Tara, Rathcroghan, and Emain Macha.[27] Her general argument is that the written sources are "unparalleled in the surviving high and late medieval allusions to inauguration rites" and are "fanciful".[28] Moreover, she argues that the late medieval references to inaugurations at Tara were "reflecting a contemporary reality and not intentionally elucidating antiquity."[29] Fitzpatrick argues that Tara may have held the role of a symbolic capital that was not in fact used for rituals, and thus we should not assume that it was a place of inauguration in the early medieval period.[30] Indeed, it has been noted that there is no archaeological evidence that specifically points to inauguration from Philip MacDonald's summary of the Crew Hill (Cráeb Telcha) archaeological survey.[31] Moreover, Fitzpatrick argues that "to assume that Irish royal inauguration practices were relicts [sic] of remote antiquity, inviolably carried into historic time, is to overlook one of the essential adventures of early medieval Irish kingship."[32] This is an important distinction to make with respect to discussing rituals of any kind: we should not presume that they are simply continuances of older rituals and rituals are often changed or updated. While her caution when dealing with difficult early sources is warranted, her argument that the texts were reflecting contemporary reality could just as easily be said of the early medieval texts. It is perhaps unproductive to assume a source is unusable because it is a saga text or hagiography, and the writers of said texts could have been enhancing or elaborating upon rituals they had witnessed themselves. Rather, it is necessary to examine these sources in detail as well as comparatively with

[26] Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c. 1100 – 1600: A Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, 2004). Her monograph is based on her earlier PhD thesis. See Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, "The Practice and Sitting of Royal Inauguration in Medieval Ireland," (PhD thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1997).
[27] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 4 – 5, 48 – 51.
[28] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 5, 49.
[29] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 51.
[30] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 48 – 49.
[31] Philip MacDonald, "Archaeological Evaluation of the Inaugural Landscape of Crew Hill (Cráeb Telcha), County Antrim," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser., 67 (2008): 84 – 106, but esp. 104 – 105.
[32] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 52.

archaeological material and sources from outside Ireland to determine commonalities and potential historicity.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive examination of inauguration sites for the early medieval period has yet to be undertaken, although there is currently work being done by Patrick Gleeson at QUB on assembly sites, a category in which he includes inauguration sites.[33] In addition, there have been several small articles regarding the excavation and landscape study of various potential inauguration sites, such as the aforementioned Cráeb Telcha, as well as Rathcroghan, Co. Roscommon and Knockainy Hill, Co. Limerick.[34] Evidently, there exists space to revisit inauguration in early medieval Ireland and also to synthesise the work that has been done by historians, literary scholars, and archaeologists in order to establish how these rituals were intrinsically tied to inauguration sites. This chapter will be divided into sections on various inauguration sites, with an analysis of any inauguration rites described at said sites as well as a discussion of the landscape and archaeology of these areas. The reason for this structure is that there are four possible inauguration sites that have associated texts on inauguration as well as important archaeological surveys: Tara, Cashel, Iona, and Dunadd. The focus will be on rituals described in early medieval texts, although I will on occasion discuss some later medieval rites where a comparison is useful for parsing the early material.

3.2 Tara

The Hill of Tara is an archaeological complex situated in Co. Meath, between the towns of Navan and Dunshaughlin.[35] There are over 30 monuments (man-made earthen structures and alterations to the land) on the hill itself, and the surrounding landscape contains several raths and burial sites.[36] Most of the monuments are dated variously from the Neolithic to the Late Iron Age, with possible early medieval activity also.[37] The first survey of the monuments at Tara was undertaken by George Petrie and published in 1839. It was based partially on the Ordnance Survey done by John

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[33] Patrick Gleeson, "Kingdoms, Communities, and Óenaig: Irish Assembly Practices in their Northwest European Context," *Journal of the North Atlantic* 8 (2015): 33 – 51.
[34] MacDonald, "Inaugural Landscape of Crew Hill," 84 – 106; Gerard Mulligan, "Archaeology and Myth: a consideration of the ancient royal site of Rathcrogan," *Archaeology Ireland* 25:3 (2011): 14 – 17; Tom Condit and Frank Coyne, "Knockainy Hill – a ceremonial landscape in County Limerick," *Archaeology Ireland*, Heritage Guide No. 27 (2004).
[35] Colin Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, Discovery Programme Monograph 2 (Dublin, 1997), p. 1.
[36] A rath (ráth in OIr) is an earthen rampart, usually translated as a "fort" but largely now just referred to as raths within the archaeological literature on Ireland. See eDIL, s.v. 2 ráth, ráith, dil.ie/34837; Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, pp. 1 – 2.
[37] Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, pp. 225 – 230.

O'Donovan, combined with Petrie's own analysis and comparison with the *Dindshenchas Erenn*, or the Place-name Lore of Ireland.[38] Petrie compared monuments mentioned in the *Dindshenchas* with visible monuments on Tara, which formed the basis of later archaeological surveys.[39] Subsequent discussions regarding Tara and its monuments were published by Rev. Denis Murphy and Thomas J. Westropp in 1894 and R.A.S Macalister in 1919.[40] One feature of the site, Rath na Senad (Rath of the Synods), was dug out haphazardly by British Israelites at the turn of the twentieth century as they believed the Ark of the Covenant was buried there.[41] The first modern archaeological survey of Tara was undertaken by Sean P. Ó Ríordáin in 1955, where he and his team excavated Ráith na Senad in 1953 and 1954 and Duma na nGiall (Mound of the Hostages) in 1955 and 1956.[42] In the early 1990s, there was a renewed interest in Tara with the extensive excavations and publications undertaken by the Discovery Programme on the Hill of Tara and its surrounds. Edel Bhreathnach's survey of past scholarship and bibliography on Tara remains an indispensable source for the study of this site, and Conor Newman's *Tara: An Archaeological Survey* is a comprehensive report and examination of the Hill of Tara.[43] The collection of papers in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, edited by Bhreathnach, contains very useful studies of the textual references to Tara as well as its archaeology.[44]

The sacral nature of Tara is evident in the saga literature through the emphasis on its relationship to legendary kings like Conn Cétchathach and Conaire Mór, as well as its representation of the seat of the Kingship of Tara. The use of Tara as an inauguration site in early medieval Ireland has been debated. As mentioned previously, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick has questioned its use given the

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[38] George Petrie, "On the History and Antiquities of Tara Hill," *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 18 (1839): 25 – 232.
[39] Petrie, "History and Antiquities of Tara Hill," 128 – 232.
[40] Rev. Denis Murphy and Thomas J. Westropp, "Notes on the Antiquities of Tara (Temair na Rig)," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 5th ser., 4:3 (1894): 232 – 242; R.A.S. Macalister, "Temair Breg: A Study of the Remains and Traditions of Tara," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 34 (1917 – 1919): 231 – 399. Macalister refutes several of Petrie's observations, but Conor Newman's archaeological surveys notes that Petrie's observations were more accurate. See Macalister, "Study of the Remains and Traditions of Tara," 244 – 246. See also Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, p. 5; See also Edel Bhreathnach, *Tara: A Select Bibliography* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 27.
[41] For a full discussion of this search, the ideologies and politics around it, and the responses from Irish nationalists and media at the time, see Mairéad Carew, *Tara and the Ark of the Covenant: A search for the Ark of the Covenant by British-Israelites on the Hill of Tara (1899 – 1902).*
[42] The results from Ó Ríordáin's excavations have been published and updated in Muiris O'Sullivan, *Duma na nGiall: The Mound of the Hostages, Tara* (Bray, 2005) and Eoin Grogan, *The Rath of the Synods: Tara, Co. Meath, excavations by Seán P. Ó Ríordáin* (Dublin 2008).
[43] Bhreathnach, *Tara: A Select Bibliography*; Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*.
[44] Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), The *Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005).

absence of archaeological evidence of inauguration at the location, and Patrick Gleeson has argued that Tailtiu (modern Teltown) was in fact the assembly place for the region rather than Tara.[45] Moreover, while there is a great deal of evidence for both royal and religious assemblies, or *óenaig*, held at Tailtiu throughout the early medieval period, there is no evidence for inaugurations being held at Tailtiu.[46] Thus, we must be cautious in assuming that inaugurations were included within the broader definition of assemblies, or from the assumption that assemblies could not have had several fixed locations within a region. It should be noted that within textual material, inaugurations were not referred to as *óenaig*.[47] Bhreathnach and Murray suggest that Óenach Tailten and *óenaig* in general may have been thought of as different types of ceremonies to the *feis* held at Tara.[48] This is in reference to a line in *BCC* in which Diarmait mac Áedo Sláine "celebrates the assembly," describing perhaps to Óenach Tailten.[49] The archeological finds have highlighted Tara's usage in the pre- and proto-historic periods in Ireland, but there is evidence to suggest the site remained in use in the early medieval period despite a number of scholars stressing its supposed abandonment.[50] Moreover, it is quite possible that Tara had early medieval usage: Conor Newman has analysed that the Tech Midchúarta (Banqueting Hall) is very similar in construction to the Knockans at Tailtiu which were determined to have had two phases of construction: 640 AD – 780 AD and 770 AD –

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[45] See section 3.1 above; Gleeson, "Kingdoms, Communities, and Óenaig," 34.

[46] For an analysis of Tailtiu and other *óenaig* sites, see Gleeson, "Kingdoms, Communities, and Óenaig," 33 – 51.

[47] The only comparison with an inauguration site and *óenaig* is Cruacháin, but no texts refer to inaugurations at this hill. See Ronald Hicks, "Some correlations between henge enclosures and oenach sites," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 139 (2009): 36; The *óenach* here as referred to in *Fled Bricrenn* (eighth century) clearly refers to a meeting and games, not an inauguration. See George Henderson (ed. and transl.), *Fled Bricrend* (London, 1899), p. 4 – 5, 84 – 85; This seems to indicate that sites could overlap in usage rather than *óenaig* encompassing inaugurations. Elsewhere, kings are associated with *óenaig* within the context of them holding it, although frequently kings are not mentioned. See for example *AU*, *s.a.* 789.17.

[48] Bhreathnach and Murray, "*Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," p. 92.

[49] Breathnach and Murray, "*Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*," p. 85, 92. They point out that this aligns with Tiréchán's mention of the Oenach Tailten as "agon regale", or "royal contest". *Agon*, meaning "contest" was an Ancient Greek loanword into Latin, and seems to be etymologically related to *aige*, "the act of holding festivals" but also "to drive horses, etc.", see dil.ie/914, which is ultimately linked back to the PIE root **aĝ*, "to lead". See J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1 (Bern and Munich, 1959), pp. 4 – 6. The etymology of *óenach* as it relates to assemblies does not seem to be clear, as it is a derivative of *óen*, "one".

[50] Conor Newman, "Procession and Symbolism at Tara: Analysis of Tech Midchúarta (the 'Banqueting Hall') in the Context of the Sacral Campus," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 26(4): 415 – 438; Conor Newman, "The sacral landscape of Tara: a preliminary exploration," in Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman, & Edel Bhreathnach (eds), *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 22 – 43; Edel Bhreathach, "Transforming kingship and cult: the provincial ceremonial capitals in early medieval Ireland," in *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship*, pp. 126 – 148.

990 AD.[51] Thus, this archaeological context suggests that the Tech Midchúarta may very well have been built at a similar time, and suggests that early medieval peoples' relationship with these ancient landscapes was an active one. While the medieval horizon of this monument cannot be definitively confirmed without excavations, the comparative similarities between it and the Knockans suggest an early medieval date and therefore we should look at the Tara as having real function past literary symbolism in the early medieval period.

Newman has suggested that the Tech Cormaic is also an early medieval monument as it appears to be a "bivallate ringfort", which based on evidence elsewhere are usually dated from the sixth to the tenth centuries.[52] Its enclosure of the earlier monument, the Forrad, as well as the geophysical surveys that indicate it was built over top of older monuments, suggests that it was constructed to appropriate the Hill of Tara for contemporary purposes but also to associate it with the older burial mounds and monuments.[53] Thus, the Hill of Tara was not simply a pre-historic site but rather its usage continued into the medieval period; it was reused and reinterpreted, although its sacrality remained central. In addition, the strong possibilities that these monuments are of an early medieval date indicates that we cannot dismiss Tara as holding purely symbolic importance, and that the true significant site was Tailtiu. If the Tech Midchúarta was in fact constructed at a similar time to the Knockans at Tailtiu, then that suggests that both sites were being used concurrently, and for different purposes. Moreover, this highlights that we cannot assume that *óenaig* sites were synonymous with inauguration sites. The ephemeral nature of inauguration rituals in the archaeological landscape means that textual contextualisation of these rituals is necessary to understand them in better detail.

The most detailed inauguration rite set at Tara is found within a saga text titled *De Síl Chonairi Móir*.[54] This text survives in three late fourteenth/early fifteenth century manuscripts: TCD MS 1298, the *Book of Ballymote (BB)*, and *The Great Book of Lecan (Lec.)*.[55] The text from TCD 1298 was edited and translated by Lucius Gwynn in 1912 with variant readings from BB and Lec.[56] The text is related to the more well-known saga *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (*TBDD*) a text dating to at least

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[51] Newman, "Procession and Symbolism of Tara," p. 422.
[52] Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, p. 180.
[53] Newman, *Tara: An archaeological survey*, p. 180; Newman, "Procession and Symbolism of Tara," 434 – 436.
[54] For a full edition and translation, see Lucius Gwynn (ed. and transl.), "De Síl Chonairi Móir," *Ériu* 6 (1912): 130 – 143.
[55] TCD MS 1298, cols 90 – 94; BB, ff. 80r – v; Lec., ff. 103r – v.
[56] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 130 – 143.

the eleventh century, although it may contain an eighth- or ninth-century stratum.[57] Max Nettlau has discussed the relationship between these texts and others that concern Conaire Mór, which he refers to the *TBDD* series of texts.[58] *De Síl Chonairi Móir* relates the story of Conaire Mór, legendary king of the Érainn and how he came to be the King of Tara.[59] The narrative begins with genealogical information of Conaire Mór and his mother Mess Búachalla, and that she was conceived in the fairy-mound of Brí Leith (*sith Breg Leith*) and was a user of sorcery.[60] There have been few in-depth discussions regarding this text.

The text itself has not received as much attention as *TBDD* or the related texts, but it is significant for its depiction of an inauguration rite, and the main text (lines 5 to 63) has been dated to the eighth century.[61] Scholars have generally agreed on an eighth-century date for this text based on Rudolf Thurneysen's original assessment of the text.[62] Thurneysen has identified a late addition to the text in the lines 64 to 74, which seems to be a scribal explanation for narrative differences between *De Síl Chonairi Móir* and other texts that describe his conception.[63] The dating of the passages from lines 1 to 5 and 75 to 107 has not concretely established, but it is possible that these sections contain early material also. The use of *machu* in two instances to refer to members of the Corco Luigde may be evidence of this. Byrne identified this as a form of *moccu* (earliest form *mocu*), meaning "belonging to the *gens* of" although he does not state if this would be indicative of Old Irish or a Middle Irish change.[64] *Moccu*/*mocu* was interpreted by later scribes as *mac .h.*, *macc uí*, or *macc úa* "son of the descendants of" after the original form lost its meaning.[65] Byrne notes that the misunderstanding of the meaning of *moccu* may date to the late eighth century as there is an

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[57] For an edition of *TBDD*, see Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), "The Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel," *Revue Celtique* 22 (1901): 9 – 61, 165 – 215, 282 – 329, 390 – 437, 260 (erratum); for a recent analysis of *TBDD*, see Ralph O'Connor, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel: Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 19 – 20;

[58] For a discussion of these texts, their provenances, and how they related to one another, see Max Nettlau, "On the Irish text Togail bruidne dá Derga," *Revue Celtique* 12 (1891): 229 – 253, 444 – 459; Nettlau, "On the Irish text Togail bruidne dá Derga (suite et fin)," *Revue Celtique* 14 (1893): 137 – 152.

[59] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 130.

[60] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 138.

[61] Thurneysen has dated the first half of the text (lines 5 – 63) to the eighth century, while the subsequent narratives are late. See Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, II (Halle, 1921).

[62] O'Connor, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*, p. 36; Edel Bhreathnach, "Temoria: Caput Scotorum?" *Ériu* 47 (1996): 67 – 88, here 71.

[63] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 135 – 136; Thurneysen, *De Irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 619 – 621.

[64] A discussion of this form is in Byrne, "Dercu: the feminine of mocu," 50 – 54.

[65] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 42 – 43.

entry in the *Annals of Ulster* that translate the population group name of Uí Macc Úais (possibly from the earlier Uí mocu Úais) as "Nepotum Filiorum Cuais" or "descendants of the sons of Cuais".[66] Thus, as Byrne states, *moccu*/*mocu* was seen at least by the eighth century as a genitive plural form of *macc*.[67] Since the usage in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* aligns with older usage, namely, that it is used as a synonym for a population group (in this instance for the Corco Luigde) I argue that the passages from 75 to 90 contain early material, although the relationship between this passage (which concerns the descendants of Conaire Mór specifically) is linked only by the genealogical preface at the start of the saga.[68]

In addition, while Thurneysen does not provide a date for the genealogical preface, he does say that the older Múscraige genealogies have Cairpre Músc (and thus one of the progenitors of the Múscraige along with his son or possible double Óengus Músc) as the son of Conaire Mór while later genealogies add in several more generations.[69] The passage from lines 91 to 107 are likely to be later additions or modified by a scribe to insert later genealogical interpretations of Conaire's desendants, which primarily to claim that Coirpre Musc had two brothers, Coirpre Baschain (or Ailell Baschain) from whom descend the Corco Baiscinn and Coirpre Rígḟota (or Eochaid Rígḟota) from whom descend the Dal Riata.[70] Ultimately, this text claims all of these groups are a part of the Érainn population group.[71] It also states that it was Conaire mac Mogalama rather than Conaire Mór who was the progenitor of these three peoples, which also lends credence to this being a later addition as it aligns with the narrative of the text *De Maccaib Conaire*.[72] No definitive date for *De Maccaib Conaire* has been established by Gwynn argues that it belongs to the period of the composition of the *Book of Leinster* in which it appears and that it seems the scribe attempted to attach it to the Conaire Mór texts.[73] It is hard to determine if *De Maccaib Conaire* is based on *De Síl Chonairi Móir* or if someone made changes to *De Síl Chonairi Móir* based on *De Maccaib Conaire* or a similar tale elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is likely a later addition while the passages on Gnathal mac Conruith may well be from the eighth century as in line with the main text on Conaire.

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[66] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 51, 54 – 56.
[67] Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 56.
[68] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 133, 138.
[69] Thurneysen, *De Irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 619.
[70] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 137, 141.
[71] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 137, 141.
[72] Lucius Gwynn (ed. and transl.), "De Maccaib Conaire," *Ériu* 6 (1912): 144 – 153.
[73] Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 144.

The authorship of the text has not yet been considered, and it is difficult to ascertain the origin of this text. The passages on Conaire Mór seem to be disjointed from the passages on his descendants which may be a result of scribal additions and deletions, although if my assessment of the dating is correct then I argue this is a Múscraige text that has later additions to link the Dál Riata, the Corcu Duibne, and the Corco Bascinn with a common Érainn ancestry.[74] In addition, we cannot view these texts simply as political propaganda, but rather as complex tales that have several layers of meaning to the author(s), patrons, diverse audiences, the genealogical and political undercurrents as well as the themes of true kingship are particularly important for our analysis.[75] The main text on Conaire posits the Laigin and Connachta as not worthy of Tara and thus this likely represents a saga written from the perspective of people who held Tara once but no longer.[76] What is significant is that by the eighth century, the Múscraige peoples did not have significant political power in Bregia (where the text seems to indicate their origins) but were subject kindreds to the Éoganachta, which will be discussed below.[77] If they once held Tara (which is unlikely), then this saga evokes similar themes with the early seventh-century Laigin genealogical poem "Nidu dír dermait dála cach ríg rómdae" that calls for the Laigin to not forget they once held Tara, implying their right to the kingship of Tara.[78] Thus, whoever penned this saga was likely an individual linked with the petty Múscraige kings, either a *fili* (poet) or clergyman.[79] There are no obvious or vague references to Christianity within the text and thus it seems likely that the author is a secular *filid*.

The "Conaire saga", meaning *TBDD*, *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, and other associated tales were also discussed by Josef Baudiš as evidence towards the early Irish "priest-kingship".[80] The text has only been briefly discussed since, usually in the relation to early Irish kingship, in articles by Edel Bhreathnach and Bernhard Maier.[81] The inauguration rite itself has been analysed by Tomás Ó Broin, although his conclusion of the text is that "the narrative is too fantastic to have any bearing

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[74] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 136 – 137, 140 – 141.
[75] Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, pp. 158 – 161.
[76] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 134, 138.
[77] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, p. 23; Edel Bhreathnach, "Kings, the kingship of Leinster and the regnal poems of *laídshenchas Laigen*: a reflection of dynastic politics in Leinster, 650 – 1150," in *Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology*, pp. 299 – 312, here p. 303.
[78] O'Brien, *CGH*, p. 8; For a discussion of the date, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy," pp. 58 – 60; See also Bhreathnach, "Temora: Caput Scotorum?" 87.
[79] Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, pp. 138, 140 – 146. Johnston notes there were certainly ecclesiastics who were *fili* but the relationship between the clergy and *fili* was very complex.
[80] Josef Baudiš, "On the Antiquity of the Kingship of Tara," *Ériu* 8 (1916): 101 – 107.
[81] Bheathnach, "Temoria: Caput Scotorum?" 71 – 72, 78, 86 – 87; Maier, "Sacral Kingship in Pre-Christian Ireland," 18 – 19.

on real events; we have to reject obvious fiction."[82] While the text has strong supernatural elements and themes, it still contains valuable ideological and political information for eighth century Ireland.

The narrative of the text is based on Conaire Mór's claiming of the kingship of Tara with the help of his mother. The text relates that after Conaire Mór's father Eterscél is killed by Nuadu Necht of the Laigin on behalf of Lugaid Riabnderg, the Laigin and Connachta were choosing a king at Tara, but that Lugaid was rejected from the kingship through a failure to complete an inauguration rite:

> "Bai carpait rig hi Temair nogabatis da ech oendatha nad ragabaitis riam fon carpat. Inti nad airoemath flaith Temrach, conocbath in carpat fris conachmoceth 7 concligtis ind hich fris. 7 bai casal rig isin carbad; inti nad aurimeth flaith Temrach ba romor do in chasal. 7 batar da liaic hi Temuir .i. Blocc 7 Bluigne. Ise mod ticed hochair lame eturru; 7 inti nad auremeth flaith Temrach, ni screted in Fal fria fonnad. Ni arroetatar Lugaid Riabnderg fochetoir iar nguin Etersceoil."

> "There was a king's chariot at Tara. To the chariot were yoked two steeds of the same colour, which had never before been harnessed. It would tilt up before any man who was not yet destined to receive the kingship of Tara, so that he could not control (?) it, and the horses would spring at him. And there was a king's mantle in the chariot; whoso might not receive Tara's sovereignty the mantle was ever too big for him. And there were two flag stones in Tara: Blocc and Bluigne; when they accepted a man, they would open before him until the chariot went through. And Fál was there, the 'word of the contest' at the head of the chariot-course (?); when a man should have the kingship of Tara, it screeched against his chariot-wheel, so that all might hear. But the two stones Blocc and Bluigne would not open before one who should not hold the sovereignty of Tara, and their usual position was such that one's hand could only pass sideways between them; also he who was not to hold Tara's kingship, the Fál

[82] Tomás Ó Broin, "Lia Fáil: Fact and Fiction in the Tradition," *Celtica* 21 (1990): 393 – 401, see 399 for the quote.

> would not screen against his wheel. They had not received Lugaid Riabnderg, once Eterscél had been slain."[83]

This inauguration rite described evidently has supernatural elements to it, but it is interesting that the rite has several parts to it that presumably a king-elect may fail at any time. The text relates that the rite rejected Lugaid Riabnderg, although it does not state when he failed the rite. The narrative relates that Mess Búachalla was aware somehow of the events at Tara, and she revealed to Conaire who his father was, after which he says, "If I had men now to win the sovereignty, they would not be let deal thus," and after which Mess Búachalla raised an army that are said later to be the *síde* from Brí Leith.[84] When Conaire and his mother with the *síde* arrive at Tara, the previous armies leave, and Conaire undergoes the inauguration rite:

> "Ni thairiset in tloig batar hi Temair ara cind. Dergit Temraig cona dusib ⁊ co carpat na flatha. Anais in carpat cona echaib ara chind, ⁊ co casail ind rige hisin carput. Ansait na heich and i leith ar cind Conaire. 'Ac sin carpat deit,' ar a mathair. Teit Conaire ind. Ardafoem in carpat he. 'Gab immot dano,' ol si, 'in caisil.' Gabais ime inna hesam fiad na slogaib ; ba coimsi do in casal. Teit a charpat foe, is e inna sesam and. Teit dochum na da liac: arosailcet fris. Teit dochum Fail cosna slogaib ime, a mathair riam: gloedith in Fal. 'Arraet Fal!' forsint sluag huli."

> "The hosts in Tara stayed not before them. They leave Tara and its possessions and the chariot of kingship. The chariot and its steeds awaited him with the cloak of kingship in the chariot. The steeds stayed behind there for Conaire. 'Lo! A chariot for thee,' said his mother. Conaire enters the chariot and it receives him. 'Gird the cloak about thee,' said she. He dons it standing in the presence of the hosts; the cloak fitted him. He stands in the chariot and it moves under him. He does towards the two stones, and they open before him. He goes to the Fál with all the host around him and his mother before him. The Fál cries out. 'Fál has accepted him!' cry the hosts."[85]

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[83] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 134, 139.
[84] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 139 – 140.
[85] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 135, 139 – 140.

Conaire underwent the same inauguration rite as Lugaid, but this time he was accepted at each turn, and the "hosts" of Tara accepted him as king. The text is confusing, as it refers to two different groups here as the hosts: the ones who leave are those of Lugaid Riabnderg, whereas the hosts that remain are said to be like the "folk of Síth Breg Leith," and thus were supernatural beings who "raised [Conaire] to the sovereignty."[86] There are several aspects of the inauguration rite that need to be analysed. It is curious that Conaire said that he needs armies to claim the kingship, as this implies that it is not just passing the rite that will allow one to be king, but that military power is needed as well. Evidently, military power was a significant part of claiming kingship, especially in a system where the rules of succession are complex, as stated at the beginning of this chapter.[87] Inauguration rites as significant to the inheritance of kingship have been relegated to being simply a veneer over the military power by Ó Corráin.[88] He and several other scholars have highlighted the importance of kin-groups and succession practices for inheritance of kingship.[89] T.M. Charles-Edwards suggests that *febas* (defined as qualities inherent to succeed as king) were all essential for succession, and he discounts seniority as being central to succession.[90] Bart Jaski, in contrast, highlights seniority/descent, wealth/capabilities, and military strength as all significant factors within determining succession.[91] Immo Warntjes expands on Jaski's theories, highlighting the peculiarities of inheritance of status and degrading of members of a royal family to regular nobles, and the segmentation of family lines.[92] Warntjes argues that succession is based around the final *gelfine*, namely, the head of the family (*flaith*) and the eponymous ancestor, his sons, and grandsons. When the eponymous ancestor dies, then his eldest son becomes head of the family. Kingship based on a new kindred versus an established one is different. When the last members of a *gelfine* die off, the fourth generation descended from the eponymous ancestor then succession based on seniority may no longer be applicable, and other factors such as wealth and social status

[86] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 140.
[87] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Regnal Succession: A Reappraisal," *Studia Hibernica* 11 (1971): 7 – 39; Ian Whitaker, "Regnal Succession among the Dálriata," *Ethnohistory* 23:4 (1976): 343 – 363; Immo Warntjes, "Regnal Succession in Early Medieval Ireland," *Journal of Medieval History* 30:4 (2004): 377 – 410.
[88] Ó Corrain, "Irish Regnal Succession," p. 37.
[89] There are several defined kin-groups in early medieval Irish law: the *gelfine, derbfine, iarfine,* and *indfine*. These terms are very difficult to define. See Neil McLeod, "Kinship," *Ériu* 51 (2000): 1 – 22; See Warntjes, "Regnal Succession," 382.
[90] T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 89 – 111; For my definition of *febas*, see Warntjes, "Regnal Succession," 401.
[91] Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, pp. 113 – 124, 169 – 170, 229 – 236, 278 – 283.
[92] Warntjes, "Regnal Succession," throughout, but esp. 381 – 387, 388 – 390, 392 – 399, 401 – 403.

were significantly more important.[93] While *De Síl Chonairi Móir* does not explicitly incorporate legal traditions, the mention of needing armies to take the kingship is perhaps representative of a mixed model for acquiring and succeeding to kingship, as well as highlighting seniority (Conaire as the son of the previous king). There is also the potential implication that the inauguration refers to *febas*. While the text does not discuss Conaire's qualities, passing the inauguration rite at every stage as he is destined to implies that he is more worthy of kingship than Lugaid. The depiction of Lugaid as a usurper is interesting, as it suggests that military power is not enough to claim kingship. It is still considered necessary to prove that one is worthy of it past gaining it through might. Moreover, while Lugaid is prevented from completing the inauguration ritual through supernatural means, in a real-life scenario an inauguration would not necessarily legitimise one's rule in everyone's perspective. Inaugurations were clearly seen as key features for legitimisation, hence Lugaid's desire to complete it and the importance attached to it within the text.

The customary aspects of succession are necessary for understanding the background for the text, but the inauguration rite itself is the key element within the text and the succession to the Kingship of Tara. There are several aspects to the inauguration rite within the text, both explicit and implicit and each one will be examined in turn:

1. The location at the Hill of Tara
2. *Side*/Otherworldly beings
3. The chariot/horses
4. The king's mantle
5. The opening flag stones
6. The Lia Fail aka the crying stone

The text does not elaborate on why the Hill of Tara is so significant, likely because Tara was already established by the time the text was first written as a seat of kingship, as evidenced by the early seventh-century Leinster genealogical poetry.[94] The reason why Tara became such an

[93] Warntjes, "Regnal Succession," 382 – 388.

[94] See for instance the verse "Nida dír dermait dála cach ríg rómdai / reimsi ríg Temro, túatha for slicht slógdae," which Kuno Meyer translates as "It behoves me to not forget the doings of each renowned king, the periods of Tara's kings, hosted tribes upon the track of war." See O'Brien, *CGH*, p. 8, transcribed from Rawl. B 502, p. 116c. For the translation, see Kuno Meyer, "Quantitative Assonance," *Ériu* 6 (1912): 154 – 156, here 155. The poems contain many references to Tara, and given their early date as argued by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, we can be assured that it was established as a place of kingship very early. See Ó Corrain, "Irish origin-legends and genealogy: recurrent aetiologies," in Tore Nyberg, Iøre Piø, P.M. Sorenson, & Aage Trommer (eds), *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium* (Odense, 1985), pp. 51 – 96.

important site is likely to do with the older monuments that exist on the hill, specifically, the burial mounds. The most prominent burial mound located at the summit of Tara, Duma na nGiall, was a Neolithic burial mound that had later Bronze Age insertions.[95] Just to the northeast of this, the now-destroyed Duma na mBo (Mound of the Cow) which was ploughed over before any meaningful excavations could be done, would have been a potentially prominent mound given its circumference still slightly visible in geophysical imaging.[96] Ráith na Senad, which is located near the two mounds has several Iron Age burials, a few of them early medieval, with a few later insertions from the eleventh and possibly the thirteenth century.[97] There are even more burials elsewhere on the hill, such as the barrows in the Clóenfherta (Sloping Trenches), which is a section of the Hill of Tara located on the western side, and is now heavily covered with gorse and trees.[98] Ráith Gráinne is another well-preserved mound along the north side of Tara as well as other smaller barrows that are less obvious until one sees them from above.[99] In addition, several large early medieval cemeteries have been uncovered in the vicinity of Tara along the M3 motorway, such as Collierstown 1, which suggest that association with Tara within its wider landscape was likely an important method for conveying status on those buried within view of the hill.[100] As stated above, Newman has argued for an early medieval construction date of the Tech Midchúarta and the Tech Cormaic, which were constructed in such a manner as to incorporate and direct attention to the older monuments, the majority of which were burial sites. The Tech Midchúarta serves to limit and direct one's view to said monuments, like Raíth Gráinne, while on the path to Raíth na Senad and

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[95] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 71 – 75.
[96] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 68 – 71.
[97] Tiernan McGarry, "The late prehistoric burials at Tara, c. 900 BC – AD 200," in Muris O'Sullivan, Christopher Scarre, Maureen Doyle (eds), *Tara: From the Past to the Future: Towards a New Research Agenda* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 233 – 239, here pp. 235 – 237.
[98] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 115 – 125.
[99] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 125 – 142.
[100] Collierstown 1 is a burial located along the east bank of the Gabhra river system and was uncovered during the rescue archaeological excavations done ahead of the M3 construction, was likely an ancestral boundary *fert* or burial mound. The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware (PRSW) at the site, although not associated with any specific burial, suggests that the hinterlands of Tara were places of trade and migration. This burial will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but for a specific discussion of the PRSW found at the site, see Amanda Kelly, "The discovery of the Phocaean Red Slip Ware (PRSW) Form 3 and Bii Ware (LR1 amphorae) on sites in Ireland – an analysis within a broader framework," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 110C (2010): 35 – 88. For a discussion of the hinterlands of Tara as sites of settlement, agriculture, and trade, see Aidan O'Sullivan and Jonathan Kinsella, "Living by a sacred landscape: interpreting the early medieval archaeology of the Hill of Tara and its environs, AD 400 – 1100," in *Tara: from the past to the future*, pp. 321 – 344.

Duma na nGiall.[101] More importantly, Newman suggests that the Tech Midchúarta was the inauguration processional line, and that it was "a contrived experience, the views and the impressions have been carefully managed and manipulated, and what lies ahead has been deliberately hidden from view to the very last."[102] He noted that the selection of prehistoric funerary landscapes as kingship sites may have been due to the fact that burial mounds were possibly seen as the dwellings of the *síde* (along with natural hillocks).[103] In addition, undertaking rituals at these sites ostensibly links the kings with ancestors even if they had no true blood relationship.[104] Furthermore, when we consider that the *side* ultimately have control over the inauguration rite in the text, that suggests that the mentality towards the passage tombs associated with these royal sites was that they were an integral aspect to conferring kingship. These were sites that were evidently considered apart from regular day-to-day activity, which suggests that these places were demarcated for special uses, such as inaugurations.

The second aspect of the inauguration rite is the chariot race. Both chariots and horses appear as connected to royalty and kingship within the saga texts. Kings and queens are often written as riding in chariots, both as simply a form of transportation but also within a military context. For example, in the *Táin Bó Cúailgne*, Medb rides a chariot into battle and also lists a "chariot worth thrice seven cumala" as a gift to the warrior Fer Diad.[105] Several warriors in the text are described as fighting from chariots as well, including Cú Chulainn.[106] It is perhaps noteworthy that the above individuals did not drive their own chariots but rather that charioteers drove them. David Stifter has questioned their use as a military vehicle, and instead argues that they were a prestige vehicle for transportation.[107] They are evidently seen as a high-status object within the *Táin*, similarly to their depiction in *De Síl Chonairi Móir*. Chariots are not extant in the archaeological record in Ireland, as it seems the Iron Age La Tène chariot burials on the Continent and to a lesser

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[101] Newman, "Procession and Symbolism of Tara," 423 – 428.
[102] Newman, "Procession and Symbolism of Tara," 426 – 428.
[103] Conor Newman, "Reflections on the making of a 'royal site' in early Ireland," *World Archaeology* 30:1 (1998): 130.
[104] Newman, "Reflections on the making of a 'royal site'," 130; this was previously noted in Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 20.
[105] Cecile O'Rahilly, transl., *Táin Bó Cúailnge, Recension I* (Dublin, 1974), pp. 125 – 128, 196, 202. In the *Book of Leinster* version, Medb lists a "chariot worth thrice seven cumala" as part of her bride-price given to Ailill. See Cecile O'Rahilly, transl., *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1970), pp. 138.
[106] There are several references to chariots throughout the text, but see O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailgne, Recension I*, p. 133 – 135, 140, 143 – 151 for some specific examples.
[107] David Stifter, "The Old-Irish Chariot and Its Technology," in Stefan Zimmer (ed.), *Kelten am Rhein. Akten des dreizehnten Internationalen Keltologiekongresses, 23. bis 27. Juli 2007 in Bonn* (Bonn, 2009), p. 279.

extent Britain have no apparent equivalent in Ireland.[108] That is not to say chariots were not used, or that they were not buried, only that they have not survived the archaeological record. Stifter argues that their prominence in the literary material disproves the idea they were "fictional motifs[s]" as they demonstrate a knowledge of their construction and appearance.[109] They do not only appear in the saga material either: in Tírechán's late seventh-century *Collectanea de sancto Patricio*, St Patrick is depicted as riding a chariot and while this is a religious act, it alludes to the association of chariots with kings:

> "Mane autem facto cum surgerent, conpleta benedictione super patrem Benigni Patricius currum conscendit et pedes illius diuerso alter in curru et alter in super terram erat, et Benignus puer pedem Patricii tenuit duabus manibus strictis et clamauit: 'Sinite me apud Patricium patrem proprium mihi,' et dixit Patricius: 'babtitzate eum et eleuate eum in currum, quia heres regni mei est.' Ipse est Benignus episcopus, successor Patricii in aeclessia Machae."
>
> "When in the morning they got up and Patrick, having blessed the father of Benignus, was about to mount his chariot, with one foot in the chariot and the other on the ground, Benignus held on to Patrick's foot with his outstretched hands and exclaimed: 'Allow me to be with Patrick, my real father,' and Patrick said: 'Baptize him and lift him up

[108] There are several publications on La Tène chariot burials, and this list is not exhaustive. For chariot burials in Carpathian Basin in Central Europe, see Sándor Berecki, "Connected Elites. Middle La Tène Chariots in the Carpathian Basin," in Sándor Berecki, Aurel Rustoiu, Mariana Egri (eds), *Iron Age Connectivity in the Carpathian Basin. Proceedings of the International Colloquium from Târgu Mureş, 13 – 15 October 2017* (Mureş, 2018), pp. 143 – 163; For discussions on the Iron Age Yorkshire chariot burials, see T.C.M. Brewster, "The Garton Slack chariot burial, East Yorkshire," *Antiquity* 45 1971: 289 – 295; Andrew Selkirk and Wendy Selkirk, "Two chariot burials at Wetwang Slack," *Current Archaeology* 8:10 (1984): 302 – 306; Helen Louise Chittock, "Pattern and Purpose in Iron Age East Yorkshire," PhD thesis (University of Southampton, 2016), throughout but especially pp. 55 – 56, 71, 75 – 78, 81 – 83, 85 – 87, 94 – 95, 101, 178 – 122; Peter Halkon et al., "Arras 200: revisiting Britain's most famous Iron Age cemetery," Antiquity 93 (2019: 1 – 7; For the single chariot burial uncovered in Scotland, see Stephen Carter & Fraser Hunter, "An Iron Age Chariot Burial from Scotland," *Antiquity* 77:297 (2003): 531 – 535; Stephen Carter, Fraser Hunter, and Andrea Smith, "A 5th BC Iron Age Chariot Burial from Newbridge, Edinburgh," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 76 (2010): 31 – 74.
[109] Stifter, "The Old-Irish chariot," 284 – 287.

> into my chariot, for he is the heir to my kingdom.' This is bishop Benignus, Patrick's successor in the church of Armagh."[110]

Patrick's use of a chariot is evidently meant to evoke the symbolism here of him being elevated, albeit in a Christian manner. Tírechán evidently thought that it was an appropriate vehicle for someone as saintly as Patrick. Moreover, equating the bishopric of Armagh to a kingdom evokes both a comparison not only with the Kingdom of Heaven but also an earthly kingdom.

Within Muirchú's *Vita sancti Patricii*, King Lóegaire mac Néill sent his warriors out on chariots, which Muirchú stated were "iunctis secundum deorum traditionem (equipped, according to the tradition which they had received from their gods)," which suggests there was a pre-Christian tradition of chariot riding although it is unclear what Muirchú means with this passage.[111] Nevertheless, chariots do seem to be connected with nobility in this passage, although it is not clear if Lóegaire himself rides out in one.

The meaning of the chariot drive may be linked with proper rulership. In the *Audacht Morainn*, the seventh-century *speculum principum* (mirrors for princes) text that stipulated proper rulership, there is a passage that related the driving of a chariot to proper rule:

> "Apair fris, os hé oec, oec a ḟlaith. Ardosécath arid sencharpait. Ar nícon-chotli are senḟonnith. Remi-déci, íarmo-déci, tair sceo desiul scei túaithbiul. De-éci, im-dích, im-dídnathar, arna bó co foill na forráin fonnath fod-rethat."
>
> "Tell him, since he is young, his rule is young. Let him observe the driver of an old chariot. For the driver of an old chariot does not sleep. He looks ahead, he looks behind, in front and to the right and to the left. He looks, he defends, he protects so that he may not break with neglect or violence the wheel-rims which run under him."[112]

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[110] Tírechán, *Collectanea de sancto Patricio*, 5.4 – 5.5 (Ludwig Bieler (ed. and transl.), available at https://confessio.ie/ (Accessed 10 October 2020)).
[111] Muirchú, *Vita sancti Patricii*, 1.16 (Ludwig Bieler (ed. and transl.), available at https://confessio.ie/ (Accessed 10 October 2020)).
[112] Fergus Kelly (ed.), *Audacht Morainn* (Dublin, 1976), pp. 6 – 9; This text is formulated as advice from the legendary judge Morann; Philip O'Leary, "A Foreseeing Driver of an Old Chariot: Regal Moderation in Early Irish Literature," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 11 (1986): 1.

Conaire's successful chariot drive may represent a symbol of good rulership. In the tale, the chariot would not accept any not worthy of kingship as it would tilt and refuse to be controlled. While the chariot is given agency in the text, the concept of control in the saga evokes the same attitude in *Audacht Morainn*. The rightful king must control the chariot and drive it properly as he would rule his land.

The philosophical ramifications of the chariot drive may not be the only reason for its inclusion in the inauguration rite. The chariot race may be a version of the rite of *tellach*, a ritual legal procedure of entry onto the land. The rite is described in the legal tract *Din Techtugad*, or "On Legal Entry."[113] T.M. Charles-Edwards has summarised this rite as follows:

> "The first phase is that of entry, *tellach*, in the narrow sense. The claimant enters the land over the grave mounds which stand guard at the boundary [=*fertae*]. He must repeat this entry after ten days and again after another ten days. On the first two occasions, therefore, he must retire from the land after making his entry."[114]

In the first entry, the claimant must bring two horses and one witness, in the second entry with four horses that are unyoked and left to graze on the land and two witnesses, and in the final entry with eight horses and three witnesses.[115] In the second phase he must stay overnight on the land, kindle a fire, and tend the livestock.[116] Charles-Edwards describes *tellach* as a ritualised process by which "there is a ceremony which displays the claim, and then a further ceremony which displays the satisfaction of the claim, the final taking of possession."[117] The boundary here refers to burials or tumuli known in Old Irish as *fertae* (sg. *fert*, sometimes *ferta* is used for both sg. and pl.) and Bhreathnach, building off Charles-Edwards' discussion, has suggested that the chariot course on Tara may have been the ritual legal procedure of *tellach* or "entry".[118] Bhreathnach argues that the ritual of the chariot and horse-race around Tara and the passing through the flagstones may

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[113] *CIH* 205.22 – 213.37 = *AL* iv 3.1 – 33.23.
[114] Charles-Edwards, *Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 25.
[115] Charles-Edwards, *Irish and Welsh Kinship*, p. 260; *CIH* 205.25 – 206.10 = *AL* iv 2.17 – 5.16.
[116] Charles-Edwards, *Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 260 – 261; *CIH* 210.25 – 211.25 = *AL* iv 18.20 – 21.7, 22.20 – 23.37.
[117] T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), p. 259.
[118] Edel Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel: Manifestations of the Centre of the Cosmos in the North and South," in Jacqueline Borsje, Ann Dooley, Gregory Toney, and Séamus Mac Mathúna (eds), *Cosmology: Perspectives from Ireland and Scotland* (Toronto, 2014), pp. 165 – 185, but esp. p. 175 – 178.

represent *tellach*, as would perhaps the ceremonial passage through the Tech Midchúarta past the burial mounds as suggested by Newman above.[119]

Another key aspect to *tellach* as indicated in *Din Techtugad* is that *fertae* were used as territorial boundary markers. By interring ancestors on territory or by claiming an ancestral relationship to those buried within disputed territories then it reinforces ancestral claims to the land. This is important for the right of *tellach*, as they "defend" the territory. Defining boundaries is very difficult but largely the scholars who have studied *fertae* like Elizabeth O'Brien rely on natural boundaries and that political territories align with them.[120] As we will discuss in the burial chapter below, many *fertae* are found near natural boundaries like rivers. These likely corresponded with early medieval territorial boundaries in many cases. Paul MacCotter has determined that territorial boundaries in the twelfth century and onwards often follow pre-Invasion boundary lines.[121] It is possible that these boundaries stretched into the early medieval period as it seems clear they often followed natural boundaries like rivers.[122] This is seen to this day with rivers like the Liffey, which form a border between the modern counties of Wicklow and Kildare.[123] O'Brien has also noted that *fertae* may represent physical and metaphysical boundaries and that they were liminal spaces, associated both with boundaries and death.[124] T.M. Charles-Edwards has also suggested that ring ditches are representative of a group's territory and therefore burials and cremation deposits in the ditches represent burials along a boundary.[125] Kingship sites like Tara are microcosms of wider kingdoms and when a king-elect underwent inauguration rites, crossing over burials at these kingship sites represents crossing the boundary of the kingdom. It is also interesting that the *Din Techtugad* tract references the use of placing a stone as a marker.[126] The movement of the chariot with the two horses through the two flagstones and past the Lia Fáil may then be representative of passing over the boundary.

[119] Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," pp. 176 – 177.
[120] Elizabeth O'Brien, *Mapping Death: Burial in Late Iron Age & Early Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2020), p. 66.
[121] Paul MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland: Territorial, Political and Economic Divisions* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 16 – 17, but also especially ch. 3.
[122] MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 68, 70, 72, 131 – 132 n. 22, 136, 153, 155, 165 n. 21, 212, 222, 223, 224 n. 50, 230 – 231,
[123] Maeve Tobin and Faith Bailey, "Burials and Boundaries at Britonstown, Co. Wicklow," *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 23 (2014): 157 – 169, here 165.
[124] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 78
[125] O'Brien, *Mapping Death,* p. 18 n. 41.
[126] *CIH* 207.4, 207.20 – 207.21 = *AL* iv 6.12, 8.6 – 8.8.

What is more significant are the demarcations of boundaries with the *fertae*, noting that those buried in the mounds protected the lands of their descendants from outsiders and thus a claimant to the land had to be a relative of those buried in the *fertae*.[127] The Hill of Tara as discussed above has several burial mounds and Conaire's entry onto the hill past the burial mounds may signal the first ritual entry. The chart of the chariot drive may have also necessitated driving past these mounds. As the *side* at the Hill of Tara are not explicitly stated to live in the mounds, it may be that they were representative of Conaire's ancestors that accepted his entry onto the hill and through the chariot course.

Clearly the rite of *tellach* holds many parallels with the rite described in *De Síl Chonairi Móir*. Conaire Mór is the rightful King of Tara, and while it does not state it, it is implied that he is the rightful heir as his father before him was the rightful king who was killed by a usurper. Lugaid was rejected by the rite because he was not a descendant of Eterscél. The rite of *tellach* is for those who have hereditary claims to the land, as Conaire did from his father.[128] Thus, the chariot drive is proof that he has an inherited claim but that he had to undergo a rite of entry, both to Tara and through the flagstones with the chariot, to make his claim. The chariot drive in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* has several possible layers of meaning. It was an elite vehicle, but the ability of the rightful king to control the chariot represents proper and careful rule. In addition, the chariot drive is very similar to the rite of *tellach*, which suggests that the ideological underpinnings of a king's inauguration were not simply about having a claim on kingship but the process of making the claim was important to confirm legitimacy.

The role of the chariot was evidently very significant, but the horses themselves may have also been an important element of legitimising rule. They were important animals in early medieval Ireland and markers of status. The legal texts note that horses were worth even more than cattle: the highest status *bóaire* (commoner) would be expected to own twenty cows, two bulls, six oxen, and two horses (one for riding and the other for work).[129] They were associated in particular with high-status individuals, and every grade of lord would be expected to own a riding horse, with bridles of increasing value depending on status.[130] It is clear that horses were considered important animals, and horses were of higher value than cattle, with horse riding being the privilege of nobility

[127] Charles-Edwards, *Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 262 – 265.
[128] Charles-Edwards, *Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 259,
[129] Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 88 - 89
[130] Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 89.

and rich farmers.[131] However, it is possible that their significance was likely beyond simply being a marker of status.

There are over fifty men in the genealogies, legendary and historical, that bore names with *ech* (riding/chariot horse) as the primary element word, although it is likely this was not an exhaustive list.[132] The popularity of names like Eochu and Eochaid suggest a relationship between horses and kings but it is unclear what the true extent of this nature is. It is possible that these names evoked a strong connection with popular legendary kings or perhaps a pre-Christian deity, a trend seen with names like Lugaid which are possibly based on the pre-Christian deity Lug.[133] It is interesting, although perhaps just a coincidence, that in the related texts *TBDD*, Conaire's grandfather was Eochaid Feidech and the ninth-century saga *Tochmarc Étaine* his grandfather was Eochaid Airem.[134] What is especially important is the figure Eochaid Ollathair (Allfather), who was also known as the Dagda, whom the *Tochmarc Étaíne* refers to as a god.[135] It seems very possible that he too was a pre-Christian deity, and perhaps his importance informed the popularity of Eochaid as a name for royal men: the epithet Ollathair indicates his cosmological importance. Moreover, he is identified as a king in the *Tochmarc Étaíne*, which further suggests a link between this figure and kingship. A mythical deity/king whose name is linked with horses and rule further implies a strong importance placed upon horses within a wider ideology of kingship.

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[131] Finbar McCormick, "The horse in early Ireland," *Anthropozoologica* 42:1 (2007): 92 – 94.

[132] *Capall* was the word for workhorses, which curiously has survived to this day as the Mod. Ir. word for all types of horses. *Ech* survives in Mod. Ir. as *éach*, meaning "steed".

[133] Lug has been identified as one of the most significant pre-Christian deities in early medieval Ireland. This theory is based largely on the identification of a Gaulish deity named Lugus that suggests that Lug was a deity worshipped by Celtic-speaking peoples in Iron Age Europe, and the existence of a possible pre-Christian festival called Lughnasa. He is also a figure that appears frequently in early Irish literature as a supernatural being. For instance, see the eighth-century text *Compert Con Chulainn*, where Lug is identified as the father of Cú Chulainn, reproduced in Marion Deane, "From Sacred Marriage to clientship: a mythical account of the establishment of kingship as an institution," in *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship*, pp. 1 – 3; For discussions on Lugh as a deity, see O'Rahilly, "On the Origin of the Names Érainn and Ériu," *Ériu* 14 (1946): p. 14 n. 3, 17; Daniel Gricourt and Dominique Hollard, "Lugus et le cheval," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 28:2 (2002): 121 – 166; For an overview of the name Lug and his identification as a deity, see Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton, 2016), passim, but esp. pp. 16 – 29.

[134] Osborn Bergin and R.I. Best, "Tochmarc Étaíne," *Ériu* 12 (1938): 143 – 193; Bergin and Best assigned the text linguistically to the ninth century. See Bergin and Best, "Tochmarc Étaín," 139. This was repeated by Myles Dillon later. See Myles Dillon, "Tochmarc Étaíne," in Myles Dillon (ed.), *Irish Sagas* (Cork, 1968), p. 20.

[135] Bergin and Best, "Tochmarc Étaíne," 142 – 151, 154 – 155; Williams, pp. 84,

There have been arguments from scholars such as Próinséas Ní Chatháin and John Waddell that argue for the existence of a horse cult in early medieval Ireland.[136] Ní Chatháin states that there were Christian texts that implied the eating of horse meat was unacceptable, although it is unclear whether this implies that horses were still highly valued and respected in early Christian Ireland or if the practice was associated with paganism and thus condemned.[137] She notes that in the *Vita Columbae*, St Columba prophecies about a man residing on the isle of Hinba after the saint offered indulgence from their restrictive diet.[138] Columba says to the man:

> "'Erit tempus quo cum furacibus furtiuae carnem in silua manducabis equae.' Hic idem itaque postea ad seculum reuersus in saltu cum furibus talem comedens carnem iutxa uerbum sancti de graticule sumtam lignea inuentus est."
>
> "The time will come when in a wood, with thieves, you will chew the flesh of a stolen mare.' And so afterwards, when he returned to the world, this same man was discovered, according to the saint's word, in a forest pasture with thieves, consuming such flesh taken from a wooden griddle."[139]

The association of consuming horse flesh with criminals and as punishment for disobeying Columba implies that eating horse flesh was considered taboo, an idea reflected in the ninth-century Old Irish Penitential where anyone who eats the flesh of a horse must do penance for three and a half years.[140] Horse thieves were especially reviled, perhaps due to the association of horses

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[136] Próinéas Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse in Early Irish Sources," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 19:1&2 (1991): 121 – 131; John Waddell, "Equine Cults and Celtic Goddesses," *Emania* 24 (2018): 5 – 18; John Waddell, *Myth and Materiality* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 124 – 146.

[137] Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse," 123 – 131.

[138] Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse," 123; Adomnán, *Vita Columbae* I.21 (Ian Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1991, pp. 46 - 49; Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Richard Sharpe (London, 1995), pp. 127 – 128).

[139] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, 1.21 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, pp. 46 – 49); Ní Chatháin has noted the similarities with the *Life of Enda*. See "Vita Sancti Endei," in Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1910), p. 73; Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse," p. 123.

[140] D.A. Binchy (transl.), "The Old-Irish Penitential," in Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin, 1963), p. 25; For an earlier translation and edition of the text, see Lucius Gwynn (ed. and transl.), "An Irish Penitential," *Ériu* 7 (1914): 146 – 147; see also Timothy Bourns' discussion of the consumption of horse flesh and other food restrictions in pre- and post-conversion Iceland and Scandinavia. Timothy Bourns, "Meat and Taboo in Medieval Scandinavian Law and Literature," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 14 (2018): 61 – 80.

with high-status individuals.[141] Thus, the passage from the *Vita Columbae* may be describing a particularly egregious act.

Ní Chatháin argues further that the taboo against eating horse meat may not have been a Christian invention because the *Tochmarc Emire* had two passages, a riddle and then an answer, that indicated charioteers were under prohibition of entering a chariot within eighteen days of eating horse meat.[142] The riddle and the answer belong to the Middle Irish recensions of *Tochmarc Emire*, and the early version has a lacuna of four pages where the riddles and answer section would be (if it existed in the older text) and thus we cannot know how early this passage is.[143] If the riddle and passage were included in the early text, which may date to the eighth century, it may still not necessarily reflect a pre-Christian perspective on the value of horses and the passage may well be influenced by Christian perspectives.[144]

Both Ní Chatháin and later Waddell have placed a great deal of importance on the possible horse-goddess Macha.[145] Waddell's arguments on Macha are based on later recensions of medieval Irish texts, such as the *Noínden Ulad* (*The Debility/Pangs of the Ulstermen*), that Macha was a horse-goddess as well as a goddess of sovereignty.[146] The tale concerns the marriage of an unnamed supernatural woman to a commoner who brags to his king about his wife's speed, claiming that she can run faster than the king's horses and chariot. This results in the wife, who is pregnant, being forced to run the race and giving birth and dying at the end after she wins, and she curses the

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[141] Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 93.
[142] Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse," 124; *Tochmarc Emire*, 16, 32. (A.G. van Hamel (ed.), *Compert Con Culainn, and other stories* (Dublin, 1933), pp. 26, 35.)
[143] Toner, "Transmission of *Tochmarc Emire*," 77 – 79; Van Hamel suggests, following Thurneysen's arguments, that the earlier recension that only exists in British Library MS Rawlinson B 512, ff. 117ra – 118rb contains the latter half of the early recension while the version in the *Lebor na nUidre* (*LU*) Royal Irish Academy MS 23 E 25, ff. 121a – 127b contains the first half up to edits made by a second scribe who erased the corresponding section in Rawl. B 512 and inserted a later version. See van Hamel, *Compert Con Culainn*, pp. 16 – 19 and Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 380. Toner has demonstrated that this is not likely, because Rawl. B 512 is largely in Old Irish, while the *LU* is only in Middle Irish and the language style is considerably different. Thus, the scenario where Rawl. B 512 and the *LU* are two halves of the same text would require a very difficult transmission that is highly unlikely and impossible to prove, and thus we can only state that the version in Rawl. B 512 is the earliest. See Toner, "Transmission of *Tochmarc Emire*," 76 – 79.
[144] For the date of the text, see Kuno Meyer (ed.), "The Oldest Version of Tochmarc Emire," *Revue Celtique* 9 (1890): 437 – 443, and for the edition and translation of the text, 442 – 457.
[145] Ní Chatháin, "Traces of the Cult of the Horse," 125, 129. She also links Medb, Fergus mac Roích, and Cú Chulainn with this cult, see pp. 127 - 129; Waddell, "Equine Cults and Celtic Goddesses," 5 – 7; Waddell, *Myth and Materiality*, pp. 124 – 130.
[146] Waddell, *Myth and Materiality*, pp. 125 – 128.

Ulstermen with the pangs of childbirth thereafter.[147] This tale is modified in later recensions where the woman is named as Macha and the site of the race was called Emain Macha after her, which Waddell argues is an older survival of pagan myth.[148] The earliest recension dates to the ninth century and while I agree with Waddell's argument that survivals of pre-Christian tales and beliefs can be found in the medieval Irish sagas I argue that caution must be exercised when assuming that this tale indicates pre-Christian belief, especially if the earlier recension does not name the woman.[149] Gregory Toner argues that the inclusion of Macha is a literary invention that was inserted to explain the etymology of Emain Macha, and thus her direct association with horses is difficult to prove as pre-Christian.[150] The possibility of a horse cult in pre-Christian Ireland is quite probable, but the earlier evidence on Macha does not link her with horses but rather warfare.[151]

There are a few placenames near the Hill of Tara associated with horses that suggest further associations between horses and kingship. The first is Lagore, or *Loch Da Gabor/Loch nGabor* (Lake of the Two White Mares/Lake of the White Mare) that is the site of a probable royal crannóg that is 7 km from the Hill of Tara.[152] This site may have had ritual associations too, as there are remains of people that seem to have been ritually dismembered, which Newman argues were human sacrifices.[153] Human sacrifice at the site may have had a long tradition, as there are human remains dating from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and the early medieval period within the site, suggesting perhaps that the Lagore crannóg was deliberately built on an ancient ritual site.[154] The *Dindshenchas* of the site state that it was named after two horses that were drowned there as a ritual sacrifice, but Rolf Baumgarten has demonstrated that individuals may be invented from placenames, which

[147] Vernam Hull (ed. and transl.), "Noínden Ulad: The Debility of the Ulidians," *Celtica* 8 (1968): 28 – 29, 36 – 38.
[148] The second recension has not been translated, but it is in the edition of the *Book of Leinster*. See Best, Bergin, O'Brien, and O'Sullivan (eds), *Book of Leinster*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1956), pp. 467 – 468; For the third recension, see Rudolf Thurneysen, "Tochmarc Cruinn ocus Macha," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 12 (1918): 251 – 254; Waddell, "Equine Cults," 6.
[149] Waddell, "Equine Cults," 6.
[150] Gregory Toner, "Macha and the Invention of Myth," *Ériu* 60 (2010): 84 – 90, 106 – 107.
[151] Toner, "Macha and the Invention of Myth," 98 – 104, 106.
[152] Conor Newman, "The sacral landscape of Tara," in Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman, and Edel Bhreathnach (eds), *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* (Dublin, 2011), p. 28.
[153] Newman, "The sacral landscape of Tara," pp. 28 – 29.
[154] Newman, "The sacral landscape of Tara," p. 29.

is why we should be careful about assuming that any *Dindshenchas* tales may be preserving older tradition.[155]

Nevertheless, while the horse associations with Macha cannot be proven for the early period, evidently horses held special significance. The role of the horses in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* may have been specific for the rite of *tellach*, but I argue that they hold even deeper significance. The reaction of the horses against Lugaid Riab nDerg while they submitted to Conaire suggests the motif of the king bringing order to the land. The horses are representative of nature and the landscape that is unruly without the rightful king to bring order. This may be a reference to *fír flathemon*, or the "king's justice", a concept described in the wisdom text *Audacht Morainn* where a just king's rule will result in a prosperous land while if a king has been unjust, *gáu flathemon*, the land will rise up against him.[156] While this is speculative, it is clear from the metaphor for chariot driving discussed above as well as references to the land in the *fír flathemon* passages that a rightful king must rule carefully and properly and if he does then the landscape and kingdom will be prosperous.

The next element in the inauguration rite is the king's mantle. Clothing associated with kingship is a motif that appears elsewhere, both in early and late sources, such as the *Exile of Conall Corc*, which will be discussed below. Conaire's mantle may have been paralleled in *TBDD* in which Conaire was given a royal garment and was placed in a chariot and was recognised as king.[157] A similar passage is also in the *Tochmarc Étaíne*, where the supernatural figure Midir (perhaps also another deity) was given a cloak and a mantle by his foster-son.[158] As for other clothing, there is late medieval evidence for a king's shoe being proffered during an inauguration ritual, but Fitzpatrick argues that this emerged in the late medieval period.[159] Bonne Effros states that "[g]arments, hairstyles, and the display of related possessions may reveal the nature of a person's relationship to his or her contemporaries, whether with respect to religious belief, gender, age, ethnic affiliation, status, or membership in a kin group."[160] Clothing was a visual identifier and thus was one of the

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155 Edward Gwynn (ed. and transl.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, vol. 4 repr. (Dublin, 1990), pp. 182 – 183; Rolf Baumgarten, "Etymological Aetiology in Irish Tradition," *Ériu* 41 (1990): 115 – 122.

156 Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, pp. 7 – 11, 17 – 19; Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 18.

157 Stokes, "The Destruction of Dá Derga's hostel," p. 25.

158 Bergin and Best, "Tochmarc Étaíne," 148 – 149, 152 – 153.

159 Proinsias Mac Cana, "The *Topos* of the Single Sandal in Irish Tradition," *Celtica* 10 (1973): 160 – 166; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 122 – 129.

160 Bonnie Effros, "Appearance and Ideology: Creating Distinctions Between Clerics and Laypersons in Early Medieval Gaul," in Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (eds), *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images* (New York, Basingstoke, 2002), p. 7.

most useful ways to distinguish oneself (as it is today). In Merovingian Francia, the kings were distinguished by their clothing, such as the wearing of purple robes, diadems, and certain belt styles.[161] The "cloak of kingship" has no specific description, but presumably it was because a designation of being a piece of clothing associated with kingship had cultural signifiers known to the author and the wider populace and thus did not warrant more detail. There was an early Irish law tract called *Cáin Íarraith* (Law of Fosterage) in which different grades of men were directed to wear different coloured clothes on different days: the sons of kings are to wear purple and blue.[162] Within the Irish saga literature, Otherworldly women (likely stand-ins for female deities) are often depicted as wearing purple or red mantles, such as in *TBDD* and the pre-eleventh century saga *Tochmarc Becfhola*.[163] Maggie McEnchroe Williams has identified a rigid code of dress in the depiction of noble people on Irish high crosses, which consists of a *léine* (a tunic undergarment) and a *brat* (sometimes hooded cloak or shawl).[164] Niamh Whitfield has discussed the textile evidence to date through a comparison of archaeological, artistic, and textual evidence.[165] Purple cloaks were very expensive, and Whitfield argues that Ireland adopted the Imperial colour symbolism of associating purple with power: the Old Irish word for purple dye was *corcur*, which is derived from the Latin *purpura*.[166] Bestowing a special raiment on a king during their inauguration not only adds to the visual spectacle of the ritual but is also a visible marker of the king-claimant transitioning to kingship. The easiest way to demarcate a king's special and elevated status is through visual cues, and thus donning the mantle at the beginning of the rite was a key element in demonstrating a king's legitimacy. Lugaid's unsuitability as highlighted by the mantle being too large while it fit Conaire perfectly displays the importance of a king's special clothing.

Flagstones are mentioned in sources on inauguration rites as well as being present at sites traditionally associated with kingship. The movement of the stones Blocc and Bluigne seems to be

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[161] Effros, "Appearance and Ideology," p. 13.

[162] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 87; *CIH* 1759.6 – 1770.14 = *AL* ii 146.1 – 149.10.

[163] Stokes, "The destruction of Da Derga's Hostel," pp. 13 – 14; Máire Bhreathnach, "A New Edition of Tochmarc Becfhola," *Ériu* 35 (1984): 72, 77. The date of the text is pre-1000 and is in early Middle Irish, but was based on a ninth-century source. See Bhreathnach, "Tochmarc Becfhola," 68 – 70.

[164] Maggie McEnchroe Williams, "Dressing the Part: Depictions of Noble Costume in Irish High Crosses," in *Encountering Medieval Textiles*, pp. 45 – 57.

[165] Niamh Whitfield, "Aristocratic Display in Early Medieval Ireland in Fiction and in Fact: The Dazzling White Tunic and Purple Cloak," *Peritia* 27 (2016): 159 – 188.

[166] Whitfield, "Aristocratic Display in Early Medieval Ireland," 176. The *c* replaced the *p*, which she notes would have pre-dated the seventh-century. Purple dye can be made from the Irish shellfish species, the dogwhelk, as well as lichen, see pp. 176 – 181.

unique to this text within the Irish context. There are stones in the early modern cemetery at Tara that may be associated with the stones in the text, as noted by Colin Newman, but it is notoriously difficult to determine how long they may have stood there, although they have been associated with Blocc and Bluigne in the past.[167] They stand maybe a metre apart, one is short and rounded and the other is tall and rectangular. The tall stone has a Sheela-na-gig carving on one face and may have been part of the Church lintel.[168] Sheela-na-gigs were often interpreted to be "pagan" iconography, but most date to the twelfth to sixteenth centuries.[169] Thus, the carving cannot tell us if this was a stone that was used for ritual purposes, nor does it indicate that it was a "pagan" object. It is impossible to date these stones and determining if they have been relocated or repurposed but they do appear to be local to the area based on a geological analysis.[170] Their role in the saga text has not been widely discussed, although Newman argues that it is symbolically sexual, a form of mating with the sovereignty goddess, who is represented by the land.[171] This theory seems unlikely, as there are no obvious or even oblique references to a sexual union with the land, and has influenced interpretations of the Lia Fáil, which will be discussed below. As stated above in the discussion of *tellach*, these stones may have been boundary stones that Conaire had to pass through to complete his claim on the kingship of Tara.

Identification of these stones is also problematic because of the language used in the text to refer to the stones: they are called flagstones, but flagstones have been widely interpreted to be flat stones, not upright. If Blocc and Bluigne had to move aside to let the chariot through, it seems more likely they were either very large stones or standing stones that were not recumbent. The difficulty with identification of these stones is further complicated by the etymology of the specific words used to describe them. The text uses *liac*, meaning "stone", which was translated as "flagstone" but in Old Irish a flagstone is *lecc*.[172] The *Dictionary of the Irish Language* has them as

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[167] Petrie, "On the History and Antiquities of Tara Hill," 179 – 180.
[168] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 98 – 101; For an overview of these carvings, see James A. Jerman, "The 'Sheela-na-Gig' Carvings of the British Isles: Suggestions for a Re-Classification, and Other Notes," *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society* 20:1 (1981): 10 – 24. He states that the carving at Tara is no longer regarded as a Sheela-na-Gig, an assertion that was not substantiated elsewhere; For a more recent discussion of these carvings, see Barbara Freitag, *Sheela-na-Gigs: Unravelling an Enigma* (London, 2004), and for a description of the carving at Tara, see p. 143.
[169] Freitag, *Sheela-na-Gigs*, pp. 16 – 23; Georgia Rhodes, "Decoding the Sheela-na-gig," *Feminist Formations* 22:2 (2010): 167 – 194, here 168.
[170] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, p. 98.
[171] Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, pp. 149 – 150; The names Blocc and Bluigne are given to two of Conn Cetchathach's druids in *Baile in Scáil*. See Murray, *Baile in Scáil*, p. 33, 50.
[172] *eDIL*, s.v. lecc, s.v. lía.

separate words that are often confused with one another, although they are evidently etymologically related. Flagstones, or *leaca* have widely been interpreted as being flat recumbent stones but the word is also used for gravestones and while the antiquity of this usage is unclear, we cannot necessarily use this definition to explain if the *leaca* were recumbent or upright. If they were confused with one another, it is possible that some early medieval writers thought them to be interchangeable, so that would potentially change how we define these words. Flagstones themselves seem to be very important for sites associated with kingship elsewhere, although most of them are mentioned in later source material.[173]

The Lia Fáil has been discussed several times, although modern scholarship has dismissed the standing stone on the Hill of Tara as being the "true" stone as discussed in the sagas based on linguistic evidence.[174] Lia means stone, it is the singular form of *liaic* used for Blocc and Bluigne above. It has also been described as a flagstone and recumbent in other (albeit later) sources, and for that reason there are scholars who reject that the Lia Fail that is now on the Hill of Tara is in fact the original stone.[175] The stone itself is not described, although if a chariot wheel must make a noise against it, it would make more sense for the stone to be recumbent rather than standing. Fitzpatrick has suggested that the stone described in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* was different than the later texts that mention a flagstone at Tara.[176] It is worth noting that *De Síl Chonairi Móir* is the earliest account of the stone, and that the possible flagstone at Tara that existed in addition to the standing stone were mixed up with one another. Certainly, the existence of a flat stone on Tara is referenced in *Baile in Scáil* and the twelfth-century *Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin* mentions both a pillar-stone, the *Carti na nGiall* and an unnamed flagstone.[177] The assumption that the unnamed flagstone is the Lia Fáil seems unlikely, while that the pillar-stone would be named instead. It seems very possible that medieval writers were in fact unsure which stone on the Hill of Tara was the Lia Fáil. Moreover, the stone may have been recumbent and placed upright at some stage. T.J. Westropp states that the stone was evidently meant to be recumbent, and states that it has rounded ends rather than just

[173] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 104 – 108.
[174] Ó Broin, "Lia Fáil: Fact and Fiction," 394, 400 – 401; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 102 – 104; Carey, "Ferp Cluche," 167; Grigory Bondarenko, "Lia Fáil and other stones: symbols of power in Ireland and their origins," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 65 (2018): 45 – 62, here 46.
[175] Ó Broin, "Lia Fáil: Fact and Fiction," 394, 400 – 401; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 102 – 104.
[176] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 103.
[177] Murray, *Baile in Scáil*, pp. 33, 50; Kuno Meyer (ed. and transl.), *Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin. Life of Colmán son of Lúachan* (Dublin, 1911), pp. 72 – 73.

the one rounded end, although Bondarenko notes there are no other accounts to support this.[178] The etymology of Fáil (OIr. Fál) has not been discussed at length by anyone other than Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, who assessed various possibilities and concluded that Fál must mean "sovereignty" in the context of the name, and thus Lia Fáil means "Stone of Sovereignty".[179] To my knowledge, no one has since revisited his analysis, but the association between kingship and the stone it is very probable. While I do not disagree that equating the current stone with the one described in the text is problematic, it is not impossible, and it may well have been the original, as the stone's antiquity is likely.[180] Stones may be significant within inauguration rituals on several levels, that they were "symbolic of a relationship with an object of great antiquity and permanence, with nature, and also with the land from which his client-base earned their living."[181] In Gwynn's translation, he translated the stone's epithet "ferp cluiche" as the "Stone Penis," which seemed to align with the potential phallic nature of the current standing stone at Tara. This phrase has since been re-translated as "The Word of the Contest" by John Carey which also makes sense considering the stone is meant to cry out, and the inauguration rite could well be described as a contest.[182] He notes that the stone does not "speak" but rather cries out and this presents an interpretive problem with using "word" to describe the stone.[183] There are many layers of metaphor in the text, and this does not seem contradictory to infer that the cries from the stone could be heard as words or speaking. Grigory Bondarenko has posited another interpretation of this phrase and argues that because the Lia Fáil does not literally speak that *ferp* could in fact be a variation on OIr. *ferb* "blister" and that it referred to a bump in the ground, like a recumbent stone, part of the *cluiche* or the inauguration contest.[184] However, because *ferb* seems to be only used in contexts of literal blisters on the face while *ferp* seems to carry poetic symbolism elsewhere meaning "poet", Carey's interpretation is more likely.[185]

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[178] T.J. Westropp, "The Marriages of the Gods at the Sanctuary of Tailltiu," *Folklore* 31:2 (1920):, 109 – 141, here 122; Bondarenko, "Lia Fáil and other stones," p. 52; Byrne has argued that antiquarians were confused as they discovered the stone in a recumbent position and assumed that it was meant to be as such before it was placed in its current position. See Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, p. 57.

[179] Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, "Notes d'Étymologie et de Lexicographie Gauloises et Celtiques XX," *Ogam* 16 (1965): 436 – 446.

[180] Conor Newman, pers. comm., 2016.

[181] Philip MacDonald, "Archaeological Evaluation of the Inaugural Landscape of Crew Hill (Cráeb Telcha), County Antrim," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser., 67 (2008): 92; See also Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 100 – 101, 107.

[182] Carey, "Ferp Cluche," 167.

[183] Carey, "Ferp Cluche," 167 n. 16.

[184] Bondarenko, "Lia Fáil and other stones," 52; *eDIL* s.v. 2 ferb.

[185] *Edil* s.v. 3 ferb.

Despite the problems of identifying the "true" Lia Fáil, clearly the stone was necessary for the ritual. Its crying out at the end of the chariot drive is the final act that declares Conaire as king and signals to the *side* to accept him also. Symbolically, it is likely emblematic of the earth and land to the early medieval writers who linked the Lia Fáil to kingship and sovereignty, and as a monument it has permanence as a physical marker within the landscape. Other speaking and oracular stones are seen elsewhere in Ireland, although they seem to be largely later traditions and folklore.[186] These stones seemed to be prophetical, and the Lia Fail is seen to have this property in *Baile in Scáil* when Conn stepped upon it and each cry was symbolic of each of his descendants who would rule at Tara.[187] The crying out of the stone may represent acclamation, a feature seen in inaugurations in late medieval Ireland and elsewhere in Europe.[188] Ernst Kantorowicz' 1946 monograph on royal acclamations, or *laudes regiae*, is still the most thorough examination of this practice.[189] It was a gradual formalisation of invoking a new ruler, first begun in Imperial Rome and then recast within liturgical rites in Carolingian Francia for the coronation of rulers within a strictly Christian context.[190] The acclamations were twofold. The first was the *collaudatio*, which involved the people present at the coronation crying out either in consent or homage to the new king, while the liturgical acclamations were given after consecration by the clergy.[191] The *collaudatio* propagated the myth of popular sovereignty, while the liturgical acclamations demonstrated the link between the king and the Church.[192] Acclamation in an inauguration rite of kingship was likely to be widespread, as the public spectacle of the ritual would have depended on both visual and oral performance that would allow distant onlookers to "view" the ritual even if they were not immediately present. Thus, the oral component of accepting the king-clamant as king after he has completed the rites was important to confirm the legitimacy of his rule and the acceptance by the people as the ruler. The Lia Fáil is then likely to be a symbolic representation of both an individual in the inauguration rites that acclaims the king as well as the landscape over which the king rules.

The act of acclaiming or proclaiming a king is more apparent in several later Irish inaugurations. For example, in *Betha Colmáin maic Luacháin*, it is Colman's successors who have

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[186] Ellen Ettlinger, "Oracular and Speaking Stones in Celtic Britain," *Ogam* 14 (1962): 485 – 491.
[187] Murray, *Baile in Scaile*, pp. 33, 50.
[188] Nelson, "Carolingian Coronation Rituals," 10 – 12; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 8
[189] Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in the Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, 1946).
[190] Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, pp. 65 – 76.
[191] Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, p. 79.
[192] Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, pp. 79 – 80.

the right to proclaim all future kings of Tara.[193] Fitzpatrick notes that acclamation was also used in the inauguration of Ó Dubhda in the fifteenth-century *Book of Lecan*, where the Ó Dubhda's principal vassal Ó Caoimhin and his *ollam* (the highest grade of poet) Mac Firbisigh had to name the bishops, coarbs, clergymen and every chief of the subject tuaths before inaugurating the Ó Dubhda king.[194] She also points to the inauguration of Conchobhar Ó Briain at Magh Adhair in 1242 who was proclaimed by Sída Mac Con Mara.[195] Thus, while the other Irish evidence is late, *De Síl Chonairi Móir* may represent a metaphorical depiction of an acclamation with the Lia Fáil. Any real ceremony likely would have had acclamation performed by an *ollam* or perhaps a lower grade of king from a subject kindred.

The inauguration rite described in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* is imbued with several layers of meaning as demonstrated by its composite parts. The entirety of the text has strong supernatural elements, and despite what are clearly embellished and metaphorical aspects it is possible to uncover what was likely a real inauguration ritual. The location of the inauguration at the Hill of Tara is important because of the ideological and political significance of Tara in early Ireland and that the king of Tara held a great deal of political power in early medieval Ireland. Various peoples laid claim to the kingship even if their political fortunes had heavily diminished by the eighth century. Inauguration rites were not literary tropes, but were useful rituals that were necessary for installing the next king. Demonstrating the rightful kingship of a legendary ancestor as counter to other dynasties named in the text, the Laigin and Connachta, indicates that the inauguration rite was ideologically important for legitimising kingship. The rite itself incorporated elements of the legal rite of *tellach*, a rite which also involved strongly associated with kingship such as horses and chariots. The use of special regalia for a king both aligns with other inauguration rites but specific

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[193] *Betha Colmáin*, pp. 72 – 73.

[194] Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 2, f. 73r col. b; The Irish and a translation is in John O'Donovan, *The Genealogies, Tribes, and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach, commonly called O'Dowda's Country* (Dublin, 1844), pp. 440 – 442; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 8; this inauguration text, while in a fifteenth-century manuscript was added after the *Book of Lecan* was written in a different hand, although it may date to the fourteenth century. See Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelc Ireland*, p. 22; see also Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and Joseph Fenwick, "The Gathering Place of Thír Fhiachrach? Archaeological and Folkloric Investigations at Aughris, Co. Sligo," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 101:3 (2001): 75 – 77; *Ollam* does not always refer to a member of the *filid* but that seems to be the context for references to the *ollam* in inauguration texts discussed in this thesis. For a discussion on the *ollam*, see Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, pp. 136 – 138.

[195] Sean Mac Ruairdhrí Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, ed. and transl. Standish O'Grady, vol. 1 (London, 1929), p. 2; Sean Mac Ruairdhrí Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, ed. and transl. Standish O'Grady, vol. 2 (London, 1929), p. 2; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 8.

types of clothing for different grades of people are also seen in the legal texts. In addition, the text is replete with kingly ideals seen in wisdom texts like *Audacht Morainn*. And while the Lia Fáil has presented interpretive difficulty, it is most likely meant to be a metaphorical representation of the *ollam* or acclaimer, an important aspect of inauguration rites in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe. Thus, *De Síl Chonairi Móir* most likely depicted a true inauguration rite. Furthermore, it will become apparent with comparisons of other early texts that there were variations with inauguration rites but there are several commonalities amongst them that lend more credence to their usage.

3.3 Cashel

The Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary, is a prominent rocky limestone outcrop located near the town of Cashel in south Tipperary.[196] The rock is host to several ruined buildings, the earliest of which is the round tower, dated closely after 1101 after it was formally dedicated to the church, and then followed up by Cormac's Chapel, constructed in 1127/8.[197] The ninth century history of Cashel is relatively well-represented in the annals, but there are few entries in the eighth century.[198] Despite the historical significance of Cashel prior to the tenth century, the focus has largely been on the post-1101 history, material finds, and Romanesque architecture.[199] There were limited excavations

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[196] Patrick Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland: Cashel and the Creation of Munster," in Jayne Carroll, Andrew Reynolds and Barbara Yorke (eds), *Power and Place in Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 2019), pp. 346 – 368, here p. 346.

[197] I have found no concrete dating for the round tower, but the archaeological surveys of the Rock of Cashel have placed it as one of the first buildings and roughly contemporaneous with the first cathedral, which was rebuilt circa 1169. See Roger Stalley, "The Original Site of St. Patrick's Cross, Cashel," *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 27 (1985): 8 – 10; Tadhg O'Keeffe, "Lismore and Cashel: Reflections on the Beginnings of Romanesque Architecture in Munster," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 124 (1994): , 118 – 152, here 138 – 139; Patrick Gleeson, "Kingship and Architecture in 11th- and 12th-Century Cashel," *Journal of the Society for Church Archaeology* 15 (2013): 1 – 15, here 4 – 5.

[198] The earliest annalistic reference to Cashel is *AU*, s.a. 491.3, in which Muirchertach mac Erca defeated the King of Cashel (unnamed). There are only two entries for Cashel in the eighth century in the *Annals of Ulster*, *AU* s.a. 715.4 and 742.3, compared to the ten entries in the ninth century: *AU* s.a. 820.5, 833.7, 836.2, 848.7, 851.1, 853.1, 856.2, 872.3, 888.4, and 895.1. *AI* has several entries that reference Cashel where *AU* refences Munster only. See *AI* s.a. 580.1, 593.1, 662.1, 666.2, 713.2, 721.2, 821.1, 848.1, 852.1, 856.1, 859.1, 861.1, 873.2, 889.1, and 896.4. *AU* preserves entries that may reflect poorly on Cashel, such as the burning of Clonmacnoise, s.a. 833.7, where as *AI* has more entries on kings taking the kingship. The *Annals of Tigernach* only has one pre-tenth century annal on Cashel specifically, see *ATig* 715.5, but there are approximately forty entries that reference the Kings of Munster from the late-fifth century to the mid-eighth century, after which there is a lacuna in the text, and the next entry is *ATig* 976.2.

[199] Ann Lynch, "Excavations at the Base of St. Patrick's Cross, Cashel," *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 25 (1983): 9 – 18; Roger Stalley, "The Original Site of St' Patrick's Cross, Cashel," *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* 27 (1985): 8 – 10; Peter Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel and a Historical Reconsideration of the 'Ahenny Group' of Crosses," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 93C:1 (1993): 1 – 20; O'Keeffe, "Reflections on the Beginnings of Romanesque Architecture in Munster," 118 – 152; Tadhg O'Keeffe, "Wheels of Words, Networks of Knowledge: Romanesque Scholarship and Cormac's Chapel," in Damian Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland*

undertaken in the early 1990s, led by Brian Hodkinson, as well as more recent limited radiocarbon dating from the *Mapping Death* project, as well as LiDAR and aerial photography undertaken by the *Óenach Project* and the *Comparative Kingship* project, partially published and discussed by Patrick Gleeson.[200] Hodkinson's excavations uncovered several burials as well as the remains of a wooden church that was located where Cormac's Chapel is now.[201] Hodkinson suggests that the church must be, at the latest, a ninth-century foundation, as it was clear it was in use for some time and based on the stratigraphy of the site there was a period of disuse between the wooden church and the construction of the twelfth-century buildings on the site, the hiatus continuing until circa 1100.[202] Furthermore, based on the stratigraphy he argues that the earliest phase of burials (Phase 1 of the site) could likely be dated pre-wooden church from the sixth to the ninth centuries, with the second phase of burials being contemporaneous with the wooden church and thus from the ninth and tenth centuries.[203]

Hodkinson's interpretations of the site have been challenged since his excavations, such as by Aiden O'Sullivan et al., who argue that the wooden church must be of a later date.[204] Gleeson's publication of the radiocarbon dating done via the *Mapping Death* project on two burials, one from Phase 2 and the other from Phase 5, both returning dates of cal AD 1033-1155 and cal AD 1029 – 1155, has indicated that Hodkinson's interpretation of the usage of the site is no longer tenable.[205] Moreover, Gleeson suggests that the church cannot be reliably dated, but that the Phase 1 burials are more likely to be contemporaneous with the wooden church.[206] It should be noted that until radiocarbon dating is completed on all of the burials, the dates of the early phase remains are still speculative.

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and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal (Dublin, 2006), pp. 257 – 269; Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Cashel and Germany: The Documentary Evidence," in *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 176 – 217; Roger Stalley, "Design and Function: The Construction and Decoration of Cormac's Chapel at Cashel," in *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century*, pp. 162 – 175; Fergus O'Farrell, "St. Patrick's Cross, Cashel: A Re-Assessment," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 136 (2006): 99 – 111.

[200] Gleeson, "Kingship and Architecture," 6; Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship," 350, 354 – 358, 366.

[201] Brian Hodkinson, "Excavations at Cormac's Chapel," *Tipperary Historical Journal* 20 (1994): 167 – 174; See also Hodkinson's rough draft of the final report of the excavations, which have not been formally published but are available online, Brian Hodkinson, *Report on the Excavations at Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, 1992 – 93*, available at http://homepage.eircom.net/~dunamase/Dunamase.html (Accessed 3 March 2020).

[202] Hodkinson, "Excavations at Cormac's Chapel," 171 – 173.

[203] Hodkinson, "Excavations at Cormac's Chapel," 173.

[204] Aiden O'Sullivan, Finbar McCormick, Thomas R. Kerr and Lorcan Hardy, *Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400 – 1100: The evidence from archaeological excavations* (Dublin, 2013), p. 153.

[205] Gleeson, "Kingship and Architecture," 6.

[206] Hodkinson, "Excavations at Cormac's Chapel," 173; Gleeson, "Kingship and Architecture," 6.

Regarding the wider landscape of Cashel, there have been more archaeological excavations on the surrounds, but unfortunately very little remains published on these finds. There have been extensive archaeological excavations done on a rath just south of the town of Cashel, Rathnadrinna, which was very possibly a royal site associated with Cashel, with other raths and enclosures located in the area.[207] Gleeson's work on Cashel and its surrounds also suggest a wider sacral landscape, and while his work did not expand upon the work done on Rathnadrinna, he suggests that the surrounding enclosures could be a parallel to the enclosures that surround Tara.[208] This suggests there was a considerable wider sacral landscape here, although the relationship between the Rock of Cashel and these satellite raths and enclosures is not historically established for the early medieval period. Elizabeth Fitzgerald does note that there is a 16th c. reference to the inauguration of the kings of Cashel involving a rath in the area, named Rath na nIrlann, but as this is late it does not necessarily mean that these raths were used for inauguration in the early period.[209] Gleeson's work on the surrounding area has also revealed further parallels with Tara, suggesting the inauguration route followed an avenue called Dubhcloy, from which several barrows and ringforts are visible, much in the same way the Mídchúarta defined the procession line to the top of Tara.[210] The archaeological finds, combined with the textual material below, suggest that Cashel was a relatively new kingship site in comparison with Tara and others like Emain Macha, and that it reflected changing political tides among the Éoganachta and other Munster peoples from the sixth century onwards.

There are several early medieval saga texts on Cashel, dating from between c. 700 to the ninth century, that focus on a legendary ancestor of the Éoganachta, Corc (variously known as Corc mac Luigthig or Conall Corc):[211]

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[207] See Richard O'Brien's findings at *Rathnadrinna Research Project*, https://richardcashel.wordpress.com/ (Accessed 3 March 2020).
[208] Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," 357.
[209] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 178 – 179. The identification of Rath na nIrlann is debated: Fitzpatrick and O'Brien both state that it was likely Rathnadrinna, but Gleeson argues it is Ballinree fort instead. See Richard O'Brien, "Excavations at Rathnadrinna 12E157: Season One findings and plans for Season Two," *Rathnadrinna Research Project*, https://richardcashel.wordpress.com/ (Accessed 9 March 2020), cf. Patrick Gleeson, "Constructing Kingship in Early Medieval Ireland: Power, Place and Ideology," *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012): 17.
[210] Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," 364 – 366.
[211] There is one other Conall Corc text, called *Geineamuin Chuirc Meic Luigdeach*, or *The Conception of Corc mac Luigdeach* that will not be discussed here as it does not contain references to inauguration rites and seems to be a late text. Vernam Hull included it in his edition and translation of *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*. See Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 906 – 908.

1. *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, late seventh century.[212]
2. *Longes Chonaill Chuirc* (*The Exile of Conall Corc*), c. latter half of seventh century.[213]
3. *Senchas Fagbála Caisil* (*The Story of the Finding of Cashel*), first version from the seventh century, second version from the tenth century.[214]

While there are important publications on these texts, further contextualisation and comparison of these with other inauguration texts and the archaeological evidence of Cashel is necessary for understanding the breadth and variation of inauguration rites in early medieval Ireland.[215]

These early medieval Conall Corc texts contain several references to an inauguration ritual held at Cashel, although the rite itself is vague and attempts to piece it together remain speculative. They are significant in that they may represent an early attempt to Christianise an inauguration ritual.[216] As stated in the discussion on Tara, Bhreathnach's suggestion that the inauguration rite described in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* may have been an example of *tellach*, and further argues that the Corc texts suggest this was also the inauguration rite for the Cashel kings.[217] The earliest text, *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, henceforth *CCCL*, may in fact refer to this rite: Feidlimid mac Tigernaig (d. 590/3) and his horses were banned from entering Cashel and was thus barred from undergoing the rite of *tellach*:

> "Hui Echach dano ni rucsat orbe, ar toruarith Mac Caiss a horbu I mbethu Chuirc araill Corc Eochaith forsna tótha dislúi. Is de rogab a tíre ar a haltram. Is de attá: 'cach ua hEchach, cid rí Muman huie, ní raga hi Caisiul.' Is de Fedlimthig mac Tigernaich. Ba rí Muman. Ni luid hi Caisel,

[212] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," pp. 57 – 63; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 887 – 909.
[213] For the edition and translation, see Vernam Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," *PMLA* 56:4 (1941): 937 – 950; The text can be found in the *Book of Leinster*, ff. 206r – 206v. Unfortunately, part of the manuscript is missing and thus the first section and real title are gone, thus Hull has named the text as he did.
[214] Myles Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," *Ériu* 16 (1952): 61 – 73. The text is preserved only in TCD MS H.3.17 from the fifteenth century.
[215] David Sproule, "Origins of the Éoganachta," *Ériu* 35 (1984): 31 – 37; David Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative in the Stories about Corc of Cashel," *Ériu* 36 (1985): 11 – 28; Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," pp. 165 – 185; Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," pp. 346 – 368; Clodagh Downey, "Medieval Literature about Conall Corc," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 110 (2005): 21 – 32; Clodagh Downey, "Purple Reign: The Naming of Conall Corc," in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (eds), *Approaches to Religion and Mythology in Celtic Studies* (Newcastle, 2008), pp. 28 – 54.
[216] I would like to thank Edel Bhreathnach and Katharine Simms for pointing out this possibility to me.
[217] Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," 175 – 177.

acht classa Bodumbir lais. Is de dogeni Cumman ben Choirpri. O dodeochaid co Fedlimid iar n-ecaib Coirpri dixit in rand sa:

'Amra n-adamrae ra nech

iadad Caisil frim da hech,

amra n-adamra leou

iadad Caisil frim eochu.'"

"The Uí Echach also did not obtain a patrimony; for in the lifetime of Corc, Mac Caiss had run (?) out of [his] patrimony. Corc imposed (?) Eochu on the septs. He paid them off (?). In consequence, he had his lands taken for fostering him. As a result, there is [a saying]: 'Every descendant of Eochu, though he may be king of all Munster, shall not go to Cashel.' That applies to Feidlimid mac Tigernach. He was the king of Munster. He did not go to Cashel, but Bodumbir was dug by him. Concerning him Cumman, the wife of Coirpre, made this quatrain after she had come to Feidlimid upon Coirpre's death:

'The closing of Cashel against both my horses

[Is] a marvellous wonder before any [other]

The closing of Cashel against my horses

[Is] a marvellous wonder in their opinion.'"[218]

This is reminiscent of the preventing of Lugaid Riabnderg of not being able to undergo the rites in *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, which began with the two horses.[219] It is interesting that the passage acknowledges that there were kings of Munster who were not able to enter the seat of kingship. Bhreathnach suggests this may be a comment on Feidlimid's potential lack of deference to

[218] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," pp. 61 – 62; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 904 – 905; Bhreathnach gives a slightly different translation of the quatrain: "Anyone would be greatly surprised / that my two horses were barred from Cashel; they would be astonished to learn / of the shutting of Cashel against my horses." See Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," 176.
[219] Also noted by Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," pp. 176 – 177.

ecclesiastical authorities with undergoing inauguration rites.[220] Gleeson suggests that the reference to "Bodumbir" was potentially an alternative and rival kingship site in Munster, and thus further indicates the struggle for power in early Munster based on different kingship sites.[221] He argues that Cashel only became a significant seat of kingship once the Uí Maic Láire branch of the Éoganachta in the sixth or seventh centuries had shifted their power centre to Cashel from Cnoc Áine (Knockainy Hill), a possible Iron Age ringfort.[222] Regardless of the interpretation here, it is clear that Cashel was being depicted as the all-powerful power centre, and even for a king of Munster, ruling Cashel was of prime importance. The entrance rite of *tellach* may not determine if one was to be king, but it does determine if one was the most powerful king. Moreover, it stresses the pre-eminence of Cashel over any other potential kingship site that was potentially also in existence in the sixth century.[223]

There is another reference to *tellach* in *CCCL*, only briefly mentioned by Gleeson, regarding Corc's son Coirpre Cruithnechain (otherwise known as Coirpre Luachra, ancestor of the Uí Choirpre Luachra/Éoganachata Locha Léin), who attempted to take the kingship of Munster:

> "Intan ba haniu flaith Cuirc hi Caisiul, is and doluith a mac .i. Coirpre taris inda diaig a hAlpain. Crecais eochu isin tuaisciurt co mbui tricha marcach oc Caisiul. Scuirit hi tir Chuirc for arbur. Cartaith in rechtaire na heochu asan gurt arbae. Attraig Carpri ara cend. Gonti hísen cui maledixit pater suus ⁊ docorastar huad ind Iarmumain […]."
>
> "When Corc's sovereignty in Cashel was most exalted, then his son, namely, Coirpre, came across from Scotland in his wake. He bought horses in the north until he arrived, thirty horsemen strong, at Cashel. They unharnessed [them] on Corc's land to pasture on the grain. The steward cleared the horses out of the grainfield. Coirpre rose up against him. He slew him there. His father reviled and exiled him to West Munster […]."[224]

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[220] Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," p. 177.
[221] Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," pp. 352 – 353.
[222] Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," pp. 357 – 361; see the discussion on the Uí Maic Láire below.
[223] Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," p. 353.
[224] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," pp. 59 – 60; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 898 – 899; Gleeson, "Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland," p. 364.

The act of bringing horses to pasture to claim Cashel is a clear reference to the rite of *tellach*, which involved bringing horses to graze on the land. Coipre killed the steward, which meant that he broke the proper procedure for *tellach*, and subsequently was exiled from Cashel and rendered ineligible for kingship. Coirpre's Pictish mother may have have contributed to his expulsion as discussed in the previous chapter.[225] Not only was he not considered eligible to undergo the rite of *tellach* because of his matrilineal line, but he broke the rules of *tellach*. This relates to the last example of *tellach* in *CCCL*, which has yet to be discussed at length. Coirpre's exclusion from the kingship impacted his descendants, namely his grandson Dauí Iarlathi mac Maine, who took the kingship of Cashel by force:

> "Digensat essomon fri sóegul nÓenghusa cith iar n-ecaib nOengusa. Ni forgell Dau friu, act rogab ar ecin fuigell cen dliged naich duthaid doib righe Chaissil."
>
> "During the lifetime of Óengus [mac Nad Froích], they [Óengus and Dauí] made a truce. Even after the death of Óengus, Daui did not submit to arbitration with them but took the kingship of Cashel by force without adjudication [and] without legal right to any hereditary due of theirs."[226]

The language of arbitration and hereditary dues suggest that Dauí did not engage in the proper legal rite of *tellach* to claim Cashel but took it by force, which he was not hereditarily entitled to. The passage contains terminology seen in *tellach*, referring to arbitration and hereditary due.[227] This highlights the perception of rightful kingship aligning with proper legal procedure. While the denial of the hereditary due for Coirpre Cruithnechan's descendants (the Uí Choirpre Luachra/Éoganachta Locha Léin), represented by Dauí Iarlaithe, was clearly a political statement that reflects seventh or eighth century dynastic conflict, this is further indication of the importance of legal procedure in inauguration rituals and legitimisation of kingship.[228] The breaking of the rite of *tellach* is used to explain retroactively why these people do not hold the kingship of Cashel. Nonetheless, this passage also demonstrates that ritual and legal procedure were not always

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[225] See section 2.6 above.
[226] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," p. 60; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 899 – 900.
[227] Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 260 – 261.
[228] Sproule, "The Origins of the Éoganachta," 33,

followed: kings taking land by force is not unusual, but it is clear that these actions could be used as a retroactive comment on unlawful rule, denying certain branches to the kingship, or an explanation as to why certain branches were unsuccessful in maintaining their hold over the kingship.

The political context of *CCCL* is threefold. It promotes a certain Éoganachta kindred, whom Gleeson states was the Síl Cathail, the ruling line of the Uí Maic Láire who were later known as the Éoganachta Glendamnach.[229] This particular family did not fit neatly into the Éoganachta genealogical scheme as the Mac Láire individual seems to be another name for Conall Corc (after his foster-mother Láir Derg) but that epithet does not appear in the genealogies.[230] It is also clearly promoting Cashel as the ruling seat of Munster over other rival sites like Bodumbir, as discussed above. Through promoting Cashel as the true seat of the kingship of Munster, it further legitimises any king inaugurated there. Those who ruled from other seats of power were therefore not legitimate. Finally, it seems to represent the construction of a united Éoganachta kindred that seems to have brought together disparate groups with no previous dynastic ties in the seventh and eighth centuries.[231] Through this, it also indicates a desire for ruling Éoganachta kindreds to construct genealogies and histories that run parallel to the Uí Néill. This Sproule argues is evident through the name Éoganachta (like the Connachta, of whom the Uí Néill were a part) and even through motifs such as Corc freeing hostages while Níall Noígiallach took hostages.[232] Downey has discussed how Conall Corc seems to represent a fusion of two legendary ancestors that may represent a subjugation of one kindred under another or may demonstrate a political rise to power of a group that wished to legitimise their claims.[233] This form of genealogical alteration serves as an ethnogenesis that legitimises a claim to power over a centre like Cashel. Thus, while these texts are used as a wider explanation for Éoganachta rule in Munster, the legitimisation of one kindred over all others highlights the need to also demonstrate that the proper kindreds were entitled to the rites of *tellach* while rival kindreds who had no claim to Cashel were not.

The nature of *CCCL* suggests that like *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, this was written by a *fili* for their king, in this case perhaps Finguine mac Cú-cen-Mathair (d. 696) or his son Cathal mac Finguine (d. 742), as Hull argues that this text is likely from circa 700, but it is impossible to say definitively when

[229] Gleeson, “Making Provincial Kingship in Early Ireland,” p. 352.
[230] Sproule, “The Origins of the Éoganachta,” 34.
[231] Sproule, “The Origins of the Éoganachta,” 31 – 37.
[232] Sproule, “The Origins of the Éoganachta,” 31 – 32, 36.
[233] Downey, “Purple Reign,” pp. 29 – 32, 35 – 37, 51.

this was written as there are no figures in the text that we can ascribe dates to.[234] The genealogical nature of the passage, as it is contained within a mass of genealogies in MS Laud 610, as well as a lack of Christian themes and knowledge of the rite of *tellach* may suggest a secular origin.[235]

The other two early Corc texts describe more clearly an inauguration rite, and while the narratives are contradictory, they share a common link on the founding of Cashel as the seat of kingship in Munster. *Longes Chonaill Chuirc* relates the story of Corc's exile to Pictland and his subsequent return with his Pictish wife and children to Munster to found Cashel.[236] The ritual is first prophesied by an unnamed swineherd, and it was later fulfilled by Corc:

> "Bái muccaid Aeda ríg Muscraige oca muccaib in laa sin. As-bert fri Aed d'adaig: 'At-chonnarc-sa ingnad,' olse, 'indiu isna drummaib se a-tuáid. At-chonnarc doss n-ibair for carraic con-acca daurthach bec ara belaib 7 lecc cloiche ara belaib side. Timthirecht angel ond licc súas 7 anúas.'
>
> 'Fír,' or in drúi ind Aeda, 'bid ed domsod rig Muman in-sin co bráth 7 intí cétna ataifes tenid fond ibur sin bid úad rige Muman.'
>
> 'Tiagam dia hatud,' or Aed.
>
> 'Anam co mmatin,' or in drúi.
>
> Is didiu do-ralai-seom fora merugud intí Chorc…Ro-addái tenid mnai 7 dia maccaib conid-fúair int Aed arnabarach oca thein cona maccaib imme. At-géoin didiu 7 do-beir failte móir dó 7 do-bert a macc i ngiallai fria láim. In tan trá ro-bás oc imchosnam ríge Muman iar n-ecaib a athair, iss and ranic Corc. Do-gnith iarum attreb les-sium fo chetóir issin Chasiul 7 ba lán-ri fer Muman ria cind sechtmaine.
>
> Is é didiu cet-giall ceta-ragaib rí Muman giall Múscraige et soerthi dóib dara esi 7 rigan uadib i Casiul. In muccaid dano fo-uair i Cassiul do-ratad saírthi dó la ríg Cassil 7 dia chlaind .i. cen cháin 7 cen chobach ríg na rechtaire. Is é dano co-gair gairm rige do ríg Cassil 7 do-berar

[234] *AU* s.a. 696.2, 742.3.
[235] Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 888 – 889.
[236] Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 942 – 950.

bennachtain lasin ríg 7 dechelt ind ríg do fo chetóir. Is de sein didiu atá Cassel Cuirc 7 iss ed a sil 7 a femen Cuirc maic Lugdach fil i Cassiul co bráth ond uair sin.

“On that day, the swineherd of Aed, the king of Muscraige, was tending his pigs. That night, he said to Aed: ‘I saw a wonder today,’ said he, ‘on these ridges in the north. I beheld a yew-bush on a stone, and I perceived a small oratory in front of it and a flagstone before it. Angels were in attendance going up and down from the flagstone.

‘Verily, said the druid of Aed, ‘that will be the residence of the king of Munster forever, and he who shall first kindle a fire under that yew, from him shall descend the kingship of Munster.

‘Let us go to light it,’ said Aed.

‘Let us wait until the morning,’ said the druid.

[Thither] then came the aforesaid Corc in his wanderings… He kindled a fire for his wife and for his sons so that Aed found him the following day by his fire with his sons about him. He recognized him them, and he gave him a great welcome, and he put his son in surety under his custody. When, now, after the death of his father there was a contention about the kingship of Munster, then Corc came. Thereupon, a residence was at once established by him in Cashel and before the end of a week, he was the undisputed king of the Munstermen.

The surety of the Muscraige is the first surety that a king of Munster ever took, and, afterwards, they were freed, and a queen of theirs [was] in Cashel. Moreover, the swineherd who was found in Cashel, freedom was given to him and his children by the king of Cashel, that is, without tribute and without exaction of king or steward. It is he, too, who raises the cry of kingship for the king of Cashel, and is given a

> blessing by the king, and straightaway receives the garment of the king."[237]

The key element of the inauguration ritual seems to be lighting the fire on Cashel and as Charles-Edwards has pointed out, lighting a fire is the second phase of the rite of *tellach*, and spending the night is necessary in at least one form of *tellach*.[238] However, despite Bhreathnach's assertion that the lighting of the fire is mirrored in *Senchas Fagbail Caisil* (henceforth *SFC*), it appears only in the tenth century version of the story where it may very well have added in elements of *LCC*.[239] The first version of *SFC* does not seem to depict the rite of *tellach*, and it is possible that the later version was influenced by *LCC* and *CCCL*, although the relationship between the Conall Corc texts has not been determined. Rather, the claim to the land is determined in this text through the swineherd's vision and subsequently the transaction of cumals between Corc and one of the swineherds. While *tellach* seems to be significant in claiming the kingship of Cashel, the texts vary in what elements of *tellach* are included.

The prophecy of the swineherd is present in *SFC*, although in this case it involves two swineherds: Duirdriu the swineherd of the king of Éile and Cuirirán the swineherd of the king of Múscraige.[240] Duirdiu told his king, Conall mac Nenta Con, about the vision "so that the place in which he had seen the vision might be earned for him."[241] Corc arrived and bought the land, and "thus the descendants of Duirdriu are entitled to seven *cumals* from the king of Cashel."[242] It is interesting here that it is the swineherd of Éile rather than Múscraige who is entitled to gifts from the king of Cashel, as opposed to *LCC*, but the rite of inaugurating the king does not seem to be afforded to the descendants of the swineherd of Éile in this version of the text. Próinséas Ní Chatháin suggests that the second swineherd Duirdriu and the King of Éile were possibly added to elevate the Éile people to the status of the Múscraige in the text.[243]

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[237] Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 942, 949 – 950.
[238] Charles-Edwards, "Early Irish and Welsh Kinship," pp. 261, 272 – 273; *CIH* 210.25 – 211.25 = *AL* iv 18.20 – 21.7, 22.20 – 23.37.
[239] For the lighting of the fire on Cashel in *Senchas Fagbail Caisil*, see Dillon, "The Finding of Cashel," 66, 71; Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," p. 175.
[240] Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 64 – 65, 68 – 69.
[241] Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 65, 69.
[242] Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 65 – 69.
[243] She does also suggest it may be a literary trope. See Próinséas Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," *Studia Celtica* 14 (1979): 200 – 211, here 206.

LCC does contain other elements comparable to other inauguration rites, although their role in the inauguration rite at Cashel is more obscure than the lighting of the fire. The yew bush may be a reference to the *bile*, or sacred tree, which is an obscure but potentially an important symbol of kingship. Most of the evidence regarding these trees is very vague, and while some scholars have suggested they had a role in inauguration rituals, there is no conclusive textual or archaeological evidence for sacred trees playing a role in inaugurations.[244] Fitzpatrick notes that any association with trees at inauguration sites is poorly understood: there are some references to trees at inauguration sites such as the tree at Magh Adhair, which was destroyed (or partially destroyed) in 982, and then destroyed fully (or perhaps it was another tree) again in 1052.[245] There are subsequent references to the destruction of trees at other inauguration sites elsewhere through Ireland, but again, these are all eleventh and twelfth century events.[246] She suggests further that the sacred trees may have had something to do with the *slat na rige* (rod of kingship).[247] The *slat na righe* was a feature within late inauguration rituals, such as the one described in the twelfth-century *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)*, and the inauguration tracts of Ó Chonchuibhuir and Uí Dhubdha.[248] Fitzpatrick notes that the *slat na righe* was likely linked to the sacred tree based on *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)* in which it state that the rod must be cut from the sacred hazel tree of Máedóc.[249] Compared to the late medieval evidence, the few early medieval references to these sacred trees seem to be more ecclesiastical in nature, such as the *Bile Tortan* which was mentioned in the *Book of Armagh*, or the *Eó Mugna*, the felling of which was recorded in the *Félire Óengusso*.[250] It is possible that certain trees were held sacred, but their specific role cannot yet be determined, and it may very well be that they only gained symbolic importance after the eleventh century. The

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[244] For discussions on the sacred trees, see A.T. Lucas, "The Sacred Trees of Ireland," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 68 (1963): 16 – 54; Alden Watson, "The King, the Poet and the Sacred Tree," *Etudes Celtiques* 18 (1981): 165 - 180

[245] *ATig* s.a. 982.4, 1051.11; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 57 – 58.

[246] AU s.a. 1111.6; AFM s.a. 1099; CS 1129.

[247] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 58.

[248] Charles Plummer (ed. and transl.), *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)*, in Charles Plummer (ed. and transl.), *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, 2 vols., (Oxford, 1922), I. 191 - 290, II. 184 - 281; For the Ui Chonchobhair inauguration tract see John O'Daly and John O'Donovan, "Inauguration of Cathal Croibhdhearg O'Conor, King of Connaught," *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society* 2:2 (1853): 335 – 374, here 342 – 343; *Book of Lecan*, f. 73 r, col. b; O'Donovan, *The Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach*, pp. 440 – 444; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 58.

[249] *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)*, I. 203, II. 197; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 58.

[250] John Gwynn (ed.), *Liber Ardmachanus: The Book of Armagh* (London, 1913), p. 30; Stokes, *Félire Óengusso*, pp. 258 – 259.

assumption that the sacred trees were a pre-Christian ritual is not well-founded, and it may just as well be an innovation in eleventh-century Ireland.

The motif of the mantle appears again in *LCC* in which Corc bequeaths his royal cloak to the swineherd, in what seems to be a reverse of the rite in *De Síl Chonairi Móir*. The giving up of clothing for an inauguration seems to be a common aspect in other inauguration accounts within and outside of Ireland. The aforementioned inauguration rite in *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)* mentions that "the horse and robes of the King of Breifne on his coronation day [were] to be given to the family of Máedóc, or else ten horses or twenty [cattle]."[251] A similar motif is also seen in the inauguration of Ó Dubhda, in which is weapons, clothing, and horse were given to Ó Caomháin, a vassal of Ó Dubhda whose role is akin to the swineherd in *LCC*.[252] Fitzpatrick highlights that the role of giving up royal clothing for an inauguration is not unique to Ireland, but the reason for it is unclear.[253] Perhaps it signalled the transition from king-claimant to king, or perhaps it was a single privilege afforded to the one who gave the acclamation at the ritual, which is in this case the swineherd, a feature that will be discussed below.

Another element of the inauguration rite at Cashel that appears in the swineherd's prophecy is the flagstone, which as discussed in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* is an important aspect of Irish inauguration rites. The earliest reference to a stone at Cashel, although it is not clear if this was an inauguration stone, was in Tírechán's *Collecteana de sancto Patricio*, in which the sons of the king of Cashel Nad Froich were baptised over the *petra Cothrigi* (Patrick's stone) at Cashel.[254] The ninth-century *Vita Tripartita* expands on this episode, and refers to the stone as *lecc Patráic*.[255] The flagstone at Cashel is also referenced in later material, known either as *Lecc Cothrige* (Flagstone of Patrick) or *Lecc na gCéad* (Flagstone of Hundreds).[256] It seems likely that the stone mentioned by Tírechán and in the *Vita Tripartita* is the same flagstone as the one in *LCC*, although if it was the

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[251] I supplied the verb in this sentence as it was not present in Plummer's translation, and cattle in lieu of "kine" for ease of understanding. See *Betha Máedóc Ferna (II)*, I. 202, II. 196.
[252] O'Donovan, *The Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach*, pp. 440 – 441; Fizpatrick noted similarities in an early modern document about the chief of the Oirghialla, as well as a continental inauguration rite amongst the Dukes of Carinthia. See Fitpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 6 – 8.
[253] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 6 – 7.
[254] Ludwig Bieler (ed. and transl.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, (Dublin, 1979), pp. 162 – 163.
[255] Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), *The Tripartite Life of Patrick: with other documents relating to that saint*, I (London, 1887), pp. 194 – 197.
[256] It is referred to as *Leac na gCéad* in the *Acallam na Senórach*. See Standish O'Grady (ed. and transl.), *Silva Gadelica*, (London, 1892), I.205, II.233.

same as the one in later sources is unknown. Evidently, the naming conventions of the stone are meant to evoke continuity of a flagstone dedicated to Patrick from the early medieval period to the late medieval, even if different stones were used, so perhaps the *Lecc Cothrige* was in fact this earlier flagstone.

There is a passage in a twelfth-century Éoganachta genealogical tract regarding an inauguration stone at Cashel called the "*Lecc Cotraide"* that was apparently housed in Cormac's Chapel.[257] Gleeson further postulates that this stone may have originally been housed in the early church on Cashel.[258] The stone may have been within the church, although the text implies the flagstone being in the open air outside of the church. The passage, in fact, is clearly modelled on the tale of Jacob at Bethel:

> "…igitur egressus Jacob de Bersabee pergebat Haran. Cumque venisset ad quemdam locum, et vellet in eo requiescere post solis occubitum tulit de lapidibus qui jacebant et subponens capiti suo dormivit in eodem loco. Viditque in somnis scalam stantem super terram et cacumen illius tangens caelem: angelos quoque Dei ascendentes et descendentes per eam…"
>
> "But Jacob being departed from Bersabee went on to Haran. And when he was come to a certain place, he would rest in it after sunset, he took of the stones that lay there, and putting under his head, slept in the same place. And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven, the angels also of God ascending and descending by it."[259]

Jacob hears the voice of God after this vision, who informs him that his descendants will spread out in all directions and will be blessed, he awakes and pours oil onto the stone he slept upon and names the place Bethel.[260] F.J. Byrne notes that this passage was included in liturgy meant

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[257] The passage is found in the *Great Book of Lecan*, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 2, f. 181v d28 – 30; Various scholars have discussed the stone and this passage. See Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, p. 191; Ó Corráin, "Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil," 69; Ó Riain-Raedel, "German Influence," 328 – 329; Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inaugurations in Gaelic Ireland*, p. 101; Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," pp. 179 – 178.
[258] Gleeson, "Kingship and Architecture," 11 – 12.
[259] Genesis 28.10 – 12 (Robert Weber and Roger Gryson (eds), *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart, 2007), p. 41; *Douay-Rheims Bible* (Baltimore, 1899), pp. 20 – 21).
[260] Gen. 28. 13 – 22 (Weber and Gryson (eds), *Biblia Sacra*, p. 41; *Douay-Rheims*, p. 21.).

to consecrate churches, and while the earliest record of this tradition is not noted, the corresponding passage in *LCC* is clearly evoking this Biblical tale.[261] Moreover, it also involves a stone, which then may indicate that the flagstone and the entire Rock of Cashel in *LCC* were then blessed by God. The role that the flagstone is meant to play in an inauguration rite in the context of *LCC* is unclear, but the association of flagstones with inauguration sites and descriptions of stones in other inauguration rites may indicate that the king of Cashel had to stand upon it. It is evident that the Christianised flagstone was meant to stand in opposition to the Lia Fáil much in the way that Cashel was depicted as the opposite to Tara. There was continuity of tradition with the flagstone, but evoking Christian and Biblical imagery to legitimise the site legitimises the Kings of Cashel as Christian kings.

Acclamation played a more evident role in *LCC* with the role of the swineherd. In *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, the acclamation of the rite was symbolised by the stone, but in *LCC*, there is a more conventional depiction of acclamation.[262] In addition, this may be reflected in *SFC* in an untranslated passage in the text called *Dicta Cuirirán Muiceda* where the swineherd Cuirirán gives a blessing to the king of Múscraige regarding Corc that he had received in a dream.[263] Bhreathnach, while not providing a full translation, states that the blessing "speaks of waves, of dominance over foreign lands, of acquiring hostages, of *fír fírinde* ("truth of truth"), of fertility of the land, of *bithbetha* ("everlasting life"), of *ríg ruirech* ("king[s] of over-kings").[264] According to Fergus Kelly, the material is partially drawn on from *Audacht Morainn* and reflects concept of *fír flathemon*.[265] Byrne suggests that it may represent a proclamation said at the inauguration of the king of Cashel, especially given the ending phrase: "The king replied and said: may it be truth that is confirmed, may it be power that is enforced. The people replied: Amen."[266] Bhreathnach argues that the angel's blessing heard by the swineherds may also have been a proclamation given at an inauguration:

> "Bennacht toicith trén teasamain foraib uilib rígaib Caisil: flaith-bennacht bó-bennacht búaid-beandacht cath-beandacht ana-

[261] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, p. 186; For a discussion of the liturgy used for consecrating churches, see Lee Bowen, "The Tropology of Mediaeval Dedication Rites," *Speculum* 16:4 (1941): 469 – 479; see also Carolyn M. Carty, "The Role of Gunzo's Dream in the Building of Cluny III," *Gesta* 27:1/2 (1988): 113 – 123, here 123 n. 50.
[262] Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 942, 950; Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 135, 140.
[263] Dillon, "The Finding of the Finding of Cashel," 65, 70 n. 4.
[264] Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," p. 174.
[265] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, pp. xiv, 73 – 74; Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," p. 174.
[266] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, p. 174.

bendacht mag-bendacht fid-bendacht óg-bendacht fín-bendacht slán-bendacht sáer-bendacht sír-bendacht. Bendacht nime néll-bendacht, bendacht tíre torad-bendacht, bennacht mara íasc-bendacht, bendacht gréine grad-bendacht, bennacht ésga ordan-bennacht, bendacht latha lón-bendacht, beandacht-drúcht, bendacht faithin, bendacht gaile, bendacht gaísi, beandacht air, bendact aurith arub ceantaib cíallatar. Beatha-bendacht beanfacht dochtu in Chomdhid cumachtaig céne forcomédaigh fírinni co fodlaib trócaire, trénruire réim cean tosach can forceand as maa bithapert. Bendacht foraib uile ríga[ib] Caisil."

"A powerful blessing of prosperity south upon you all, kings of Cashel: blessing of rule, blessing of cattle, blessing of victory, blessing in battle, blessing of wealth, a blessing for the plain, a blessing for the wood, a perfect blessing, blessing of wine, a sound blessing, a noble blessing, a lasting blessing. Blessing of heaven cloud blessing, blessing of earth fruit-blessing, blessing of sea fish-blessing, blessing of sun rank-blessing, blessing of moon honour-blessing, blessing of ale food-blessing, a blessing of dew, blessing of light, blessing of valour, blessing of wisdom, blessing of ploughing, blessing of [?] . A life blessing is the firm blessing of the mighty Lord so long as you keep the Truth with the divisions of mercy, a strong Prince who reignith [sic] without beginning, without end, who is greater than everlasting telling. A blessing upon you all, kings of Cashel."[267]

[267] Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 65, 69. Dillon was unable to translate "bendacht aurith arub ceantaib cíallatar," and to my knowledge there have been no further attempts. *Aurith* may be a corrupt form of *ad-reith* "attains, runs towards, attacks, overtakes, arrests," or *ar-reith*, "accuses, brings to trial, overtakes, captures", see eDIL *s.v.* ad-reith and eDIL *s.v.* ar-reith. *Arub* may be a form of the preposition *ar*, see eDIL, *s.v.* 1 ar. *Ceantaib* seems to be a form of *cennaid*, "tame, domesticated," see eDIL *s.v.* cennaid. *Cíallatar* is likely *cíallathar*, which seems to be largely used only in complex verbs, but on its own may mean "gather," see eDIL *s.v.* -ciallathar. Thus, perhaps this passage is about overtaking or claiming tamed animals; For a brief discussion of this passage, see Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," p. 173.

Like the *Dicta*, this blessing refers to good and prosperous rulership, linked to the land, with references to truth and just rule. Bhreathnach notes that this passage mirrors the *Audacht Morainn* in both its content and structure and lends credence to her suggestion that these types of texts regarding kingship were "handbooks for royal governance and ritual."[268] It may represent a combination of pre-Christian kingship customs placed within a Christian framework, in which clergy were integrated into inauguration rituals through the use of these blessings.

The significance of the swineherd has been discussed by various scholars. Kelly notes that Byrne suggested that the swineherd is taking on the role of the druid or member of the learned class in the inauguration rite.[269] Ní Chatháin has examined the mythological importance of swineherds, pointing to both the cultic significance of boars and swine among "Celtic" peoples in the Iron Age and early medieval Irish and Welsh literature and the appearance of swineherds in the saga narratives.[270] The sacred function of the swineherd is further exemplified, in her view, by the possible etymology of the name Cuirirán meaning "little pig-nut", a type of acorn.[271] She argues further that the swineherd's "function as a seer goes back to a time when swineherds were sacred and engaged in important specialised activity in a primitive society."[272] She also suggests that the second swineherd, Duirdriu, received visions from eating acorns as his name may be etymologically related to *daur*, the Old Irish for "oak tree".[273] David Sproule rejects the supernatural implications of the swineherds or that a swineherd ever took part in the inauguration rituals of the kings of Cashel, suggesting that it may simply be that the king's *ollam* claimed descent from this swineherd.[274] Sproule argues that this is more likely because of a line in an eighth or ninth-century text *Frithḟolaid ríg Caisil fri túatha Muman* (*Counter-obligations of the king of Cashel towards the peoples of Munster*), where it states that the chief *ollam* of the king must be from the Múscraige.[275]

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[268] Bhreathnach, "Tara and Cashel," pp. 173 – 174; The blessing section is heptasyllabic, which Dillon notes is common in the early legal tracts. See Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," p. 69 n. 6.
[269] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, p. xiv; Calvert Watkins argues also that the blessings were likely used in inaugurations, citing Kelly and Byrne. See Calvert Watkins, "Is Tre Ḟír Flathemon: Marginalia to Audacht Morainn," *Ériu* 30 (1979): 181 – 198,183 – 184.
[270] Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," 200 – 211.
[271] Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," 209.
[272] Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," 209.
[273] Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," 210.
[274] Sproule, "Politics and Pure Narrative," 26 – 28.
[275] For the Irish text, see J.G. O'Keeffe, "Dál Caladbuig and Reciprocal Services between the Kings of Cashel and Various Munster States," in J. Frazer, P. Grosjean, S.J., and J.G. O'Keeffe (eds), *Irish Texts, Fasculus I* (London, 1931), pp. 19 – 21, here p. 20; For a translation of the passage, see Vernam Hull, "A Passage in *Dál Caladbuig*," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 30 (1967): 12 – 13; For the tentative date and discussion of the political background of this text, see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 534 – 548.

This seems a more likely scenario than the mythological or supernatural explanation, and perhaps the authors of the *LCC* and *SFC* were of the Múscraige people, a suggestion that Charles-Edwards made about *Frithḟolad Muman* based on the passage on the *ollam*.[276]

The possibility of the authors of *LCC* and *SFC* being members of the Múscraige (or Éile, for the latter text) seems very possible when considering the central role that the swineherds played in the stories. The special privileges and visions held by the swineherd(s) clearly lends prestige onto their descendants and the close relationship they had with the kings of Cashel. What is particularly interesting is that *De Síl Chonairi Móir* was also likely written from a Múscraige perspective but clearly these texts serve different political purposes. While *De Síl Chonairi Móir* was clearly laying claim to Tara by a people who no longer held it, these Cashel texts were produced by someone highlighting the prestige of being the chief *ollam* of the kings of Cashel. Thus, while these texts all promote a Múscraige perspective it is unlikely that they were produced within the same context. The Cashel texts were almost certainly written by a *fili* closely connected with the ruling Éoganachta kindreds, while *De Síl Chonairi Móir* was probably written by a *fili* who was attached to a Múscraige king who wanted to demonstrate his right to a more prestigious position. Overall, *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, *Longes Chonaill Chuirc*, and *Senchas Fagbála Caisil* texts were clearly meant to demonstrate the continued power of the ruling Éoganachta kindreds.

The Cashel texts, while having scattered and vague references to inauguration rites, seem to suggest that Cashel was a "new" kingship site meant to rival the old "pagan" sites, especially regarding the integration of Christian blessings and visions. Instead of doing away with old traditions, this represented an accommodation of Christian theology within pre-Christian ideals of rightful kingship. Moreover, although the Cashel texts are markedly different from *De Síl Chonairi Móir* because of the clear Christian imagery in the texts, there are still several parallels between the two. The legal rite of *tellach* likely underpinned inauguration rites at Tara and Cashel and both contain references to flagstones, but the inauguration rites at Cashel seem to be the most similar to the late medieval iterations, especially with the giving up of the king's cloak and the special rites given to the descendants of the swineherd.

[276] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 543.

3.4 Iona/Dunadd

While Cashel could represent a halfway point between "pagan" and Christian traditions, the last inauguration rite discussed may have been an even greater effort to Christianise inauguration rites in early medieval Ireland. There are several complex issues with both the texts and the sites. Iona, an island in the Inner Hebrides in what is now Scotland, was historically part of the territory of the Dál Riata and the site of a monastic foundation by St Columba. Iona was situated within an Old Irish speaking region, but its proximity to Britain acts as a bridge between Ireland and Britain, and any inauguration rites that may have been set here align more with those in English-speaking kingdoms, as will be demonstrated later on. In addition, what sets it apart from Tara and Cashel is a lack of any textual references to prehistoric or distant legendary pasts, as its earliest historical horizon is the monastic foundation by Columba, and the textual sources on this event appear after his death. There is a single reference to an inauguration on Iona, contained within the *Vita Columbae* written by Abbot Adomnán of Iona between 689 and his death in 704.[277] The text survives in several manuscripts, one of which is highly important because it was written shortly after the original text itself. The manuscript is known as the *Schaffhausen Adomnán*, Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, Gen. 1, and the scribe was Dorbbéne, abbot of Iona, (d. 713), known to us through a colophon.[278] The date of the manuscript thus cannot be later than 713, but Richard Sharpe notes that Dorbbéne may have copied it before becoming abbot and thus Adomnán himself could have seen the manuscript.[279] Thus, this early manuscript is incredibly valuable given its close relation to the original text.

The passage on the inauguration of Áedán mac Gabráin is notable for being a very early reference to the phrase *ordinatio* used in relation to the inauguration of a king. The previous texts discussed may have depicted real types of inaugurations, but the settings of each were situated within a legendary past, written to promote the rites that certain dynasties had over kingships. While this text also had political purposes, it is the only text that describes the inauguration of a historical king, although the historicity of the passage has been heavily debated by scholars. Moreover, the implication of *ordinatio* feature prominently in these discussions, particularly with

[277] For the dating of the text, see J.M. Picard, "The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*," *Peritia* 1 (1982): 160 – 177, here 167 – 169.

[278] The manuscript has been digitised and is available at *e-codices*, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/sbs/0001 (Accessed 5 February 2020); For a discussion of Dorbbéne and the composition of the manuscript, see Mark Stansbury, "The Composition of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*," Peritia 17 – 18 (2003 – 2004): 154 – 182.

[279] Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 235.

regards to the potential use of unction in the inauguration ceremony. Enright has analysed this passage and its historical implications at length in his 1985 monograph *Iona, Tara and Soissons: The Origin of the Royal Anointing Ritual*.[280] His argument was that the anointment of Pippin I circa 751 was based on the *Collectio Canones Hibernensis*, an eighth-century Irish compilation of canon law which was influenced by Adomnán, whose ideology of kingship was based Old Testament Book of Samuel.[281] This is in spite of the earliest reference to the royal unction, that of Wamba, King of the Visigoths, in 672 which Enright rejects as having any influence on the Franks.[282]

His monograph was very provocative, and subsequent discussions of the passage have largely been in response to Enright's thesis. There have been several responses to Enright's thesis since its publication. Meckler states that the inauguration must have been historical and promoted an alliance between the Uí Néill and Dál Riata.[283] In Sharpe's translation of the *VC*, he notes that the word *ordinatio* does not necessarily mean anointment, although he concedes that Enright was correct in his argument that Adomnán was influenced by the Book of Samuel.[284] Tanaka is more cautious about the historicity of the passage, agreeing with Enright that the passage was propaganda for Áedán as the rightful king of Dál Riata.[285] Tanaka does not believe that Adomnán

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[280] Michael Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons: The Origin of the Royal Anointing Ritual*, *Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung*, Bd. 17 (Berlin, 1985); Enright builds upon earlier Continental scholarship such as Jan Prelog, "Sind die Weihesalbungen insularen Ursprungen?" *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 13 (1979): 303 – 356; Jörg Jarnut, "Wer hat Pippin 751 zum König gesalbt?" *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 16 (1982): 45 – 58; Arnold Angenendt, "Rex et sacerdos. Zur Genese der Königssalbung," in Norbert Kamp und Joachim Wollasch (eds), *Tradition als Historische Kraft. Interdiszipinäre Forschungen zur Geschichte des Früheren Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1982), pp. 100 – 118; see also Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, pp. 2 n. 5, 3 n. 7.

[281] The problems surrounding the provenance, compilation, and authors of the *CCH* are too complex to be dealt with in this thesis. Traditionally, the compilers were thought to be Cú Chuimne of Iona and Ruben of Dairinis, who were mentioned in a colophon in one of the manuscripts, the ninth-century Saint Germain MS Paris BN Lat. 12021, but as Bart Jaski notes, we do not know the extent to which they were involved, if at all. See Bart Jaski, "Cú Chuimne, Ruben and the Compilation of the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*," *Peritia* 14 (2000): 51 – 69, here 52. For the date of the *CCH*, see David Howlett, "The Prologue to the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*," *Peritia* 17 – 18 (2003 – 2004): 144 – 149; Enright provides an overview of his argument in the conclusion to his monograph. See Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, pp. 163 – 165; For the edition and translation of the text, see Roy Flechner, *The Hibernensis*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 2019); 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel correspond with 1 and 2 Regum in the Vulgate.

[282] For the anointment of Wamba, see K. Zeumer (ed.), *Chronica regum Visigothorum*, 44 in MGH LL. nat. Germ 1 (Hannover, 1902), p. 461; for Enright's arguments on Wamba, see Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, pp. 80 – 85.

[283] Meckler, "Colum Cille's Ordination of Áedán mac Gabráin," 139, 146 – 147.

[284] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 355 – 356, n. 358.

[285] Tanaka, "Iona and the Kingship of Dál Riata in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*," 204 – 205.

was attempting to obtain the right to inaugurate kings of Dál Riata for abbots of Iona, *contra* Enright, who argues that was Adomnán's goal.[286]

Despite the extent of the scholarship on this passage, there have been no attempts to place it within a general context of inauguration within Ireland, and it is important to compare it with the above two passages in order to ascertain any potential parallels. The passage from the *Vita Columbae* is as follows:

> "Alio in tempore, cum uir praedicabilis in Hinba commoraretur insula, quadam nocte in extasi mentis angelum domini ad se misum uidit, qui in manu uitrem ordinationis regum habebat librum. Quem cum secundum quod ei in libro erat commendatum Aidena in regem ordinare recussaret, quia magis Iogenanum fratrum eius dilegeret, subito angelus extendens manum sanctum percussit flagillo, cuius liuorosum in eius latere uestugium omnibus suae diebus permansit uitae. Hocque intulit uerbum: 'Pro certo scias,' iniquiens, 'quia ad te a deo misus sum cum libro, ut iuxta uerba quae in eo legisti Aidanum in regnum ordines. Quod si obsecundare huic nolueris iusioni, percutiam iterato.'
>
> Hic itaque angelus domini cum per tris contenuas noctes eundam in manu uitreum habens codicem apparuisset, eademque domini iusa de regis euiusdem ordinatione commendasset, sanctus uerbo obsequtus dominu ad Iouam transnauigauit insulam, ibidemque Aidenam hisdem aduentantem diebus in regem sicut erat iusis ordinauit. Et inter ordinationis uerba de filiis et nepotibus pronepotibusque eius futura profeitizauit, inponensque manum super caput eius ordinans benedixit."
>
> "Once, when the praiseworthy man [Columba] was living in the island of *Hinba*, he saw one night in a mental trance an angel of the Lord sent to him. He had in his hand a glass book of the ordination of kings (*uitrem ordinationis regum librum*), which St Columba received from

[286] Tanaka, "Iona and the Kingship of Dál Riata," 205; Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, p. 62.

> him, and which at the angel's bidding he began to read. In the book the command was given to him that he should ordain Áedán as king, which Columba refused to do because he held Áedán's brother Éoganán in higher regard. Whereupon the angel reached out and struck the saint with a whip, the scar from which remained with him for the rest of his life. Then the angel addressed him sternly: 'Know then as a certain truth, I am sent to you by God with the glass book in order that you should ordain Áedán to the kingship according to the words you have read in it. But if you refuse to obey this command, I shall strike you again.'
>
> In this way the angel of the Lord appeared to St Columba on three successive nights, each time having the same glass book, and each time making the same demand that he should ordain Áedán as king. The holy man obeyed the world of the Lord and sailed from *Hinba* to Iona, where Áedán had arrived at this time, and he ordained him king in accordance with the Lord's command. As he was performing the ordination, St Columba also prophesied the future of Áedán's sons and grandsons and great-grandsons, then he laid his hand on Áedán's head in ordination and blessed him."[287]

The passage is mostly concerned with the visitation by the angel and Columba's refusal, whereas the inauguration itself has very few details: we only know that Columba lay his hands upon Áedán and gave a blessing and a prophecy. Moreover, the perspective in this passage is different from that the previous texts. The focus is on Columba as the one who ordains the king: Áedán himself gains prestige through being ordained by a saint connected to the Uí Néill who were a larger and more powerful dynasty. This in turn also provides prestige to Iona and its abbots, but the framing of the narrative here centres Columba. In *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, there are no other actors directly involved in the inauguration and in the Corc tales, the swineherd(s) gains prestige from becoming the one to proclaim the King of Munster but remains subject to the Eoganachta and is a member of a small and less-powerful dynasty.

[287] *Vita Columba*, III.5 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.) *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, p. 188; *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 208 – 209).

The inauguration in the *Schaffhausen Adomnán* is followed by the specific prophecy in a passage added by Dorbbéne that was pulled from an older *vita* for Columba, written by a previous abbot of Iona, Cumméne Alba (d. 669):

> "Cummeneus albus in libro quem de uirtutibus sancti Columbae scripsit sic dixit, quod sanctus Columba de Aidano et de posteris eius et de regno suo profetare coepit, dicens: 'Indubitanter crede O Aidane quoniam nullus aduersariorum tuorum tibi poterit resistere, donec prius fraudulentiam agas in me et in posteros meos. Propterea ergo tu filiis commenda, ut et ipsi filiis et nepotibus et posteris suis commendent, ne per consilia mala eorum sceptrum regni huius de minibus suis perdant. In quocumque enim tempore malum aduersum me aut aduersus cognatos meos qui sunt in Hibernia fecerint, flagellum quod causa tui ab angelo sustenui per manum dei super eos in magnum flagitium uertetur; et cor uirorum auferetur ab eis, et inimici eorum uehimenter super eos confortabuntur.' Hoc autem uaticinium temporibus nostris conpletum est in bello Roth, Domnallo Brecco nepote Aidani sine causa uastante prouinciam Domnail nepotis Ainmuireg. Et a die illa usque hodie adhuc in procliuo sunt ab exraneis: quod suspiria doloris pectori incutit."
>
> "Cummene the White in the book which he wrote on the miraculous powers of St Columba gives this account of St Columba's prophecy about Áedán and his descendants and his kingdom:
>
> 'Make no mistake, Áedán, but believe that, until you commit some act of treachery against me or my successors, none of your enemies will have the power to oppose you. For this reason you must give this warning to your sons, as they must pass it on to their sons and grandsons and descendants, so that they do not follow evil counsels and so lose the sceptre of this kingdom from their hands. For whenever it may happen that they do wrong to me or to my kindred in Ireland, the scourge that I have suffered for your sake from the angel will be turned by the hand of God to deliver a heavy punishment on them.

> Men’s hearts will be taken from them, and their enemies will draw strength mightily against them.’
>
> This prophecy was fulfilled in our own time, at the battle of Mag Roth, when Áedán’s grandson Domnall Brecc laid waste the territory of the saint’s kinsman Domnall Ua Ainmirech. From that day to this day the family of Áedán is held in subjugation by strangers, a fact which brings sighs of sorrow to the breast.”[288]

This prophecy is both a warning from Columba as well as a reflection of the changing political environment in Dál Riata. Tanaka has analysed the political implications behind the exclusion of the prophecy by Adomnán and its reintroduction by Dorbbéne at length.[289] The problem is too complex to focus on in this thesis, but ultimately, it was possibly not politically prudent for Adomnán to contain the prophecy from Cumméne as the Dál Riata were not under the control of a foreign power in his day. It is possible that the Dál Riata had been subjugated by the time Dorbbéne was writing or perhaps Cenél nGabráin had run afoul of the Iona abbots or the Northern Uí Néill.[290] What is significant for my discussion is the reference to the scourge that Columba received: this implies heavily that Cumméne’s *vita* included some version of the passage with the angel directing Columba to ordain Áedán. The extent to which Adomnán innovated with the terminology is unknown, but clearly some aspect of this inauguration was included in the other *vita*.

Another aspect of the prophecy that is noteworthy is the phrase “*sceptrum regni*” (sceptre of the kingdom). Sharpe was sceptical of this referring to a real physical sceptre, and suggests that it this has a metaphorical meaning, referring more generally to dominion or rule as seen in both Classical and Late Latin.[291] Moreover, Sharpe astutely points out that we really have no knowledge

[288] *Vita Columba*, III.5. (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl), *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, pp. 188 – 191; *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 209); The prophecy is only in the *Schaffhausen Adomnán* and subsequent copies of this MS, such as the ninth century Metz, Grand Séminaire MS. I fos. 1 – 79. The other MS tradition of *VC*, known as the B manuscripts, which are not derived from *Schaffhausen* and thus do not contain this passage. See Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, pp. liv – lvii.
[289] Tanaka, “Iona and the Kingship of Dál Riata,” 206 – 213.
[290] Tanaka, “Iona and the Kingship of Dál Riata,” 210 – 213.
[291] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 359 n. 361.

of royal regalia for Irish kings, past the discussion of special clothing above. Rods and wands make an appearance in later inaugurations in Ireland, but it is unknown how early that practice began.[292]

Nevertheless, there are aspects here that may be parallel to other inaugurations in Ireland. The prophecy mentioned by Columba on Áedán's descendants calls to mind similarities with the prophecy from the druid in *LCC* about the King of Munster above. It also shares similarities with the *BCC* and the *BiS* mentioned above, in which the descendants of Conn Cétchathach are prophesied to rule Tara. It is also a common hagiographical motif and the *VC* is full of prophecies from Columba, many involving kings and outcomes of battles, and naturally the events he prophesied are historically accurate, lending credence to his saintly abilities in the *vita*.[293]

The laying of hands and blessing by Columba here does not seem to hold any parallels with other inaugurations in Ireland, even the Christian ones. The Biblical precedents cited by Enright do not use the phrase "laying of hands" and are quite explicit about unction: *ordinatio* on the other hand was used in a secular function in the Late Antique period and should not be taken to imply unction. If Adomnán was deliberately trying to promote unction without any regard to historical accuracy, then there is no reason why he would have been opaque about its use when the use of oil is clear in 1 Samuel.

Tanaka is certainly correct that it is impossible to prove the historicity of this event. Nevertheless, it is not unlikely that abbots and other high-ranking church members would have wanted to insert themselves into inauguration rituals both to elevate their own political power as well as to Christianise rituals that were possibly considered too "pagan". It may be that Columba did not ordain Áedán, but Adomnán could also have been describing a rite that was used in his time or at least by the time Cumméne Alba. Janet Nelson implies that the miracle preceding the inauguration renders it unbelievable, but elsewhere throughout the *Vita Columbae* are historical events that are placed within a context of saintly interventions and prophecies.[294] Therefore, we cannot dismiss this event simply because of the hagiographical motifs that are included.

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[292] These rods/wands are referred to with various terminology in the texts: *slat na righe*, *cráeb*, and *lorg* are used to refer to wooden wands/rods of kingship or status. *Lorg* appears as an early term, and it is not associated with inauguration rituals

[293] For example, his prophecy regarding the outcome of the battle of Cúl Dreimne or his prophecy regarding Eochaid Buide, the son of Áedán, whom Columba prophesied would be king after Áedán or. See Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.7, 9 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, pp. 30 – 31, 32 – 33; Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe pp. 118 – 120

[294] Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," 52 – 53.

There are three other references to ordination in the *Vita Columbae* that are worth mentioning. The first is to Diarmait mac Cerbaill, whom Adomnán states "was the ruler of all Ireland, ordained by God's will ("…totius Scotiae fuerat regnatorem deo auctore ordinatum…").[295] This is an interesting passage because Diarmait celebrated the *Feis Temro*, and some scholars argue that this indicates he was the last non-Christian Uí Néill king.[296] Adomnán's reference here implies that Diarmait was a Christian king as ordained by God. Moreover, Adomnán implies that his murder at the hands of the Ulaid king Áed Dub mac Suibne, king of the Mag Line was a serious affront.[297] According to the *Annals of Tigernach*, Diarmait was killed in Ráth Bic in Mag Line and thus was a guest of Áed Dub when it occurred, an even greater crime as it went against hospitality rules.[298] This depiction of Diarmait as a Christian king whom Adomnán deicts favourably is important when we consider the (possibly late) tradition of Columba and Diarmait as antagonists, based on the Battle of Cúl Dreimne (c. 560).[299] According to the *Annals of Tigernach*, Diarmait mac Cerbaill killed Curnán mac Aed who was under Columba's protection and this is claimed to be one of the reasons for war, but Charles-Edwards notes this may be a late insertion into the annals as it is in Irish rather than Latin.[300] The battle itself, according to the Annals, was fought between Columba's cousins Ainmire mac Sétna and Ninnid mac Duach of the Cenél Conaill, the brothers Fergus mac Muirchertaig and

[295] Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.36 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.) *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, pp. 64 – 65).
[296] For the reference to Diarmait's celebration of the *Feis Temro*, see *AU* s.a. 560.1. This is likely a contemporary entry, as it is not embellished in any way. Mc Carthy has demonstrated that the entries in the sixth century are contemporary. See Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 114 – 116, 159 – 164. There seems to be some confusion over the *Feis Temro* passage. There is a generally commonly held opinion that this was the last *Feis Temro*, but as T.M. Charles-Edwards rightfully notes, the only text that claims this is the chronicle from Clonmacnoise and are not included in the *Annals of Ulster*. Moreover, he states that a king does not have to be a pagan in order to hold a "pagan" festival and cites the Lupercalia in Rome as an example. See T.M. Charles-Edwards, "Review of Michael J. Enright, *Prophecy and Kingship in Adomnán's "Life of St Columba*," *The Catholic Historical Review* 100:4 (2014): 807.
[297] Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.36 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.) *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, pp. 64 – 65);
[298] *ATig* s.a. 563.4; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 295.
[299] There are several entries for the battle in the *Annals of Ulster*: *AU* s.a. 560.3, 561.1, 561.2, c.f. *ATig* s.a. 560.1; Brian Lacey, "The battle of Cúl Dreimne – a reassessment," *The Journal of the Royal Societies of Antiquaries of Ireland* 133 (2003): 78 – 85, here 78.
[300] *ATig* s.a. 559.4; There is a sixteenth century tradition based on Manus O'Donnell's *Betha Coluimb Chille*, that claims the cause for the war was because Columba copied a book belonging to Finnian of Movilla Abbey, the latter claiming any copies of the book belonged to him. Diarmait mac Cerbaill ruled "to every cow…her calf, and to every book its transcript." See Manus O'Donnell, *Betha Coluimb Chille. Life of Columcille*, ed. and transl. A. O'Kelleher and G. Schoepperle (Urbana, 1918), pp. 176 – 179; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 294 n. 66.

Domnall mac Muirchertaig of Cenél nÉogain, and Áed mac Echach Timcharna of the Uí Brúin branch of the Connachta (the father of Curnán) against Diarmait, who is said to have lost.[301]

The familial relationship between Diarmait and Columba is unclear from the sources; Diarmait was a member of the Southern Uí Néill and the ancestor of Síl nÁedo Sláine, Clann Cholmáin Mór, and Clann Cholmáin Bicc (Caílle Follamain) while Columba was a member of the Cenél Conaill, a branch of the Northern Uí Néill.[302] The battle may have revolved around interfamilial conflict over succession to the Kingship of Tara, which was resolved after the battle was finished, perhaps with Diarmait agreeing to Fergus and Domnall as heirs-apparent.[303] Furthermore, Charles-Edwards contends that the reason why Adomnán depicts Diarmait positively is based on the outcome of Battle of Móin Daire Lothair, in which Ainmire mac Sétna, Fergus mac Muirchertaig and Domnall mac Muirchertaig were the victors over Eochaid Láib of the Cruithni which according to Charles-Edwards had likely bolstered Diarmait's own power.[304] He claims that this would have made the Ulaid ultimately subject to Diarmait if the Northern Uí Néill were loyal to Diarmait themselves.[305]

Adomnán's objection therefore may be as simple as Diarmait was both related to Columba and himself, and despite interfamilial struggles, it was viewed as a great crime to kill Diarmait because he was kin. Moreover, if Diarmait was ordained in some manner, Adomnán may have also objected to the killing of a rightful king. As seen with the previous two discussions of inauguration at Tara and Cashel, there is a common thread that kings who usurp power through violence are not

[301] *ATig* s.a. 560.1; *AU* 561.1.

[302] Mac Shamhráin, "The Emergence of Clann Cholmáin, sixth to eighth centuries," pp. 83 – 92.

[303] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 294 – 295; The question remains as to Columba's role in the Battle of Cúl Dreimne. The Annals of Ulster claim that the Northern Uí Néill won through the power of Columba's prayers, although it is unclear how contemporary this passage is as there is an earlier entry s.a. 560.3 that simply names the battle without any further information, while the subsequent entry s.a. 561.1 claims that Columba helped deliver this victory for the Northern Uí Néill. See *AU* s.a. 560.3, 561.1. Brian Lacey has argued that these entries are Cenél nÉogain propaganda. See Lacey, "The Battle of Cúl Dreimne," 81 – 84. Adomnán places Columba's arrival on Iona as "two years after the battle of Cúl drebene," and thus the implication is that Columba was in fact involved with this battle in some manner. We know little of Columba's life before arriving on Iona, and while this is conjectural it may be that his choice to become a pilgrim and travel to Iona was in part based on interfamilial struggles. His close relation to Ainmire mac Sétna (first cousins) suggests that Columba was eligible for kingship, although this would likely have put him more into conflict with Ainmire. It is also possible that perhaps Columba fought in this battle. The reference to a scar, said to be from the angel who scourged him after he refused to inaugurate Áedán mac Gabráin may in fact refer to a real scar obtained in battle. See Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.7, III.5. (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 30 – 31, 188).

[304] Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.7 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 30 – 31); Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 295.

[305] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 295.

viewed favourably. This narrative framing in the texts is often directed at kings whose descendants were unable to maintain their power and thus the narratives of their past were from the perspective of those hostile to them. Moreover, while the political relationships within the Uí Néill as well as between the Northern Uí Néill changed often throughout the lifetime of Columba and Adomnán, the Ulaid were often in conflict with the Northern Uí Néill. During Adomnán's lifetime, his kinsman Domnall mac Áedo, king of Cenél Conaill and King of Tara defeated Congal Caéch of the Ulaid at the Battle of Dún Cethirn, and Domnall then killed Congal at the subsequent Battle of Mag Roth.[306]

The second ordination in the text is in fact that of Áed Dub, but it was his ordination as a priest rather than as a king. The process seems very similar: the priest Findchán laid his hands upon Áed Dub and blessed him, but Columba was so displeased that he cursed both the priest and the king, stating that Áed was "unworthily ordained."[307] While this ordination was not a royal one, it is clear that ordination was taken very seriously in either case. But what is most important is that the act of ordaining a priest in early Ireland was described as the same process by which Áedan mac Gabráin was ordained. This may lend some credence to the idea that oil was involved, but since oil was not mentioned in either case it is difficult to say. Nevertheless, the ordination of Áedan was likely based on ordination of priests, as well as demonstrating a Biblical precedent.

The third king to be referenced as ordained was not an Irish king but the King of Northumbria, Oswald. Adomnán relates a tale in which Oswald receives a vision of Columba ahead of battle and is described as "emperor of all Britain, ordained by God" ("totius Brittaniae imperator a deo ordinatus est"), akin to Diarmait's description.[308] In both of these passages, it is unclear what "ordained by God" means. Adomnán may have meant that Diarmait and Oswald were not in fact ordained but they were rightful Christian rulers, and thus they were "ordained" in that they were meant to rule. Alternatively, he may have meant that they were ordained by clergy invoking what was the will of God. Certainly, there is a political aspect to be considered here. The description of these two kings as being ordained, whether that meant a true anointment or some other kind of

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[306] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, I. 49 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 88 – 89); The Battle of Dún Cethirn is recorded in *AU* s.a. 629.1, while the outcome of the Battle of Mag Roth is found in *ATig* s.a. 639.1. The *Annals of Ulster* do not record Domnall or Congal at this battle and the entry seems to be displaced. See *AU* s.a. 637.1.

[307] Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I. 36 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.) *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 66 – 67); For a different interpretation of this passage, see Michael Meckler, "Carnal love and priestly ordination on sixth-century Tiree," *The Innes Review* 51:2 (2000): 95 – 108.

[308] Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.1. (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 14 – 17).

inauguration, is very interesting: Adomnán demonstrates here his ideology of kingship: by casting a Christian king as ordained, he is not just a king, but he has *imperium* over other kings. Adomnán is implying that these kings are elevated above other kings through the process of *ordination*, whatever that may have meant to him. It is not just a Biblical precedent or purely political propaganda, but a belief in the intervention of God in the creation of a legitimate king.

Evidently, ordination has biblical precedents in the Old Testament, although the motif of the laying of hands occurs in several different contexts and does not occur in 1 Samuel.[309] Moreover, in early Christian texts, the laying of hands featured in the ordination of clergy. It does not seem to be synonymous with anointment with oil, although ordination of clergy was accompanied by unction. The problem here with the terminology is understanding how early medieval writers conceptualised of *ordo*/*ordinatio* for a secular individual: was it meant to be exactly like a clerical ordination, or was it simply the term used because it was the most fitting? There may be no answers to this question, and perhaps it is ultimately not necessary to determine of the ordination of Áedán mac Gabráin included anointment or not. What is important is that this event possibly signalled a change in practice, although our later sources on inauguration clearly indicate that this practice was not adopted en masse. Only Áed Oirdnide (the Ordained) mac Néill (d. 819), a member of Cenél nÉogain was ordained, but the process by which this occurred is unclear; Binchy has noted that this epithet was only used until after 804, which was the date of a meeting among the heads of the Uí Néill kindreds.[310] An earlier entry in *AU* s.a. 793.3 that Artri mac Cathail was ordained king of Munster. We do not know what the process was for these ordinations, although the terminology used implies an ecclesiastical role. Were these the influence of Adomnán? It is impossible to say, but certainly by the end of the eighth century and beginning of the ninth, the links between Irish church heads and Uí Néill and Munster kings were very strong. Another aspect to consider is the similarity between the ordination and the few references to inauguration in early medieval England. This will be discussed further below, but it is interesting that the only records of inauguration in England before the late ninth century are purely ecclesiastical rituals.

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[309] R. Alan Culpepper, "The Biblical Basis for Ordination," *Review & Expositor* 78:4 (1981): 471 – 484; E. Glenn Hinson, "Ordination in Church History," *Review & Expositor* 78:4 (1981): 485 – 496; Keith Mattingly, "The Significance of Joshua's Reception of the Laying on of Hands in Numbers 27:12-23," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39:2 (2001): 191 – 208; Thomas Brisco, "Old Testament Antecedents to Ordination," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 29:2 (2002): 159 – 175.

[310] *AU* s.a. 804.7, 804.8; Binchy, "The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara," *Ériu* 18 (1958): 119.

It is also important to note that there were no hard rules for inauguration in Ireland or later in Scotland: there was clearly a great deal of variation among the commonly shared elements. We may then discuss the archaeological components of inauguration in Dál Riata to ascertain if Iona was a suitable or even possible location for an inauguration, as well as discussing other sites in Dál Riata territory that may have functioned as inauguration sites.

Within the historical record, Iona has only been known as a monastic site: the *Annals of Ulster* state that Conall mac Comgaill, the king of Dál Riata and a member of Cenél Loairn gave the island to Columba, and conversely Bede relates that it was bequeathed to Columba by the Picts as a gift for his evangelisation work.[311] Scholars tend to favour the annalistic account considering Iona is well-situated within Dál Riatan territory, but the Pictish king Bruide son of Maelchon may have killed the prior king of Dál Riata, Gabrán mac Domangairt (the father of Áedán) and thus perhaps it is possible the Picts had subjugated the Dál Riata in the area.[312] Naturally, the political clout of being the chosen people by Columba would impact the historical accounts given, and Bede may not have been aware of the *Vita Columbae*.[313] It may also be argued that Columba was sent by the Northern Uí Néill to act as an ambassador to the Dál Riata, implying it was they who were the overlords over Dál Riata (instead of the Picts).[314] Iona may not then have been a remote monastic site but rather a political nexus by which the Northern Uí Néill could keep watch over the Dál Riata after the meeting at Druim Cett, which was a meeting between Aéd mac Ainmirech and Áedán circa 575, that may have been regarding an alliance against the king of the Ulaid, Báetán mac Cairell.[315] Unfortunately,

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[311] *AU* s.a. 573; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.4 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 133 – 134); Adomnán does not provide specifics on the foundation of the monastery, but he does relate how Columba visited Conall mac Comgaill and gave a prophecy regarding the Battle of Móin Daire Lothair. See Adomnán, *Vita Columba*, I.7 (Anderson and Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán's Life of St Columba*, pp. 30 – 31).

[312] It is implied in *AU*, s.a. 558.2, although it is not clear. Anderson and Anderson suggest that it is possible Iona lay under Pictish control. See Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, p. xxxi; Sharpe aligns with the view that Iona was granted to Columba by the Dál Riata. See Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 16 – 26.

[313] Several scholars are sceptical of Bede's account and have argued that he was unaware of the *Vita Columbae*. See J.M. Picard, "The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*," *Peritia* 1 (1982): 164; Alfred P. Smyth, "Review of *Iona, Kells and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* by Máire Herbert," *The English Historical Review* 105:414 (1990): 118; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 368; Bede knew of Adomnán and held him in high regard. See Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V. 15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 315 – 317; *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 293 – 295).

[314] *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, ed. and transl. Anderson & Anderson, p. xviii.

[315] *AU* s.a. 575.1; *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, ed. and transl. Anderson & Anderson, pp. xvii – xviii; Tanaka, "Iona and the Kingship of Dál Riata," 204; The question of the date has been discussed by Sharpe, who argues

whether Iona functioned as an inauguration site we cannot determine definitively: as we have seen with both Tara and Cashel, archaeological evidence is scarce, as these inauguration rites had ephemeral impact upon the landscape. Evidence exists for older settlement on the island, dating at least back to the Iron Age, but it is possible there was a period of abandonment between the Iron Age settlement and the monastic foundation.[316] If inaugurations were in fact held on Iona, then it would suggest a divergence from inaugurations elsewhere in medieval Ireland, namely that Iona is not a kingship site. It may be a direct attempt to Christianise the ritual of inauguration. However, no scholar to my knowledge has argued definitively that even if Columba or the abbots of Iona inaugurated the kings of Dál Riata that it took place at Iona, despite Adomnán's claims.

The other most-likely candidate for an inauguration site is Dunadd, one of the main royal centres of Dál Riata. Dunadd is a craggy hillfort in Argyll, Scotland, situated near the River Add (hence its name meaning "Fort at the Add").[317] Although scholars acknowledge its importance, it remains a poorly understood site due to a dearth of historical documentation. Only two direct references to Dunadd exist and they are recorded in *Annals of Ulster*. The earliest entry is only in the *Annals of Ulster sub anno* 683.3: "the siege at Dún At and the siege of Dún Duirn."[318] The second entry is recorded in both the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach*, *sub anno* 736.1: "Aengus son of Fergus, king of the Picts, laid waste the territory of Dál Riata and seized Dún At and burned Creic and bound in chains two sons of Selbach, i.e. Donngal and Feradach; and shortly after Bruide

that the *AU* entry was added retrospectively but at the wrong year of 575, and rather it must have been between 587 and 597, as Áed was not king of Cenél Conaill until c. 587. See Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 312 – 314; This was revisited by Michael Meckler, who argues that it was inserted in the twelfth century. See Michael Meckler, "The *Annals of Ulster* and the Date of the Meeting at Druim Cete," *Peritia* 11 (1997): 44 – 52; Bart Jaski, in contrast, argues that Aed mac Ainmirech could have organised a meeting before he was king. See Bart Jaski, "Druim Cett Revisited," *Peritia* 12 (1998): 340 – 350; For the hagiographical dimension of this episode, see James E. Fraser, "St Columba and the convention at Druimm Cete: peace and politics at seventh-century Iona," *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007): 315 – 334.

[316] A Bronze Age cairn and midden have been located and as well as the Iron Age fort of Dun Cul Bhuirg in which several Hebridean-style Iron Age pottery sherds were found. See J.N. Graham Ritchie and Alan M. Lane, "Dun Cul Bhuirg, Iona, Argyll," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 110 (1978 – 1980): 209 – 229; Patrick G. Topping, "Later prehistoric pottery from Dun Cul Bhuirg," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 115 (1985): 199 – 209; Samantha E. Jones, Enid P. Allison, Ewan Campbell, Nick Evans, Tim Mighall & Gordon Noble, "Identifying Social Transformations and Crisis during Pre-Monastic to Post-Viking era on Iona: New Insights from a Palynological and Palaeoentomological Perspective," *Environmental Archaeology*, Online preprint, available at https://doi.org/10.1080/14614103.2020.1713581 (Accessed 28 September 2020).

[317] Alan Lane and Ewan Campbell, *Dunadd: An Early Dalriadic Capital* (Oxford, 2000), p. 1.

[318] *AU* s.a. 683.3.

son of Aengus son of Fergus died."[319] Although the lack of entries may suggest that the site was of limited importance, the fact that it was subject to sieges suggests that it was an important strategic location for the region, and the final entry of the seizure of Dunadd highlights the political and strategic importance of the site.

In addition, while Adomnán is the most detailed source on the Dál Riata, he does not mention Dunadd, although there is a refence to their *caput regionis*, which Anderson and Anderson have argued likely referred to Dunadd.[320] While other candidates for the *caput regionis* have been put forward, there have been definitive archaeological links uncovered between the two locations, suggesting that Dunadd and Iona were linked via trade and travel.[321] Moreover, the presence of Continental pottery and other imported goods indicates that it was a high-status residence. [322]

There has been some debate as to whether Dunadd was associated with a specific kindred of the Dál Riata. Bannerman argues that it was under the possession of Cénel Loairn, as the second entry in *AU* refers to the kindred of Cénel Loairn, but the entry does not state that they were captured at Dunadd and it is more likely they were associated with Creic. M.O. Anderson, on the other hand, argues that it was under the possession of Cénel nGabráin and that they controlled that area of Argyll, whereas Bannerman has stated that area was under the control of Cénel Loairn. However, is no direct evidence of territorial divisions between the two kindreds.[323]

Dunadd has been subject to several studies and excavations since the nineteenth century, and while the majority of the excavations were limited, they have uncovered a breadth of material to suggest the political and regional importance of the site in the early medieval period.[324] The wider site is made up of smaller defended terraces, demonstrating that it was of strategic significance for the local area, although the extent it was used for domestic habitation is limited by the survivability of archaeological evidence, namely wooden structures.[325] There is extensive evidence for

[319] *AU* s.a. 736.1; *ATig* s.a. 736.1.
[320] Anderson and Anderson, ed. and transl., *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. xxxii – xxxiii, 55.
[321] Ewan Campbell, "A cross-marked quern from Dunadd and other evidence for relations between Dunadd and Iona," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 117 (1987): 105 – 117, but esp. 112 – 115.
[322] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 98 – 103, 236 – 237.
[323] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, p. 39.
[324] For example, F.W.L. Thomas, "Dunadd, Glassary, Argyllshire: The Place of Inauguration of the Dalriadic Kings," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 13 (1879): 28 – 47; J. Hewat Craw, "Excavations at Dunadd and at Other Sites on the Poltallach Estates, Argyll," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 64 (1930): 111 – 146; A summary of the excavations and prior studies of Dunadd can be found in Campbell & Lane, *Dunadd*, pp. 26 – 31.
[325] Lane and Campell, *Dunadd*, pp. 8 – 18, 250 – 254.

metalworking at Dunadd, particularly in the production of high-status jewellery, and agricultural processing.[326]

What is of most importance to this current thesis is the identification of carvings on exposed bedrock just outside the fortified summit. The carvings have been known to antiquarians since the nineteenth century although the extent of the carvings was only understood by 1976.[327] The carvings consist of the following: two single footprints, a boar, another animal carving (now damaged and difficult to identify) and an ogham inscription, along with prehistoric cup-and-ring carvings.[328] The dating of each of these features is very difficult to pinpoint. The boar has traditionally been thought to be of Pictish origin and roughly dated between the seventh and ninth centuries, the ogham to the eighth century, and the footprints as early as the Iron Age.[329] The footprints cannot be dated, only that at least one of them is pre-nineteenth century, when one of them was identified, although the existence of two carved footprints at St Columba's Church in Southend, Kintyre has drawn parallels.[330] At St Columba's Church, one of the footprints was possibly carved in 1856, but the other may be medieval and its close proximity to another potential Dál Riata kingship site of Dunaverty has prompted suggestions that Dunaverty and its surrounds may have been also used for inaugurations.[331] Fitzpatrick notes the potential similarities with the inauguration stone of the MacDonalds at Finlaggan, Islay, a stone that was "made to receive the feet of Macdonald," although the record of this stone is from 1703 although the MacDonalds held this location from circa 1300 until circa 1493.[332] The stone has not been uncovered and there are no contemporary references to it in the historical literature.[333] Fitzpatrick also identifies other potential carved footprints that may have been used for inaugurations, although no textual references survive.[334] The carved footprints at Dunadd share no direct similarities with the previous sites or records of inauguration, although a parallel may be seen in *Baile in Scáil*, in which Conn Cétchathach

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[326] Campbell, "A cross-marked quern," 113; For a survey of the metalworking artefacts, see Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 106 – 171, 201 – 220. For the charred grain evidence, see p. 221, and for a discussion of these finds, see pp. 236 – 238.
[327] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 18 – 19.
[328] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 19 – 20.
[329] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, pp. 21 – 22.
[330] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, p. 22.
[331] Lane and Campbell, *Dunadd*, p. 22
[332] For the quote, see Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Isles* (London, 1703), p. 273 Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 119 – 120.
[333] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 120 – 121.
[334] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration at Gaelic Ireland*, pp. 121 – 122.

stands on the Lia Fáil and it cries out in succession, each cry associated with one of Conn's descendants who will rule at Tara.[335]

Based on the evidence, we cannot say for certain if Dunadd was used for royal inaugurations, although it aligns closely with other kingship sites like Tara and Cashel. It seems like a more likely candidate for inaugurations than Iona. Thus, while Columba may have inaugurated Áedan mac Gabráin, it would be unusual for the inauguration to take place at an ecclesiastical site, and it would have been more likely to have been held at Dunadd. We know that Iona and Dunadd had links, and perhaps the story of the inauguration was altered to take place at Iona in order to elevate Iona and Columba's successors. It is also possible that it was held at Iona, in a place that was spiritually and politically significant. We have seen that there were variations within inauguration rites and there was likely no fixed procedure. Nevertheless, the *Vita Columba* demonstrates that the idea of inaugurating kings was important within Christian concepts of kingship. Moreover, it highlights the interplay of relations between kings and ecclesiastics: the Dál Riada were in control of what are now the Western Isles of Scotland, but Columba was a direct relation of a more powerful kindred (and possibly the overlords of the Dál Riata). Thus, the Dálriadan kings gain prestige through being inaugurated by Columba and his successors and the abbots themselves are afforded prestige for carrying this role. Therefore, while questions remain regarding the inauguration of Áedan mac Gabráin, the political situation between the Northern Uí Néill and Dál Riata throughout the sixth and seventh centuries make it very possible that the *Vita Columba* contains an inauguration rite that was in use during that period.

The lack of reliable textual evidence and concrete archaeological evidence prevents scholars from fully understanding the nature of inauguration rituals in early medieval Ireland. Nevertheless, it is clear from the evidence that does survive that inauguration rituals were forms of legitimisation for kingship. Within the saga and hagiographical texts, the inaugurations are used as motifs used to promote ideals of kingship as well as statements regarding the status of different kindreds. The use of inaugurations in these texts cannot be relegated to literary fiction, as the importance laid upon them suggests that these rites were used. In *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, the inauguration of Conaire Mór through a symbolic chariot drive seems at the surface to be too laden with supernatural elements to truly depict an inauguration rite. Through careful analysis it is clear that there are several elements that warrant further thought. Its similarities to other inauguration

[335] Murray, *Baile in Scáil*, p. 50.

rituals in Ancient India and Rome, as well as the legal rite of *tellach*, as well as the use of flagstones indicate a true inauguration rite in the text. While elements of the inauguration rite like the Lia Fáil appear to be motifs, it is very likely this was a stand-in for the acclaimer, a role seen in other inaugurations. In *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, the rite of *tellach* is even more clearly apparent in delineating proper kingship and the right of certain branches of the Éoganachta to rule Munster. The rite of *tellach* may have also been an element in both *Longes Chonuill Chuirc* and *Senchas Fagbail Caisil*, and the role of the swineherd is very close to later inauguration accounts of the acclaimer. Moreover, the Christian perspective of this text is very apparent. The visions of angels on the Rock of Cashel closely mirrors the Biblical story of Jacob at Bethel. These texts are difficult to interpret, but Cashel stood as an early Christian kingship site, a place of inauguration for the Éoganachta kings in opposition to the Hill of Tara. Finally, the inauguration of Áedan mac Gabráin by St Columba has been subject to a lot of scholarly debate, and while it is not definitive it is possible that Columba did in fact inaugurate Áedan. It may not have been at Iona, but it could have been politically expedient for a king of the Dál Riata to be inaugurated by an ecclesiastic cousin of powerful Uí Néill kings. Columba seems to be holding the role that the acclaimer held, but instead of his being a vassal of the king like the swineherd and his descendants, he holds considerably more power.

Despite the variations in depictions of inauguration rituals among the limited evidence, they were clearly necessary tools in the legitimisation of kingship both as a ritual and within texts as retrospective explanations or claims upon seats of kingship in early medieval Ireland. As we will see below, inauguration in early medieval England is even more difficult to understand, but there are many parallels with the inauguration of Áedan mac Gabráin.

3.5 Early Medieval English Inauguration

Inauguration in early medieval England has not generated the same level of interest amongst scholars as compared to early medieval Ireland. The majority of the scholarly work on inauguration in early medieval England has been undertaken by Janet Nelson.[336] Her focus was largely on the late

[336] Janet L. Nelson, "National Synods, Kingship as Office, and Royal Anointing: An Early Medieval Syndrome," G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds) in *Studies in Church History 7: Councils and Assembles. Papers Read at the Eighth Summer Meeting and the Ninth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 41 – 59; Janet L. Nelson, "Ritual and Reality in the Early Medieval *Ordines*," in Derek Baker (ed.) *Studies in Church History 11: The Materials, Sources, and Methods of Ecclesiastical History. Papers Read at the Twelfth Summer Meeting and the Thirteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, (Oxford, 1977), pp. 41 – 51; Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," pp. 50 – 71; Janet L. Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*: Some Liturgical and Historical Aspects," in Brian Tierney and Peter Linehan (eds) *Authority and Power: Studies on*

ninth and tenth century and later, from which we have the majority of surviving sources on inaugurations in England.[337] Despite the lack of direct textual evidence for the ninth century and earlier, this thesis will attempt to uncover other potential sources that may give insight into early medieval inaugurations of English kings. Thus, this section will focus on the limited textual evidence for inaugurations in the ninth century as well as incidental evidence such as assembly locations, clothing, coinage, and place-name studies.

3.6 Textual References

The textual references to inaugurations in early English literature (both Latin and Old English) are very sparse and can be found only within the *ASC*. The first reference to an inauguration is common to all versions of the *ASC sub anno* 785, which states that King Offa of Mercia had his son Ecgfrið "hallowed to king" ("to cyning gehalgod").[338] There are no other details provided, but two things stand out. The use of *gehalgod* instead of the usual phrase to describe when someone became king (*feng to rice*) implies a Christian element, as *gehalgod*, meaning "to sanctify, consecrate, make holy", was previously used in the context of consecrating bishops and churches.[339] This may or may not have involved the use of holy oil, and perhaps was only a reference to Ecgfrið being blessed by a bishop.[340] It is very possible that Offa was influenced by the Carolingians; we have discussed previously the anointment of Pippin, but he also had his sons anointed as children, and perhaps Offa modelled the anointment of Ecgfrið on Pippin's anointing of his sons.

The text does not say this was the first time this was used for a secular ruler, and its inclusion in the *ASC* may have been notable for the second reason, that Offa had his son consecrated as king while Offa was still alive. As a matter of course, kings took the kingship after the death of the

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Medieval Law and Government Presented to Walter Ullmann on his Seventieth Birthday, (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 29 – 48.

[337] Aethelwulf of Wessex, the father of Alfred, may possibly have been ordained in 838 when he gained the kingship after the death of his father Ecgbert, as his wife Judith was ordained as queen in 856. The possibility of Aethelwulf being ordained is based on a theory that the ordination prayer in the Leofric Missal, dating to around 900 was in fact composed much earlier and informed the construction of the ordination prayer for Judith. The issue is very complex and has been analysed at length by Janet Nelson. See Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*: Some Liturgical and Historical Aspects," pp. 31 – 41; Janet Nelson, "An Anglo-Saxon Queen's Consecration," in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Rubin (Princeton, 1998), pp. 327 – 332.

[338] CCCC, *The Parker Chronicle*, MS 173, f. 11r; *ASC* s.a. 785.

[339] *Bosworth-Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, s.v. ge-halgian, https://bosworthtoller.com/14604.

[340] Nelson has been sceptical that this referenced royal anointing although she has revised her opinion in more recent works. See Nelson, "The Problem of King Alfred's Royal Anointing," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 (1967): 155 n. 3, 160 n. 4; *Cf*. Janet L. Nelson, "An Anglo-Saxon Queen's Coronation," in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Ruben (Princeton, 2009), p. 359.

previous king, and clearly Offa was not installing Ecgfrið as a sub-king. It is possible that Offa was so concerned about the continuation of his dynasty that he did this in order to legitimise Ecgfrið, perhaps because he feared the kingship would pass to another. The genealogy of Offa and Ecgfrið and its relationship to the previous kings was noted previously to be suspect, due to how far back Offa's genealogy links back to what was the main line.[341] We have no details on how Offa succeeded as king, but a letter from Alcuin to the Mercian ealdorman Osbert in 797 states that Offa had killed a great many people during his reign to secure his son Ecgfrið's succession, and his son died as punishment only a few months after his father.[342] As discussed in the genealogies chapter, Offa took control of the kingdom after Mercia suffered a series of short successions of kings, and his own familial ties to the main branch of Mercia's kings were very distant. This instance of a consecration of a king, therefore, was clearly meant to legitimise a tenuous royal line regardless of whether it included anointment.

The second reference is not recorded in the *Parker Chronicle* and exists only in *Worcester* and *Peterborough*. It relates that Eardwulf of Northumbria, after succeeding to kingship was blessed at York:

> "795. Her wæs seo mona aðistrod betwux hancred und dagunge on .v. kalendas Aprilis. Und Eardwulf feng to Norþanhymbran cine dome on .ii. idus Mai. Und he wæs syððan gebletsod und to his cine stole ahofen on .vii. kalendas Iunii on Eoferwic fram Eanbalde arcebiscop und Æðelberhte und Higbalde und Badewulfe."
>
> "795. In this year was an eclipse of the moon between cock-crowing and daybreak on the fifth kalends of April [28 March]. Eardwulf took the kingdom of Northumbria on the second ides of May [14 May]. He was afterwards blessed and elevated to his throne [lit. king-stool] on the seventh kalends of June [26 May] in York by Archbishop Eanbald, Aethelbert, Higebald, and Badewulf."[343]

[341] See section 2.8 above.
[342] "Extract from a Letter of Alcuin to the Mercian Ealdorman Osbert (797)," transl. G.F. Brown, in Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1 (London, 1955), pp. 786 – 788; Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 117 – 118.
[343] *ASC* s.a. 795. I have altered the translation slightly from Whitelock, Douglas, & Tucker, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 37.

The inauguration ritual of Eardwulf is more detailed than that of Ecgfrið as we know its location and that clergy were directly involved, similarly to the inauguration of Áedan mac Gabráin by Columba. Moreover, the reference to being elevated to a throne, or a special seat indicates very clearly a defined ideology of sacral kingship. There has been very little scholarship on this passage, with the exception of Joanna Story's 1995 PhD thesis and subsequent 2003 monograph on Carolingian influences on Northumbria and England.[344] She argues cogently that Eardwulf had particular links to Charlemagne, as a brief reference in the *Annals of Lindisfarne* s.a. 797 notes that Eardwulf married a daughter of Charlemagne.[345] Because this is a twelfth-century annal (albeit possibly based on early material), this has widely been dismissed as a confusion with Aethelwulf of Wessex's marriage to Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald but Story states that this seems unlikely due to the dissimilarity between the names.[346] Moreover, even if this was not true, Eardwulf had strong ties to Charlemagne, especially in the context of Eardwulf's later exile to Francia and subsequent reinstatement as king of Northumbria with the aid of Charlemagne circa 808.[347] She notes the similarities with the consecration of Pippin, namely that Eardwulf was of noble birth but was not related to the previous king, Æthelred, and thus needed a ceremony to justify his rule.[348] On the grounds of whether this involved anointment Story is unconvinced, yet still argues that Eardwulf's ceremony must have stemmed from Carolingian influence.[349] It is a similar issue to the language used by Adomnán in the *Vita Columbae*: does blessing and laying on hands indicate the use of oil? As it has been clear, previous scholarship has been very concerned with the first use of holy oil in coronations, but ultimately whether or not it was used is perhaps not as significant as the movement towards ecclesiastical involvement in inauguration rituals is. Even if anointment was not involved, the role of clergy in the inaugurations of kings in the late eighth century is evident.

It is impossible to say how standard these inaugurations were, as both Ecgfrið and Eardwulf were clear examples of kings with weak or challenged claims to their kingdoms and necessitated a strong legitimising ritual to affirm their right to rule. Support of the local bishops and clergy was

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[344] Joanna Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria: the influence of Francia on Northumbrian politics in the later eighth and early ninth centuries*, PhD thesis (Durham University, 1995); Joanna Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750 – 870* (Ashgate, 2003).
[345] G. Pertz (ed.), *Annales Lindisfarnenesis*, s.a. 797 in MGH SS 19 (Hannover, 1866), p. 506; Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria*, pp. 35 – 36.
[346] Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria*, pp. 35 – 36.
[347] Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria*, pp. 35 – 36.
[348] Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria*, p. 38.
[349] Story, *Charlemagne and Northumbria*, pp. 39 – 41.

likely necessary for strengthening their positions. In addition, it is perhaps significant that both of these cases concerned kings who clearly desired or wanted to have closer links with Charlemagne. It may be problematic to assume that the adoption of these types of inauguration rituals were simply due to a desire to copy the Carolingians. While they may have been influenced by Francia it is also very possible that these were rituals incorporated within older inauguration rites. Moreover, without evidence regarding earlier inauguration rites it is difficult to assume to what extent these rituals differed from older ones. As Nelson states in a more recent paper, in the case of anointment in Francia with Pippin and his wife Bertrada, the earliest textual references to the rite affirmed continuity with older Frankish inaugurations practiced by the Merovingians, while also stating that the inauguration rites of Ecgfrið and Eardwulf were based on a "Carolingian model".[350] This type of continuity may have been applicable in eighth-century Northumbria and Mercia, where innovations had to be blended with older traditions, as tradition was a powerful legitimising factor.

The paucity of written evidence from before the late ninth century leads to significant problems with interpreting inaugurations. Why are there so few references to these events? The problem may be partially due to the survival of sources, as there are fewer sources overall for the period compared to Ireland. Bede provides the only historical narrative of the eighth century and earlier, and he says little about kingship itself. We can infer from the *HE* that sub-kings existed, such as Alchfrid, who seems to have been King of Deira under his father Oswiu, and that the succession of kings could happen from brother to brother, in the case of Hlothhere succeeding his brother Egbert in Kent.[351] However, he says nothing about how kings were made kings. It is possible that inaugurations meant little to Bede's criteria of what made a good or proper king as the kings he praises highly are those with close relationships with the Church. s discussed in the genealogies chapter, Bede also prioritises descent and proper relation to royal lines. Thus, it is possible that the lack of references to inaugurations indicates they were not done in conjunction with ecclesiastical powers in Bede's day. They may have been based on pre-Christian traditions, and Bede did not

[350] Janet Nelson (cited as Jinty Nelson), "Carolingian Coronation Rituals: A Model for Europe?" *Court Historian* 9:1 (2004): 2 – 3; Nelson suggested in an earlier paper that perhaps the hallowing of Ecgfrið was Byzantine influence. See Nelson, "The Problem of King Alfred's Anointing," 155 n. 4; The discussion on the Merovingian inaugurations is in Reinhard Schneider, *Köningswahl und Köningserhebung im Frühmittelalter. Untersuchungen zur Herrschaftsnachfolge bei den Langobarden und Merowingern* (Stuttgart, 1972), pp. 187 – 239. I would like to thank my colleague Florence Scott for alerting me to this reference, although I was unable to consult it for the thesis. For a summary of Schneider's arguments, see Nelson, "Symbols in Context," p. 102 n. 25; see also Nelson, Inauguration Rituals," pp. 53 – 54.
[351] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.25, III.28, IV.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 183, 194, 217; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 187, 196, 215).

spend any time discussing them because he disapproved but did not wish to offend King Coelwulf. This is similar to how Bede writes about Woden as discussed above with the genealogies; he says little about this figure likely because Coelwulf claimed descent from him. It may be possible that inauguration rituals were not used before the eighth century, but to reiterate Nelson, kings do not just become kings.[352] It strikes me as highly unlikely that kings in the early English kingdoms did not have a process by which a king was invested with power. Certainly, we have the limited evidence from the *ASC* that confirms there were some form of inauguration rituals in eighth century Mercia and Northumbria, and by comparison with the Carolingians, it is plausible that innovations in inauguration rituals would be bound up with older traditions to stress continuity and legitimacy.

Aside from the texts, it is necessary to assess indirect forms of evidence, such as assemblies and regalia, as potential indicators of inaugurations.

3.7 Assemblies: Locations of Inaugurations?

There have been in recent years a wealth of projects and publications on assembly places in early medieval England and Europe as a whole; of particular note is the interdisciplinary *Assembly Project* which focusses on assemblies in early medieval northern Europe.[353] Moreover, the 2004 edited collection *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe* contains a number of important publications on assembly in early medieval England.[354] As stated in the Irish case above, assembly sites do not necessarily equate to inauguration sites. Nevertheless, it is worth examining these sites as this may indicate a difference in practice between early medieval Ireland and England.

Assemblies in early medieval England are generally referred to variously as *mot*, *gemot*, *mæþel*, and *þing*, although these words have a very broad meaning of "meeting" and it only seems to be in the eleventh century that more specific terms such as the *micel gemot* ("great assembly") or more rarely the *witanagemot* ("meeting of councillors") were used to refer to formal meetings and royal assemblies, respectively.[355] The contexts for the early references to these words is within the early law codes of the *Laws of Æthelbert* (c. 602/603) and the *Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric* (c.

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[352] Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," p. 51.

[353] For the project website, see *The University of Oslo: Museum of Cultural History*, https://www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/previously-projects/assembly-project/ (Accessed 16 May 2020).

[354] Sarah Semple, "Locations of Assembly in Early Anglo-Saxon England," in Aliki Pantos and Sarah Semple (eds), *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 135 – 154; Aliki Pantos, "'*In medle oððe an þinge'*: The Old English Vocabulary of Assembly," in *Assembly Places and Practices*, pp. 181 – 201.

[355] Aliki Pantos, "Old English vocabulary of assembly," pp. 181 – 183.

673 – 685) , and Pantos suggests a shift in terminology towards the end of the seventh century where *þing* and *mæþel* fell out of use in favour of *mot* and *gemot*.[356]

From this evidence it seems that assemblies in early medieval England were similar to the *oenaig* in Ireland: they were held by kings and were a public event used for political purposes, markets, and games. We do not know the extent of the assembly practices mentioned in the law codes, but the comparison between *oenaig* and the Scandinavian *Thing* has been made in the past, and separate comparisons are made between the *Thing* and the assemblies in England.[357] Pantos has pointed to several potential sites of assembly based on place-names, like those with the *þing* element, although the majority are from areas that were occupied and settled by the Norse.[358] The few *þing* names outside of the Norse-occupied areas may be evidence of the early use of *þing* mentioned above, such as Thinghill, Herefordshire and Thingley and Tinkfield, Wiltshire.[359] Other assembly sites with elements containing *spell-* or *sp(r)ec-* ("speech") are also difficult to date, as *spell-* was a word used up until the sixteenth century, but Pantos argues that many could be early medieval.[360] Other frequent examples are based on *gemot*, such as Mottistone, Isle of Wight or Mottisfont, Hampshire.[361] The *gemot* names have been associated with hills and mounds, drawing a parallel with kingship sites like Tara, Cashel, and Dunadd.[362] Moreover, this may indicate a parallel with kingship sites associated with burials, like the boundary *fertae* in Ireland.

Sarah Semple has noted that the limited evidence for assemblies suggests that the early English held assemblies at places away from burials and at natural sites away from settlements, although she also notes that later assemblies may have included both prehistoric monuments and

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[356] *Laws of Æthelbert, King of Kent*, I (*Die Gesetze der Könige der Angelsachsen*, vol. I, ed. Felix Liebermann (Halle, 1903), p. 3; "Laws of Aethelbert, king of Kent (602 – 603?)," in Benjamin Thorpe (transl), *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (1840), p. 1); *Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric*, 8 (*Die Gesetze der Könige*, I, p. 10; "Laws of Kings Hlothhere and Eadric," transl. Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p. 13); Pantos, "Old English vocabulary of assembly," pp. 183 – 184.

[357] The relationship between the Scandinavian *Thing* and the Old English *þinge* is complicated. It was initially thought that the *Thing* was introduced by the Norse, as it appears in locations where they settled. However, because of its early appearance in pre-Viking law codes, it may in fact be that the English borrowed it back into English. See Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," pp. 182 – 183.

[358] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," p. 194.

[359] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," p. 194.

[360] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," pp. 185 – 188, 195 – 197.

[361] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," pp. 188, 192 – 194; See also Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), pp. 18, 108.

[362] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," pp. 190, 192

natural sites.[363] This may be due to general attitudes surrounding death and burial places, in which barrows were seen as the dwellings of supernatural beings and the spirits of heathens and criminals.[364] Semple notes that barrows were feared places, and were often on boundaries as liminal places connected with death and the supernatural.[365] This was not necessarily always the case, as seen with the *gemot* placenames associated with mounds and possible assembly sites at mounds named after the deities Thunor and Woden like Thunderlow, Essex (*Thunres-hlaw*), and Wenslow, Bedfordshire (*Wodnes hlaw*).[366] The fear may have been based on Christian attitudes towards the "pagan" monuments beginning in the eighth century, although the use of some of these mounds and barrows as assembly sites may have been the continuation of a tradition.[367] Those burial mounds that were along boundaries and not used for assemblies were then over time deemed evil and unsafe, and eventually became the sites for burials of criminals as a form of punishment in death.[368]

Identifying assembly sites based on place-name evidence presents several difficulties. Without contemporary written evidence, generally these sites cannot be considered early or late.[369] Exceptions to this may be with the *mæðel-* (sometimes contracted to *mæl-*) placenames, as this was a word that fell out of use in Old English fairly early and thus its use as a place-name indicates it is more likely an early site of assembly.[370] What is also interesting is that of the twelve identified *mæðel-*/*mæl-* placenames, six of them are compounded with tree-words: Madehurst, Sussex and Malehurst, Shropshire contain the second element *-hyrst* ("wooded hill"), Matlock, Derbyshire contains the OE *ac* ('oak'), Matlask, Norfolk and Molash, Kent have OE *æsc* ("ash").[371] Pantos suggests that this reflects pre-Christian practice, and it bears a strong resemblance to the sacred trees in Ireland, associated with inauguration sites. Trees may have held a great deal of importance

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[363] Sarah Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual, and Rulership in the Landscape* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 90 – 94.
[364] Sarah Semple, "A fear of the past: The place of the prehistoric burial mound in the ideology of middle and later Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 30:1 (1998): 109 – 126, here 109 – 113.
[365] Semple, "The place of the prehistoric burial mound," 113 – 115.
[366] Semple, "The place of the prehistoric burial mound," 116.
[367] Semple, "The place of the prehistoric burial mound," 116 – 121.
[368] Semple, "The place of the prehistoric burial mound," 121 – 123.
[369] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," p. 193.
[370] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," pp. 194 – 195. Pantos notes that identifying *mæðel-* placenames is difficult to place because "its phonology allows for the possibility of confusion with a number of other words," and the loss of the medial ð lead to confusion with OE *mæl* ("sign or cross"), and even in its full form it can be confused with *meðel* ("middle"). See Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," p. 195.
[371] Pantos, "The Old English Language of Assembly," p. 195.

to the pre-Christian Angles, Saxons, and other so-called "Germanic" peoples, and while there is no direct evidence of their use for inaugurations for these peoples, there is evidence that they held trees sacred. According to the eighth-century *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldi*, St Boniface cut down a tree that was sacred to the Hessians, which Willibald claimed was called the "robor Iobis (oak of Jupiter)".[372] This account is supported by a possible letter from Pope Gregory III to Boniface, referencing the felling of the tree and bidding him to fell the rest of the trees that the Hessians worshipped, but the letter survives as an "interpolation" in the fourteenth-century *Vita Waltgeri*.[373] Thus, the association of trees with assembly sites may be comparable to trees at inauguration sites in Ireland, although this is speculative. It is also difficult to compare the experience of the Hessians with pre-Christian England, but the possibility is intriguing.

Were these sites places of inauguration? It is impossible to say given the current evidence. Natural comparisons of assemblies on mounds with those in Ireland suggests a possible correlation, but we have only one concrete reference to a site of inauguration, and that is York with Eardwulf's blessing and enthronement, although there are no other mention of specific buildings or locations. As York was home to an archbishopric and Eardwulf's enthronement was overseen by Archbishop Eanbald and three other bishops then it may be that the rite took place either entirely or partly at a church in York, although there were three significant churches in York at this time and their history in the eighth century is obscure.[374] The detail of his inauguration and its location may be a sign that this was an innovation to hold it in an ecclesiastical centre. York's status as a royal centre has been

[372] W. Levison (ed.), *Vita Bonifatii auctore Wilibaldo*, 6 in MGH SS rer. Germ. 57 (Hannover, 1905), p. 30; For a thorough discussion of this passage, see John-Henry Clay, "From conversion to consolidation in eighth-century Hessia," in Tomás Ó Carragáin and Sam Turner (eds), *Making Christian Landscapes in Atlantic Europe: Conversion and Consolidation in the Early Middle Ages* (Cork, 2016), pp. 385 – 402.

[373] The letter has been rejected as a forgery by most historians, but Honselmann argues for its authenticity, stating that the Latin cannot have been later than the eighth century, nor could the author of the *Vita Waltgeri* have reproduced the papal formulas so effectively. For the summary of Honselmann's arguments, and other perspectives on the letter as well as circumstantial evidence for its authenticity, see John-Henry Clay, *In the Shadow of Death: Saint Boniface and the Conversion of Hessia, 721 – 54* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 218 – 225; For the English translation, see Clay, *Saint Boniface and the Conversion of Hessia*, pp. 217 – 218; for the Latin edition, see K. Honselmann, "Der Brief Gregors III. an Bonifatius über die Sachsenmission," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 76 (1957): 307 – 346, here 318 – 319, quoted in Clay, *Saint Boniface and the Conversion of Hessia*, p. 218 n. 141.

[374] Christopher Norton, "The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral at York and the Topography of the Anglian City," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 151:1 (1998): 1 – 42, here 1 – 4.

assumed in the past but there is no concrete evidence that it was a seat of royal power; rather, the archaeological and written material points to it being a powerful ecclesiastical centre.[375]

Prior to Eadwulf's inauguration, inaugurations may have been held at Yeavering, Northumberland which was possibly a royal residence, a ritual site, and a place of assembly. Bede states that Yeavering (OE *Adgefrin*) was the royal residence of King Edwin of Northumbria, which also became a place of mass baptism by Bishop Paulinus during Edwin's reign.[376] Brian Hope-Taylor argues that Yeavering held an "assembly-structure," or Building E in the excavation reports, which was a large theatre structure made from timber, as evidenced by the timber posts that radiate in concentric arcs from a central platform, which Hope-Taylor suggests may have been a spot for a throne.[377] The theatre structure is indicative of a place for assembly, although we have little evidence for the extent of its purpose.

Assembly sites were certainly in existence in the early medieval English kingdoms, although the archaeological and place-name evidence do present interpretive problems, especially with dating these sites. Their use as inauguration sites is even more difficult to ascertain. There is no concrete evidence that assembly sites were used as inauguration sites, and while they may be the best candidate for possible places of inauguration, we know that ecclesiastical centres could be and were used, specifically in the case of York. Thus, we must evaluate other evidence for inaugurations, such as coinage, which may depict royal regalia and may then also imply inaugurations.

3.8 Regalia: Numismatics and the Problem with Diadems

As previously stated, coinage may help us as incidental evidence towards clothing/sacred objects that may be associated with inauguration. Studies in early English coinage have been undertaken largely by Anna Gannon and Rory Naismith, whose analyses of the imagery on coinage as well as a discussion of their provenance has been incredibly valuable for this thesis.[378] Gannon in particular

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[375] Cecily A Spall & Nicola J Toop, "Before *Eoforwic*: New Light on York in the 6th—7th Centuries," *Medieval Archaeology* 52:1 (2008): 1 – 25, here 19 – 20.

[376] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.14 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 114 – 115; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 15).

[377] Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: An Anglo-British centre of early Northumbria*, repr. (2010), pp. 119 – 122, 242.

[378] Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford, 2003); Anna Gannon, "Art in the Round: Tradition and Creativity in Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage," in *Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages. Reading Medieval Sources, Volume I*, ed. Rory Naismith (Boston, 2018), pp. 287 – 319; Anna Gannon, *Sylloge of the Coins of the British Isles, vol. 63, British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins. Part I: Early Anglo-Saxon Gold and Anglo-Saxon and Continental Silver Coinage of the North Sea Area, c. 600 – 760*

has noted several important aspects of royal iconography that need further contextualisation within the framework of sacral kingship and inauguration. The very earliest English coins date to the late sixth or early seventh century, but iconography and inscriptions on these early coins are rare.[379] Gannon has charted the development of iconography on English coins in the seventh and eighth centuries and notes that far from being simply copies or imitations of Roman and Frankish styles, English coins incorporated Roman, Byzantine, and Frankish motifs with their own unique designs.[380] Moreover, coinage is meant to be sent far and wide. As Gannon states:

> "Their small size still demands close scrutiny of the design, but does not require proximity to the king issuing them or much by way of explanation: their iconography/epigraphy should be self-evident in proclaiming his message of power."[381]

Thus, coinage should not have ambiguity to the viewers to whom it belongs, and it was a clear display of power, meant to invoke feelings of awe in the viewer while also conveying the prestige of the individual who issued them and would have reinforced royal power in their circulation and use.

Gannon's analyses of iconography may lead the way into understanding royal attire and appearance. She has explored these possibilities, albeit briefly, and has suggested that the clothing on the coins may be depictions of real clothing and armour rather than simply stylistic choices.[382] There are clearly elements of coinage that were meant to evoke certain kingship ideals, such as the possible depiction of King Offa as King David.[383] Although Gannon mentions briefly the links

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(London, 2013); Rory Naismith, *Sylloge of the Coins of the British Isles, vol. 67, British Museum Anglo-Saxon Coins. Part II: Southern English Coinage from Offa to Alfred, c. 760 – 880* (London, 2016).

[379] Gannon, "Early Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage," in *Early Anglo-Saxon Gold and Anglo-Saxon and Continental Silver Coinage*, pp. 49 – 50.

[380] Gannon, "Art in the Round," pp. 288 – 289.

[381] Gannon, "Art in the Round," pp. 289 – 290.

[382] For example, her discussion of the images on the Franks Casket and the joint coinage of King Eadberht of Northumbria and his brother Archbishop Ecgberht in the mid-seventh century. See Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage,* pp. 91 – 93.

[383] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 32 – 33. This is based especially on certain coinage by the moneyer Eadhun where Offa is depicted with voluminous, almost three-dimensional curly hair which is evocative of the depictions of King David in sculpture and art; Comparisons with Old Testament kings and Irish kingship has been analysed by Jaski and these models of kingship may have also been popular among the early English kings. See Bart Jaski, "Early medieval Irish kingship and the Old Testament," *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1997): 329 – 344; We have already seen biblical models with the Anglian genealogies, where they mirrored the genealogy of Jesus with the fourteen generations of kings, and for Offa, a king who held tenuous

between real clothing and armour and the clothing designs on coinage, it is unclear if the depictions of diadems and helmets should be taken as literal depictions of kingly regalia or if they are simply symbolic. Helmets have been subject to more interest for kingly regalia and Nelson has argued for their usage as standard kingly regalia, and that by the tenth century were likely "archaic".[384] The linguistic evidence post-900 suggests that helms continued to be used as the Latin *corona* was translated as *cynehelm* and *helm* in the West Saxon sources and was a change from the translation of *beag* (open circlet) that became used for religious contexts.[385] Moreover, the royal *Ordo* from the early tenth century stipulated the use of a crown, although she also notes that helms may not have fallen out of use at that stage.[386] Assigning widespread usage for helms as royal regalia for the entirely of early medieval England invites caution. If the *ordo* in the *Leofric Missal* could be in fact as early as the late eighth century as speculated by Nelson, it may point to the use of helms for inaugurations in Wessex but in the absence of standard inaugurations it is unclear if these standards could be applied to Mercia or Northumbria.[387]

The visual depictions of helms are complex and relate both to the adoption of Roman iconography as well as local cultures. Imperial coinage depicted emperors wearing helms from the second century AD and later, either Hellenistic or Persian types and were "everyday crowns" during troubled times.[388] Imperial helms were highly regarded as status symbols amongst Germanic-speaking peoples and were visually imitated on early English coinage from circa 640, found in the Crondall hoard.[389] The helmeted busts on these coins, while elaborate, cannot be linked specifically with kings due to a lack of inscriptions of kings' names, although it is an enticing possibility.[390] Once we have definitive royal coinage, Offa is never depicted with a helm in any surviving example, and Gannon has noted that the probable depiction of King Æthelbald of Mercia (d. 757) on the Repton Stone depicted him in battle dress but lacking a helmet or any headwear.[391] Gannon postulates that

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links to the royal family of Mercia and who seemed driven to legitimise his rule and the rule of his son, depicting himself as King David may have been another attempt to prove his right to rule.

384 Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*," pp. 44 – 45.
385 Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*, p. 45.
386 Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*," pp. 44 – 46.
387 Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*, p. 41.
388 Gannon, *Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 51 – 54, n.187.
389 Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 51 - 52.
390 Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 52 – 53.
391 Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 53 – 54; Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, "The Repton Stone," *Anglo-Saxon England* 43 (1985): 233 – 292 but see esp. 287 – 290.

perhaps kings wanted to shift away from the warrior image and focus on "civic values".[392] The use of helmets in inaugurations may have been a deliberate archaism to demonstrate the king's link to the constructed warrior past, emphasised by his descent from Woden and other "Germanic" heroes. Of the six surviving helmet finds, only the Sutton Hoo helmet has been linked with royal use.[393] While heavily degraded, the Sutton Hoo has been reconstructed; it was an elaborately-made piece, but the date of the helmet and the question of whether it was for ceremonial or practical usage has not been determined.[394] The Sutton Hoo burial will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, but for now it is important to note that this helmet may indicate a real-world example of a helm used for inauguration, although there are no definitive answers. Thus, it may be that they were the popular form of inaugural headwear in a time when the warrior image of the king may still have been a favourable one.

The other headwear that needs examination are diadems. The significance of diadems to the English has not been properly surveyed with respect to kingship, and Nelson implies a fundamental difference between them and crowns, which only appeared in numismatic form in the coinage of Athelstan in the tenth century.[395] Gannon has pointed to the depiction of both laurel wreath crowns and pointed-style crowns on seventh-century coinage, although no speculation is undertaken on whether these depicted real objects or if they were artistic license on behalf of the moneyer.[396] Diadems were common headwear for Grecian, Persian, Seleucid, and Ptolemaic rulers, and were also used as symbols of divinity among the Greeks, as deities such as Dionysius and Apollo

[392] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, p. 54.

[393] The other helmets are an early-to-mid-sixth century helmet from Shorwell, Isle of Wight, a seventh century helm from Benty Grange, Derbyshire, an seventh century helmet found in the Staffordshire Hoard, a late-seventh century helm from Wollaston, Northamptonshire, and an eighth century helm found at Coppergate, York. See Peter V. Addyman, Nicholas Pearson, and Dominic Tweddle, "The Coppergate Helmet," *Antiquities* 56:218 (1982): 189 – 194; Dominic Tweddle, "The Coppergate Helmet," *Fornvännen* 78 (1983): 105 – 112; Heiko Steuer, "Helm und Ringschwert. Prunkbewaffnung und Rangabzeichen germanischer Krieger. Eine Übersicht," *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6 (1987): 190 – 236; Kevin Leahy, et al., "The Staffordshire (Ogley Hay) hoard: recovery of a treasure," *Antiquity* 85 (2011): 202 – 220; Ian Meadows, "An Anglian Warrior Burial from Wollaston, Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Archaeology Reports* 10 (110); Dominic Tweddle, *The Anglian Helmet from Coopergate. The Archaeology of York, Volume 17: The Small Finds*, eds. P.V. Addyman & V.A. Kinsler (York, 2015).

[394] Neil Price and Paul Mortimer, "An Eye for Odin? Divine Role-Playing in the Age of Sutton Hoo," *European Journal of Archaeology* 17:3 (2014): 517 – 538, here 519 – 521.

[395] Nelson, "The Earliest Surviving Royal *Ordo*," 45 n. 83; For a description of diadems on early coinage, see Gannon, *Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 45 – 51.

[396] Gannon, *Iconography for Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 42 – 45.

were frequently depicted wearing them.[397] In pre-Imperial Rome, diadems were associated heavily with kings and thus were not used (at least regularly) until Constantine who was frequently depicted with a diadem.[398] As Imperial helmets were emulated and desired as status objects, it is possible that diadems too were not only reused within an English context for iconography on coinage but were also adopted for changing modes of kingship.

Diadems were depicted from the early seventh century on coins attributed to Eadbald of Kent (d. 640), son of Æthelberht of Kent (d. 616), and it would not be unusual that Eadbald would adopt Roman iconography in coinage and real life displays of power as the son of the first Christianised English king.[399] Displays of *romanitas* in a kingdom that was closely tied with the Frankish kingdom would not be unusual but rather expected, particularly after Eadbald's baptism by Bishop Laurentius (as he was still a pagan when he succeeded the throne).[400] There is Continental evidence for the use of diadems, namely that Clovis was given a diadem by Emperor Anastasius in Tours that Ralph W. Mathisen has argued was likely a coronation ceremony.[401] While there is no evidence from Gregory of Tours that Merovingian rulers wore diadems, with the exception of Clovis,

[397] The extent of diadem usage in the Ancient world cannot be fully explored here, but there are some key works: Hans-Werner Ritter, *Diadem und Königsherrschaft. Untersuchungen zu Zeremonien und Rechtsgrundlagen des Herrschaftsantritts bei den Persern, bei Alexander dem Großen und im Hellenismus* (Munich, 1965); Hans-Werner Ritter, "Die Bedeutung des Diadems," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 3rd qtr., 36:3 (1987): 290 – 301; Katharina Martin, "Der König als Heros? Das Diadem und die Binden von (Gründer-)Heroen," in In Achim Lichtenberger, Katharina Martin, H.-Helge Nieswandt and Dieter Salzman (eds), *Das Diadem der Hellenistischen Herrscher. Übernahme, Transformation oder Neuschöpfung eines Herrschaftszeichens? Kolloquium vom 30. – 31. Januar 2009 im Münster* (Bonn, 2012), pp. 249 – 278; Marek Jan Olbrycht, "The Diadem in the Achaemenid and Hellenistic Periods," *Anabasis. Studia Classica et Orientalia* 5 (2014): 177 – 187;

[398] For a discussion on the Roman (and Iranian) adoption of the diadem, see Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009), pp. 196 – 20; There is a famous anecdote regarding Julius Caesar rejecting a diadem from Marcus Antoninus at the festival of Lupercalia after he was declared dictator. See Plutarch, *The Parallel Lives of Plutarch*, ed. and transl. Bernadette Perrin (Cambridge, 1919), p. 585 – 586; M. Tullius Cicero, *Orations*, transl. C.D. Yonge (London, 1903), 2.34; Cassius Dio, *Roman History, Volume IV, Books 41 – 44*, transl. Earnest Cary, (Cambridge, 1916), 44.6, 11; For a discussion of this event, see R.A.G. Carson, "Caesar and the Monarchy," *Greece & Rome* 4:1 (1957): 46 – 53; Karl-William Welwei, "Das Angebot des Diadems am Caesar und das Luperkalienproblem," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 16:1 (1967): 44 – 69;

[399] For an example of one of these coins, see Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, p. 46.

[400] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5, II.6 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae*, pp. 90 – 93; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 112 – 114).

[401] Ralph W. Mathisen, "Clovis, Anastasius, and Political Status in 508 C.E.: The Frankish Aftermath of the Battle of Vouillé," in Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (eds), *The Battle of Vouillé, 507 C.E.: Where France Began* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 79 – 110; For the passage, see Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, 2.38.

it is difficult to discount that they may have been used in some capacity in the seventh century.[402] Diadems were frequently depicted in coinage throughout the seventh and eighth century, although aside from the Eadbald coinage we cannot attribute these coins to specific kings until the coinage of Offa.[403] Offa's coinage had a variety of types, and particular styles seemed to be linked with different moneyers. His diademed portraits are perhaps not the most distinctive and the diadems themselves are not especially decorative but when compared against the breadth of the other diadem portraits, it seems very possible that these were real objects. Within the context of Offa's reign and his efforts to promote his legitimacy and the legitimacy of his son, he would have likely used any tool at his disposal to promote his kingly image.

It is unfortunate that we do not have any comparable archaeological evidence for these objects, but as coins were meant to be widely dispersed it was important for the individuals depicted to be identifiable. This would have been especially important in a society that was largely illiterate or semi-literate. Thus, kings would have likely worn regalia in fashions comparable to those seen on the coins as a way to be easily identified as a ruler, set apart from all others. Moreover, when someone became a king it was necessary to mark the individual out visually from other nobles which would mean more elaborate dress and items such as elaborately crafted helmets and diadems. This is not limited to English kings as it was obvious that demarcating kings with special regalia was common in the late antique world and Merovingian Francia. The question of course was when they adopted these clothes and if they were given them during an inauguration. While we have no direct evidence, it is probable that not only did English kings have inauguration rituals but that it was necessary within the pageantry of the inauguration to provide the king with special regalia and objects that signalled to the audience that he had crossed a threshold from prince to king.

3.9 Conclusion

It is evident that the depiction of inaugurations in early medieval Ireland versus early medieval England was very different, although this may be largely due to problems of the survival of evidence as well as the biases of the authors. The Irish inaugurations present difficulties with determining

[402] *Conta* Nelson, "Inauguration rituals," p. 62 who argues that crowning with a crown/diadem was not used until 848. I would argue that given our limited evidence for inauguration rituals of the Merovingians we cannot ignore that they may have experimented with crowning post-Clovis.

[403] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, p. 47; For a thorough examination of the history of Offa's coinage, see Rory Naismith, "The Coinage of Offa Revisited," *British Numismatic Journal* 80 (2010): 76 – 106.

historicity as they are largely contained in saga texts and thus have often been disregarded. Although they may have been literary tropes, it is also probable that they represent depictions of real inauguration rites, albeit heavily embellished and laden with supernatural themes. Furthermore, their similarities to the legal ritual of *tellach* suggest that they also had a legal basis for their use, while other elements such as acclamation and similarities with later non-saga accounts of inaugurations suggests that there were royal inaugurations in early medieval Ireland and that they were important for legitimising rule in a culture with complex succession laws.

Conversely, there is extremely little evidence for what the early English inaugurations would have looked like. We only have annalistic references that they were undertaken, and those provide little detail as to the specifics of the inauguration rite. Even the research completed on assembly sites does not definitively establish locations of inaugurations. Coinage may provide us with the most incidental evidence through the depiction of kings wearing diadems, but there is also the problem of interpreting iconography and how much it may represent historical usage of royal regalia. Moreover, like Ireland, there are indications that succession laws in early England were complex and when considered alongside the Anglian genealogies, we can see that there was an ongoing necessity for kings to legitimise their rule.

Inaugurations were used in early medieval Ireland and England to establish that a king was a legitimate ruler, and they were especially useful for those whose claim to royal power was tenuous and gained through warfare or bloodshed, or perhaps as a way to strengthen claims against those who challenged their rule. These rites also create the fiction of tradition and continuity, even if the rites were innovated or altered over time. The involvement of ecclesiastical authorities in these rites was a newer innovation that was useful for both kings and the Church during the conversion era in both regions as kings could then establish strong alliances with ecclesiastical power while the ecclesiastics gained powerful and wealthy royal patrons. These links between royal secular power and the Church would further strengthen royal power as more kings converted to Christianity.

Inauguration rituals have been the second aspect of royal legitimisation in conversion-era Ireland and England, while the final section will address burial and how burials factor into the legitimisation of kingship.

Chapter 4: Legitimacy through Death – Royal Burial

Medieval burials have often captured public attention, particularly when the question of who was buried enters the wider conversation. The recovery of Richard III of England (d. 1485) under a parking lot in Greyfriars, Leicester in 2012 demonstrates that public interest in burial archaeology is often dependent on the status and mythology surrounding the individual or individuals buried, and in this case is because the person is entrenched within national consciousness.[1] In other instances, the uncovering of burials that have challenged widely-held notions of gender and race, such as the "warrior woman" burial at Birka, Sweden and the Ivory Bangle Lady at York highlight the difficulties with discussing the person in the burial and preconceived ideas regarding the past.[2]

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[1] Richard Buckley, et al., "'The king in the car park': new light on the death and burial of Richard III in the Grey Friars church, Leicester, in 1485," *Antiquity* 87 (2013): 519 – 538; Craig Young and Duncan Light, "The corpse, heritage, and tourism: The multiple ontologies of the body of King Richard III of England," in Mattias Frihammer and Helaine Silverman (eds), *Heritage of Death: Landscapes of Emotion, Memory and Practice* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 92 – 104, but esp. 95 – 98; Greig Watson, "Richard III: Greatest archaeological discovery of all?" *BBC News*, 12 Feb 2013, Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leicestershire-21082999 (Accessed 23 July 2020).

[2] The burial of the woman at Birka has led to a debate both in the public and between scholars about the relationship between burial goods and the individual interred, gender identity, and discourses on "masculine" and "feminine" spaces in early medieval Europe. See Neil Price et al., "Viking warrior women? Reassessing the Birka chamber grave Bj.581," *Antiquity* 93:397 (2019): 181 – 198; for the genomic survey on the Birka woman, see Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson, et al., "A female Viking warrior confirmed by genomics," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 164 (2017): 853 – 862; the Ivory Bangle Lady was found in York and has led to several public discussions and articles pointing to a diverse society in Roman Britain. For the assessment of the woman's remains, see S Leach, et al., "A Lady in York: migration, ethnicity and identity in Roman Britain," *Antiquity* 84 (2010): 131 – 145. Their methods are highly problematic, and rely on cranial reconstruction compared with modern evidence to determine her ancestry in North Africa, which is not confirmed through isotope analysis, which may indicate she grew up in the Mediterranean area but could well be in Britain also. For a discussion of the problems with cranial measurements and ancestry, see Marina Elliot and Mark Collard, "FORDISC and the determination of ancestry from cranial measurements," *Biology Letters* 5:6 (2009): 849 – 852; see also Jonathan D. Bethard and Elizabeth A. DiGangi, "Letter to the Editor – Moving Beyond a Lost Cause: Forensic Anthropology and Ancestry Estimates in the United States," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, (2020), Available at https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.14513 (Accessed 23 July 2020); see also the controversy of the Kennewick Man in Washington State, USA, still sparks debate over archaeologists' responsibility to Indigenous people, issues surrounding race and cranial reconstruction, and identity of the human remains. The initial investigators initially stressed the cranial reconstruction as being closer to Polynesian and Asian groups, therefore superseding NAGPRA (Native American Graves Repatriation Act). Subsequent DNA tests from an independent lab in Denmark that demonstrate that he was in fact the direct ancestor of several groups in the area. See Morten Rasmussen, et al., "The ancestry and affiliations of Kennewick Man," *Nature* 523 (2015): 455 – 458; for an overview of the controversy, see Suzanne J. Crawford, "(Re)constructing Bodies: Semiotic Sovereignty and the Debate over the Kennewick Man," in *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?*, ed. Devon Abbott Mihusuah (Lincoln, 2000), pp. 211 – 236; Mairéad Carew explores the background of these types of cranial reconstruction with the Harvard expedition to Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s that was tasked with uncovering the "Celt" and compared modern Irish

Within the context of early medieval burials, there were efforts throughout the study of burial archaeology in Europe to designate burial goods as markers of ethnicity and religion. Heinrich Härke argues that early archaeology was "primarily a treasure hunt" and have been used overwhelmingly for evidence of ethnic markers and social hierarchies.[3] Using grave goods to identify ethnic identity or descent of individuals living in late Antique and early medieval Europe have been demonstrated to be inaccurate and has led scholars to the unnuanced dichotomies of pagan versus Christian and the so-called "Germanic barbarians" versus the Gallo-Roman/British Roman peoples.[4] Burials with grave goods on both the Continent and in Britain had been assigned a "Germanic" identity and proof of the movements of Germanic-speaking peoples into Gaul and Britain, whereas burials without grave goods were assumed to be Christian Gallo-Romans or British Romans.[5] Furthermore, burial styles like cremation and interrment, particularly from the fifth to the seventh centuries, have also been used to define a dichotomy between the "pagan" and "Germanic" cremation rite versus "Christian" and "British" inhumation rite.[6] In addition, theories regarding the status and identity of individuals based on grave goods have traditionally linked grave goods and their quality and number as directly proportional to the buried individual's role in life. Societal rank has largely been defined by the richness or rarity of the goods buried with the individuals, based on the idea that these were objects carried in real life and thus their association with the individual

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cranial measurements to determine if the "Celts" were represented in the modern populace. See Mairéad Carew, *The Quest for the Irish Celt* (Newbridge, 2018).

[3] Heinrich Härke, "Grave goods in early medieval burials: messages and meanings," *Mortality* 19:1 (2014): 41 – 42.

[4] Bonnie Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 2003), p. 6; see also Adam Stout, "Cultural History, Race, and Peoples," in Sarah Tarlow and Liv Nilsson Stutz (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death & Burial* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 19 – 22; for the Irish dimension of this problem, see for instance Elizabeth O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland During the 5th to 8th Centuries AD," in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, ed. Nancy Edwards (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 135 – 154; for an overview of the changing methodologies and approaches to this problem in Britain, see Adrián Maldonado, "Materialising the Afterlife: The Long Cist in Early Medieval Scotland," in Antony Russell, Elizabeth Pierce, Adrián Maldonado, Louisa Campbell (eds), *Creating Material Worlds: The Uses of Identity in Archaeology* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 42 – 43.

[5] For an overview of the problems with assigning ethnicity based on material culture, see Sam Lucy, "Ethnic and cultural identities," in Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić and David N. Edwards (eds), *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 86 – 109; for specific issues with early medieval English archaeology, see John Moreland, "Ethnicity, Power and the English," in William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrell (eds), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London, 2000), pp. 23 – 51; Susanne E. Hakenbeck, "Situational Ethnicity and Nested Identities: New Approaches to an Old Problem," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 14* (2007): 19 – 27.

[6] Howard Williams, "Remains of Pagan Saxondom? – The Study of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," in Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales* (London, 2002), pp. 47 – 71.

interred would have marked them in society as being of high rank or status.[7] Other assumptions regarding aspects of identity like gender have also been based on grave good analysis. For example, prior to osteological analysis, skeletons found with weapons led archaeologists and historians to assume that the person buried was a male warrior, while skeletons interred with jewellery and domestic implements were assumed to be women of varying status dependent upon the personal adornments.[8] Grave goods were not necessarily directly proportional to identity of the individual. Sam Lucy states that older scholarship has assumed that individuals were interred with their favourite belongings, but this has since been challenged in recent scholarship that has placed the emphasis on mourners and the roles they play in constructing the burial tableaux.[9]

Thus, the association of grave goods with individuals must be considered carefully with respect to the complexities of identity in life and death, and there is not necessarily a direct relationship between grave goods and the dead. Several archaeologists have shifted from attempting to link burials with discrete population groups, descent, and religious affiliation towards what burials said about their lives and towards discussions of cultures' relationship of death and memory and the performance of death and burial.[10] Moreover, questions regarding what we

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[7] Edward James has discussed the problems of assigning status to grave goods, see Edward James, "Burial and Status in the Early Medieval West," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 39 (1989): 23 – 40; for an overview of approaches to defining and understanding status in the archaeological record, see Staša Babić, "Status identity and archaeology," in *The Archaeology of Identity*, pp. 67 – 85.

[8] For the problems with gendering mortuary remains, see Bettina Arnold, "Gender and Archaeology Mortuary Analysis," in Sarah Milledge Nelson (ed.), *Women in Antiquity: Theoretical Approaches to Gender and Archaeology* (Plymouth, 2007), pp. 107 – 140; see also Margarita Díaz-Andreu, "Gender Identity," in *The Archaeology of Identity*, pp. 37 – 42; Sam Lucy has highlighted the problems with gendering burials in early medieval English archaeology and the complexities of identities across age, status, and burial rite, see see also S. J. (Sam) Lucy, "Housewives, warriors and slaves? Sex and gender in Anglo-Saxon burials," in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology* (London, 1997), pp. 150 – 168; Sam Lucy, "Gender and Gender Roles," in David A. Hinton, Sally Crawford, and Helena Hamerow (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 688 – 703; for an older and different perspective, see Nicholas Stoodley, "The Spindle and Spear: a Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the early Anglo-Saxon Inhumation Burial Rite," PhD Thesis (University of Reading, 1997).

[9] Sam Lucy, "Reinterpreting Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries," in Guy De Boe & Frans Verhaeghe (eds), *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe. Papers of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference, Volume 2* (Zellik, 1997), p. 29; for discussions on the active role of mourners and the complexity of the agency of the dead, see Howard Williams, "Death Warmed Up: The Agency of Bodies and Bones in Early Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites," *Journal of Material Culture* 9 (2004): 263 – 291; Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006);

[10] For an overview, see Härke, "Grave goods in early medieval burials," 42; see Sarah Tarlow, "Emotions in Archaeology," *Current Anthropology* 41:5 (2000): 713 – 746; see also Frederic Ekengren, "Contextualizing Grave Goods: Theoretical Perspectives and Methodological Implications," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death & Burial*, pp. 174 – 176; Howard Williams, "At the Funeral," in Martin Carver, Alexandra

conceive of as power and wealth have been examined by scholars like Adrián Maldonado, who states that "the body should not be seen as an ahistorical blank canvas on which to project social values, but a multi-authored, permeable and unstable entity which continued to act upon the living after death."[11] Thus, it is perhaps a difficult problem to reconcile the hypothesis that kingship was reaffirmed in burial and death when it is impossible to determine the identity of the people in the burials that I will discuss. However, as discussed in the previous two sections, kingship does not rely on "truth". It is at its very core a contrived experience that is based on the construction of ideas that certain people within highly stratified societies have a right to rule over others, and that right is derived through an inherent link with the sacred, reinforced with constructed memory of descent and the public display of power through inauguration rituals. In addition, the function of the mourners as those who remember as well as construct the identities of the dead are important, if an individual who was not a ruler in life was remembered as a ruler in death, this itself reinforces the relationship between king and burial. Therefore, burial legitimises this cycle through deliberate displays of power and wealth in the landscape. Even if someone in an unmarked burial was not a king, the image of what archaeologists deem "high-status" burials were deliberate attempts to lay claim to territory and status. Therefore, examining kingship through burial must acknowledge the layers of symbolism attached not only to grave goods, but the staging of the body in burial, the interplay between the burial and the landscape, and the interconnectedness of burials with each other. Burials and funerary deposits can allow scholars to have a window into the study of areas with limited written evidence as well as provide a wider lens with which to view medieval society. This chapter will explore the relationship between burial and the legitimisation of sacral kingship through a comparative analysis of the textual and archaeological evidence for burials in early medieval Ireland and England and will also discuss the site of Iona in Western Scotland as a bridge between pre-Christian and ecclesiastical burial sites in Ireland and Britain. Through this analysis, the association of grave goods with status will be thoroughly analysed, and the importance of burial sites will be emphasised. This discussion will be significant in further establishing the relationship between ancestry, perceived and real, and the landscape as well as underscoring the importance of burial to claims on the landscape.

Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (eds), *Signals of belief in early England: Anglo-Saxon paganism revisited* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 67 – 82; Sally Crawford, "Companions, Co-incidences or Chattels? Children in the Early Anglo-Saxon Multiple Burial Ritual," in *Children, Childhood and Society.* BAR International Series 1696 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 83 – 92.

[11] Maldonado, "Materialising the Afterlife," p. 44.

4.1 Early Medieval Irish Burials

Public interest in burial in Ireland has often focussed on the Neolithic burial mounds such as Newgrange and Loughcrew, likely because of their massive size and striking appearance. On the other hand, medieval burials have not seized the same level of public interest despite the fact that there have been numerous medieval burial sites located, especially through excavations done prior to roadwork and gas pipeline schemes from the mid-1990s with the establishment of the National Roads Authority (NRA, now the Transport Infrastructure Ireland, or TII as of 2015) onwards.[12] The roadworks scheme has not always been viewed positively, especially regarding the M3 in Meath, the route of which was objected to by a large number of Irish archaeologists.[13] Despite the problems presented by the M3 and the reality that the building of the M3 motorway, the excavations done ahead of its construction have revealed significant archaeological sites, some dating to the Mesolithic period through to abandonment around the twelfth century.[14]

Most of the data on early medieval burials has been facilitated by the INSTAR Mapping Death project, which is a database of (most) known burials in Ireland, and much of this data has been published recently by the principal investigator Elizabeth O'Brien.[15] There have also been

[12] Dáire O'Rourke, "Archaeology and the National Roads Authority," in Jerry O'Sullivan (ed.), *Archaeology and the National Roads Authority* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 19 – 24; Mary B Deevy, "The M3 Clonee to North of Kells Road Scheme, County Meath," in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent Archaeological Discoveries on National Road Schemes 2004* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 83 – 91; Pauline Gleeson, "Rescue Excavation in Ireland – Roads and Codes," in *European Preventative Archaeology: Papers of the EPAC Meeting 2004, Vilnius* (Budapest, 2007), pp. 137 – 160; Jonathan Kinsella, "New discoveries and fresh insights: researching the early medieval archaeology of the M3 in County Meath," in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Roads, Rediscovery and Research* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 95 – 107; Michael Stanley, "'Spot the Road Scheme': Transforming the Archaeological Landscape of Rural Ireland," *Archaeology Ireland* 31:3 (2017): 38 – 41; Donald Murphy and Vicky Ginn, "The M3 motorway excavations and Tara," in Muiris O'Sullivan, Chris Scarre and Maureen Doyle (eds), *Tara – from the past to the future: Towards a new research agenda* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 312 – 334.

[13] For an overview of the objections by archaeologists and responses from the NRA and the government prior to the build, see Conor Newman, "Misinformation, Disinformation and Downright Distortion: The Battle to Save Tara 1999 – 2005," in Conor Newman and Ulf Strohmeyer, *Uninhabited Ireland: Tara, the M3 and Public Spaces in Galway. Two Essays by Conor Newman and Ulf Strohmeyer* (Galway, 2007), pp. 61 – 102; for a retrospective on the M3, see Kathryn Rountree, "Tara, the M3, and the Celtic Tiger: Contesting Cultural Heritage, Identity, and a Sacred Landscape in Ireland," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 68:4 (2012): 519 – 544; Conor Newman, "In the way of development: Tara, the M3 and the Celtic Tiger," in R. Meade and F. Dukelow (eds), *Defining events: Power, resistance and identity in twenty-first-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 1 – 22.

[14] Murphy and Ginn, "The M3 motorway excavations and Tara," pp. 312 – 335.

[15] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*; *Mapping Death: People, Boundaries & Territories in Ireland, 1st to 8th Centuries AD*, http://www.mappingdeathdb.ie/ (accessed 12 July 2020); Elizabeth O'Brien, "Iron Age Burial Practices in Leinster: Continuity and Change," *Emania* 7 (1990): 37 – 42; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Pagan and Christian Burial in Ireland During the First Millennium AD," in Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (eds), *The Early Church in Wales and the West* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 130 – 137; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Burial Practices in Ireland: first to seventh

several edited collections of papers, such as the 2010 publication edited by Christiaan Corlett and Michael Potterton, *Death and Burial in early medieval Ireland* as well as several publications from Edel Bhreathnach, Joanna Huckins MacGugan, and Helen Imhoff that discuss the nature of death and burial within the textual material.[16] In addition, Mary Cahill and Maeve Sikora's two-volume *Breaking Ground, Finding Graves: Reports on the Excavations of Burials by the National Museum of Ireland, 1927 – 2006* is an essential publication detailing several previously unpublished burial dating.[17] These studies have been essential for this thesis, although there remains space for more analysis; O'Brien has noted that comparative analyses with the early Irish literary material is still an area for further research.[18]

Prior to discussing the textual and archaeological evidence for royal or high-status burials in Ireland, it is necessary to provide an overview of burial practices in early medieval Ireland. O'Brien notes that from the middle Iron Age into the seventh and eighth centuries AD, individuals were interred within ancestral burial *fertae*, which were discussed in the previous chapter regarding the rite of entry known as *tellach*.[19] Boundary *fertae* are defined generally as a burial under a mound and usually associated as ancestral burials through either the re-use of existing prehistoric monuments or the construction of imitation mounds.[20] As discussed in the inauguration chapter, they were situated along territorial boundaries.[21] It was only largely in the eighth and ninth

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centuries AD," in Jane Downes and Anna Ritchie (eds), *Sea Change: Orkney and Northern Europe in the Later Iron Age AD 300 – 800* (Balgavies, 2003), pp. 63 – 72; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Early Medieval Sentinel Warrior Burials," *Peritia* 20 (2008): 323 – 330; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland during the 5th to the 8th centuries AD," in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, electronic edition, ed. Nancy Edwards (London, 2009), pp. 192 – 218; Elizabeth O'Brien, "From Burial among the Ancestors to Burial among the Saints: An Assessment of Some Burial Rites in Ireland from the Fifth to the Eighth Centuries AD," in Nancy Edwards, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Roy Flechner (eds), *Transforming Landscapes of Belief in the Early Medieval Insular World and Beyond: Converting the Isles II* (Turnhout, 2017), pp. 259 – 286.

[16] Christiaan Corlett and Michael Potterton (eds), *Death and Burial in early medieval Ireland in light of recent archaeological excavations* (Dublin, 2010); Edel Bhreathnach, "From *fert(ae)* to *relic*: mapping death in early sources," in *Death and Burial in early medieval Ireland*, pp. 23 – 31; Elizabeth O'Brien and Edel Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary *Ferta*, Their Physical Manifestation and Historical Context," in Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (eds) *Tome: Studies in Medieval History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 53 – 64; Joana Huckins MacGugan, "Landscape and lamentation: constructing commemorated space in three Middle Irish Texts," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 112C (2012): 189 – 217; Helen Imhoff, "*Inna hinada hi filet cind erred Ulad inso* – Burial and the status of the head," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 63 (2016): 69 – 94.

[17] Mary Cahill and Maeve Sikora, *Breaking Ground, Finding Graves: Reports on the Excavations of Burials by the National Museum of Ireland, 1927 – 2006*, 2 vols (Dublin, 2011).

[18] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 226.

[19] See sections 3.2 and 3.3 above.

[20] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 64 – 65.

[21] See sections 3.2 and 3.3 above.

centuries that the wider secular population shifts to burials at ecclesiastical sites.[22] Boundary *fertae* contain several inhumation styles, such as burials in in slab-lined or wood-lined cists and cremations.[23] While cremation burials are often associated more with pre-Christian Iron Age practices, they did not cease entirely after 400 AD, and O'Brien notes that there are a few instances of early medieval cremations alongside inhumations, such as the burial sites at Carrickmines Great, Co. Dublin and Furness, Co. Kildare.[24] Thus, we cannot separate burials outside of an ecclesiastical context into Christian or non-Christian, burial practices in this period are reflective of the changing customs during a period of conversion where traditional burial rites will be adhered to because they are ingrained within the culture rather than a deliberate subversion of Christian practice through apostasy.[25] Furthermore, this highlights the problem of periodisation within the study of history. There is no clean break between the Iron Age and the early medieval period with regards to traditions within communities and dating techniques like carbon-14 dating do not adhere to periodisation either. Thus, several of these burials have been dated within the period of the late Iron Age to the early medieval period and without more concrete datable evidence such as coinage it is currently impossible to narrow the date of many burials.

4.2 Burial in Texts

There are several references to burials in the early medieval texts, although to varying degrees of description. One of the most important references is in Tírechán's *Collectanea*, where he relates the story about a dead pagan man who had a cross incorrectly placed above his grave instead of the intended recipient:

> "Et uenit in Album Campum in regionibus nepotum Maini et inuenit in illo signaculum crucis Christi et duo sepulcra noua, et de curru suo sanctus dixit: 'quis est qui sepultus hic?' Et respondit uox de sepulcro: 'ecce, sum homo gentilis.' Respondit sanctus: 'cur iuxta te crux sancta infixa est?' Et iterum respondit: 'quia uir qui sepultus est iuxta latus meum, rogauit mater eius ut signum crucis poneretur iuxta sepulcrum filii sui. [Sed] uir fatuus et insensatus posuit iuxta me.' Et exilít Patricius de curru suo et tenuit crucem et euellabat de gentili tumulo et posuit

[22] O'Brien, "From Burial Among the Ancestors," pp. 279 – 282.
[23] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 58 – 61.
[24] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 30 – 33.
[25] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 54 – 57; O'Brien, "From Burial Among the Ancestors," pp. 278 – 279.

super faciem babtitzati, et ascendit super currum et orauit Deum taciter. Cum dixisset ‘libera nos a malo,’ dixit illi auriga illius: ‘quid,’ auriga illius inquit, ‘cur appellasti gentilem non babtitzatum uirum? Quia ingemesco uirum sine babtismo. Melior erat apud Deum illum benedicere uice babtismatis et effundere aquam babtismi super sepulcrum mortui’. Et non respondit illi; puto enim ideo eum reliquit, quia Deus eum saluare noluit.”

“He came to Findmag in the territory of the Uí Maini and found there the sign of the cross of Christ and two new graves, and from his chariot the holy man said: 'Who is it that is buried here?' And a voice answered from the grave: 'I am a pagan.' The holy man replied: 'Why has the holy cross been placed beside you?' and again he answered: 'Because the mother of the man who is buried beside me asked that the sign of the cross be placed beside her son's grave. But a stupid and foolish man placed it beside me.' And Patrick leaped from his chariot and took hold of the cross and pulled it from the pagan grave and placed it over the head of the baptized man, and mounted his chariot and prayed to God in silence. When he had said 'Deliver us from evil', his charioteer said to him: 'How is that,' said his charioteer, 'why did you (merely) talk to the unbaptized man? For I pity a man without baptism. It would have been better in the eyes of God to bless him as in baptism and pour the water of baptism over the dead man's grave.' And (Patrick) did not answer him; I think he left the man (as he was) because God did not want to save him.”[26]

Tírechán alludes here to Christians and non-Christians being buried in the same place, although Christians are being demarcated by crosses. The miracle itself is curious as Patrick’s charioteer objects to the lack of baptism and while Tírechán states it was because God did not want to save this man it is also worth noting that the pagan man did not ask to be baptised. This miracle is relayed in Muirchú ‘s *Vita sancti Patricii*, with some slight differences, namely there is no

[26] Tírechán, *Collectanea*, 41, ed. and transl. Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 17 August 2020).

discussion of baptism or salvation of the dead pagan man.[27] Within this miracle is confirmation that pagans and Christians were buried together, and while perhaps Christian graves may have been demarcated with crosses, they were not kept separate from those who remained non-Christians. While this passage does not seem to be discussing a boundary *fert*, but rather a standard cemetery, it demonstrates that during this period of conversion, the burial traditions were adhered to by Christians.

O'Brien has discussed at length that early attitudes towards Christian burials is reflected in the *Collectionum Canonum Hibernensis*, noting that while ultimately the Church strongly encouraged Christians to be buried in Church cemeteries, there was an acknowledgement that Christians continued to use secular ancestral burial sites and that there was in fact an obligation to maintain these burial sites.[28] Thus, it is clear that the tradition of these secular burial grounds was acknowledged and respected by the Church. O'Brien notes also there may have been practical reasons for the continued use of these sites, some even in use until the twelfth century: the settlement and industrial activity at these sites remained in use and perhaps there was a compromise where some family members were buried in the ancestral burial sites while others were chosen to be buried at an ecclesiastical site.[29] It is also possible that for those of lower status, access to burial in a church cemetery was not an option.[30] Thus, the texts demonstrate the nuanced perspectives towards burial in this period. While the Church promoted the burial of secular people in church cemeteries in the eighth century, it was clearly acceptable for Christians and non-Christians to be buried alongside one another, and also for Christians to be buried alongside their "pagan" ancestors. This also demonstrates the respect towards these burial sites, an attitude that is reflected in the secular legal texts as well.

The significance of *fertae* was discussed in the previous chapter for inauguration rituals, in which rite of *tellach* as detailed in the legal text *Din Techtugad* was used to make claims upon land

[27] Muirchú, *Vita sancti Patricii*, II.2, ed. and transl. Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 17 August 2020).

[28] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 196 – 197; O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland during the 5th to the 8th Centuries AD," electronic edition, pp. 210 – 211; O'Brien, "From Burial Among the Ancestors to Burial Among the Saints," pp. 279 – 281; for the relevant canons, see Hermann Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung* (Giessen, 1874), XVIII.2, XVIII.3(a), XVIII.5, XLIX.10, L.3(a), LI.2. I was unable to consult the more recent edition of the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* for this thesis due to the pandemic. See Roy Flechner, *The Hibernensis, volume 1: a study and edition* (Washington, D.C., 2019); Roy Flechner, *The Hibernensis, volume 2: Translation, Commentary, and Indexes* (Washington, D.C., 2019).

[29] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 198.

[30] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 198 – 199.

that one had ancestral rights to. It is worth noting again that the *fertae*, as boundary markers, were seen as important for keeping territories safe as they were, and that those interred in boundary *fertae* "acted as guardians of the disputed land or territory."[31] The importance of these boundary *fertae* in delineating boundaries even after burials there ceased indicates a belief that the ancestors buried there were still to be respected.[32] Tírechán also provides a reference to *fertae* in an anecdote regarding the daughters of Lóegaire mac Néill:

> "Et consumpti sunt dies ululationis filiarum regis et sepilierunt eas iuxta fontem Clebach et fecerunt fossam rotundam in similitudinem fertae, quia sic faciebant Scotici homines et gentiles, nobiscum autem relic... uocatur, id est residuae puellarum. Et immolata est ferta Deo et Patricio cum sanctarum ossibus et heredibus eius post se in saecula, et aeclessiam terrenam fecit in eo loco."
>
> "And the days of mourning for the king's daughters came to an end, and they buried them beside the well of Clébach, and they made a round ditch after the manner of a *ferta*, because this is what the heathen Irish used to do, but we call it *relic*, that is, the remains of the maidens. And the *ferta* was made over to Patrick with the bones of the holy virgins, and to his heirs after him for ever, and he made an earthen church in that place."[33]

The daughters in this anecdote had converted to Christianity after encountering Patrick and asked to receive the sacrament to see Christ and then died. It is interesting then that even though they converted to Christianity, as did their foster-fathers who were druids, that they were buried in a *fert*. O'Brien notes that Tírechan's audience would have known that *fert* was an older word for non-Christian burial sites while *relic* became the common term of burial sites for Christians in the seventh century.[34] Moreover, according to the passage, Patrick established a church at this spot, perhaps signalling a real-life effort to Christianise "pagan" sites like boundary *fertae*. Moreover, this

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[31] O'Brien and Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary *Ferta*," p. 54.
[32] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 199 – 200.
[33] Tírechán, *Collectanea*, 26, ed. and transl. Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 17 August 2020). *Ferta* seems to be used in the singular.
[34] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 65.

indicates that kings and their families were buried within *fertae* even after conversion to Christianity.

Other references to *fertae* are contained within late sources like the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, which contained a list of *fertae* associated with legendary women, such as at Tailtiu where apparently many women were buried or Fert Medba named after Medb ingen Eochaid Feidlech.[35] However, as discussed in the inauguration chapter, it is very difficult to determine if the lore came prior to the place-name or if the lore was invented to explain the place-name. Thus, the antiquity of these place-names is unknown. References to *fertae* survive in several placenames elsewhere, like Clonfert, Co. Galway or Farta, Co. Galway, the latter being an early ecclesiastical site and the other a small townland, amongst several others.[36] O'Brien suggests that this indicates these places remained culturally important and thus that is why they are preserved in the place-name record.[37] It is possible that the ecclesiastical sites like Clonfert incorporated older *fertae* when they were established, although this remains unconfirmed without archaeological excavations. It is possible that early ecclesiastical cemeteries were referred to as *fertae* occasionally, as Muirchú mentions a "Fertae Martyrum iuxta Ard Macha (Burial Mound of the Martyrs next to Armagh)" which implies *fertae* were used for Christians, even possibly saints.[38] C.J. Lynn suggests that this *fertae* is probably the same as the early Christian cemetery uncovered in Armagh that may date to around the sixth or seventh century, while Tomás Ó Carragáin argues that this may contain the "translation of saintly remains."[39] Regardless of who was buried in this *fertae*, it demonstrates that in the early medieval period there was a blurred distinction between *fertae* and church cemeteries.

As discussed in the inauguration chapter, the rite of *tellach* likely played a role in inauguration rituals and thus the ancestors buried in the boundary *fertae* of royal land were likely considered to be also royal. These legends possibly led to some kings and their relatives choosing to be buried in these boundary *fertae*. This is demonstrated by a few scattered references in the

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[35] *Metrical Dindshenchas*, ed. and transl. Edward James Gwynn, vol. 4, repr. (Dublin, 1991), pp. 152 – 153, 366 – 367.
[36] *Logainm*, s.v. Clonfert, https://www.logainm.ie/ga/920; *Logainm*, s.v. Farta, https://www.logainm.ie/20244; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 199.
[37] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 199.
[38] Muirchú, *Vita sancti Patricii*, I.24, ed. and transl. Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 23 August 2020). *Fertae* is used in the singular here, instead of *fert*.
[39] C.J. Lynn, "Excavations at 46-48 Scotch Street, Armagh, 1979-80," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 51 (1988): 69 – 84; Tomás Ó Carragáin, "The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 133 (2003): 140.

genealogies. For example, within the Déisi genealogies, there is a passage on the Uí Rossa family, although this does not seem to be a branch of the Uí Brigte as descended from Brigit but a separate line of the Déisi Muman:[40]

> "NUNC HUI ROSA. Cormac mac Rossa meic Maili Fothartaig meic Fingein meic Nad Foglaith meic Lugdaech meic [E]ochach meic Echdach meic Cormaic meic Rosa.
>
> .ui. meic Cormaic meic Rosa: Cairpri, Mac Tail, Dau, Euchu, Mane, Fedlimid.
>
> Is dib Ferta na rRig I nAirthiur Femin.
>
> .ui. meic Feradaig meic Fingein: Mael Aichdaen, Mael Fathardaig, Becc, Ailill, Conall, Crundmael.
>
> Fogertach mac Maili hUmai meic Aeda meic Fingin.
>
> .ii. mac Aeda: Mael hUmai ocus Ochtraig.[41]
>
> Now Uí Rossa. Cormac son of Rossa son of Mael Fothartaich son of Fingen son of Nad Foglaith son of Lugdach son of Eochach son of Echdach son of Cormac son of Rossa.
>
> Seven sons of Cormac son of Rossa: Cairpre, Mac Tail, Dau, Euchu, Mane, Fedlimid.
>
> From them is the Burial Ground of Kings in East Femen.
>
> Seven sons of Feradach son of Fingen: Mael Aichden, Mael Fothartach, Becc, Ailill, Conall, Crundmael.
>
> Fogertach son of Mael Umai son of Aed son of Fingen.
>
> Two sons of Aed: Mael Umai and Mael Ochtraig."[42]

[40] For a discussion of Uí Rossa, see Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies and Genealogies*, pp. 61, 128 – 130, 135, 137, 139 – 142, 163 – 168,

[41] TCD MS 1298 cols. 82b – c.

[42] Translation and any errors are my own. Cf. BB, RIA MS P 12, f. 85v; Lec., RIA MS 23 P 2, f. 101r.

The passage here reviews the family of Uí Rossa, but what is particularly interesting is that it notes that they are buried in a *Ferta na Rig* in East Femen, which may refer to the eastern part of Mag Femen, a region that Donnchadh Ó Corráin has suggested runs between Cashel and Clonmel.[43] They were not the only group in the area: the Muscraige Airthir Femin are directly associated with the area according to the *Book of Leinster*, for instance.[44] As this area was around Cashel and Clonmel, it is very likely that this area and the peoples living there were subject to the Kings of Cashel. David Thornton has identified two further sub-dynasties within the Uí Rossa who vied for kingship of the Déisi and from whom there were identifiable kings from the annals.[45] Cormac mac Rossa meic Mael Fothartaig is probably the Cormac mac Rossa, king of the Déisi, whose obit was given in the *Annals of Inisfallen* as circa 732, and the obit of two of his sons (unnamed) are given in the *Annals of Tigernach* c. 735, who were killed in the Battle of Belach Éile between Munster and Leinster.[46] Thornton has argued that this genealogy, as well as the other Déisi genealogies in the L-tract recension dates to the eighth century as the last identifiable members of these genealogies can be compared with annal entries up to the 760s.[47] Given the date of the rest of the passage, it is clearly an early reference to a royal *fert*. This reference to the *fert* may have been for political purposes, as the Uí Rossa were likely wanting to demonstrate their power over their dynastic rivals in the late eighth century, and an explicitly royal *fert* that was associated with a sub-dynasty of the Déisi may have been constructed in order to bolster their claims to this territory similar to the use of *tellach*. If an eponymous ancestor was said to be buried in this *fert* then his descendants would have legal claim to this territory thereafter. Thus, even if he was not buried there, the invention of his burial to provide an illusion of tradition by his descendants demonstrates the importance of the burial of kings in these boundary *fertae*.

There is another reference to a burial within the Déisi genealogies, within a line of the Uí Brigte genealogies previously quoted and provided here once again, from TCD MS 1298:

> "Cethri meic Brigti ingine Dubthach do Ultaib: Ros, Feidlimid, Clar a quo
> Ui Clar. Is e a carnd fuil i nEtairb iniu."

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[43] Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, rev. Ó Corráin, s.v. femen.
[44] LL, p. 324d.
[45] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, pp. 128, 138 – 140,
[46] *AI*, s.a. 731.1; *ATig*, s.a. 735.3; This genealogy is very complicated, and David Thornton delves into the chronological and onomastic issues within it, especially regarding the individual Mael Ochtraig. See Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, pp. 137 – 139, 159 – 167.
[47] Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, pp. 127 – 129.

> "Five sons of Brigit daughter of Dubthach of the Ulaid: Ross, Fedlimid, Clár from which Uí Cláir [comes], this is his cairn which is today in Etarba."[48]

While this passage does not mention *fertae*, I argue that it is very likely that this does in fact refer to a *fert* rather than a simple grave. The key is understanding the place Etarba, which has since eluded any specific identification and has been subject to confusion across manuscripts and between scholars. In the text *Indarba na nDéisi*, Uí Brigte says that Brigit's son Fedlimid Clar was killed in *Etarbaine*, which was where his cairn was afterwards.[49] Whether Fedlimid and Clar were meant to be separate individuals or one it is impossible to discern which came first. In the *Lebor na Cert*, there is a passage on the holdings of the Kings of Cashel that references an *Etarbaine*, as well as appearing in a list of place-names in Munster in the YBL version of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.[50] Ó Corráin suggests that it was located in Howth (OIr. *Etar*), but this seems unlikely if the family was centered in Waterford.[51] It is difficult to discern which is the accurate version of the name, although I am inclined to think it is *Etarba* as the versions of this genealogy across several manuscripts preserve *Etarba* rather than *Etarbaine*.[52] What is highly significant is that *etarba(e)* means "boundary" or "boundary ditch" and the placename may have arisen from a boundary between territories. Thus, a burial for the Uí Cláir family at a place that means "boundary" is highly indicative of a boundary *fertae*.

What is interesting here is that while the Uí Brigte were to our knowledge never ruling a ruling kindred of the Déisi and the members of this family are otherwise unknown outside of the genealogies and *Indarba na nDéisi*, they were still laying claim to a territory with this burial. As stated in the chapter on genealogies, it is entirely possible that this family was still headed by a *rí tuaithe*, subject to the king of the Déisi who was then subject to the kings of Munster. The use of these *fertae* was then used at various levels within societal structure, used by different grades of kings.

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[48] TCD MS 1298, col. 82a; I would like to thank Professor David Stifter for help with translating this passage, and to both he and Dr Sharon Arbuthnot for a discussion on the meaning of *Etarba*.
[49] Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Dessi," pp. 132 – 133.
[50] Myles Dillon (ed.), *Lebor na Cert*, Irish Texts Society, No. 46 (Dublin, 1962), p. 44; Trinity College Library, Dublin, *Yellow Book of Lecan*, TCD MS 1318, col. 640 and LL, p. 102 col. A.
[51] Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, rev. Ó Corráin, s.v. *ui cláir*, *édar*, but cf. *mag n-edarba*.
[52] *The Book of Leinster*, TCD MS 1339, p. 328 col. a; *The Book of Ballymote*, RIA MS 23 P 12, f. 85r col. f; But see Lec., MS RIA 23 P 2, f. 100 v, col. c which has *odarba*.

The aforementioned *Conall Corc and the Corco Luidge* begins with Conall Corc's conception and birth and subsequent fosterage under a witch, Fedelm ingen Moethaire, who during the birth of Conall Corc "[f]íu ind aimmit occindraide ind rig hi Femun, airm hi fuil Fertai Chonail (spent the night at the king's levy (?) in Femen where is Ferta Chonaill)."[53] It is unclear if this *fert* is meant to refer to Conall Corc, but the wording of the text suggests that perhaps this refers to a mound that had some local folklore around a legendary person named Conall as of the time of the text's authorship. Later on in the text, Coipre mac Cuirc was exiled after his attempt to take over Cashel and was then exiled "ind-Iarmumain, act iss i Femun ba marb postea, unde dicitur Fert Carpri oc Loch Cend (to West Munster, but it is in Femen that he afterwards died, whence it is said Fert Coirpri at Loch Cend)."[54] It is perhaps a strange coincidence that three of the *fertae* discussed in Munster were located in Femen, including the Uí Rossa one. Thus, *fertae* were associated with legendary individuals in the early medieval period, particularly legendary kings. Moreover, the likely importance placed upon boundary *fertae* within local legend at the time and their association with legendary kings would also lend more credence to historical kings reusing these sites or having their own mounds erected.

The burials of kings as recorded in the texts were not restricted to *fertae* and ecclesiastical burials. Tírechán recounts the burial plans of Loíguire mac Néill, who was bade by his father to not convert to Christianity and to be buried in a certain manner:

> "Perrexitque ad ciuitatem Temro ad Logairium filium Neill iterum, quia apud illum foedus pepigit, ut non occideretur in regno illius; sed non potuit credere, dicens: 'nam Neel pater meus non siniuit mihi credere, sed ut sepeliar in cacuminibus Temro quasi uiris consistentibus in bello' (quia utuntur gentiles in sepulcris armati pruмptis armis) 'facie ad faciem usque ad diem erdathe' (apud magos, id est iudicii diem Domini) 'ego filius Neill et filius Dúnlinge Immaistin in campo Liphi pro duritate odiui ut est hoc'."

> "And he [Patrick] proceeded again to the city of Tara to Loígure [sic] son of Níall, because he made a pact with him that he should not be killed within his realm; but (Loígure) could not accept the faith, saying:

[53] Kuno Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," p. 57; Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 892.
[54] Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 898 – 899.

> 'My father Níall did not allow me to accept the faith, but bade me to be buried on the ridges of Tara, I son of Níall and the sons of Dúnlang in Maistiu in Mag Liphi, face to face (with each other) in the manner of men at war (for the pagans, armed in their tombs, have their weapons ready) until the day of *erdathe* (as the druids call it, that is, the day of Judgement), because of such fierceness of our (mutual) hatred'."[55]

This passage does not refer to *fertae* but rather a strange burial rite only attested in written material which O'Brien has termed these "sentinel warrior burials" in which warriors are buried standing as if they were defending the hill, standing "in the manner of men at war."[56] This is mirrored *Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde*, where Óengus mac Nad Froích, the eponymous ancestor of the powerful Éoganachta sept Cenél nÓengusso that "…is amlaid sin rohadnaiced inna hesom fo imdai nar-rig hi Caisiul (he was buried in a standing position under the couch of the kings of Cashel)."[57] This is also paralleled in a section in *De Síl Chonairi Móir* about a warrior named Mac Irmara mac Rignat:

> "Dignaid a aimend la Mac Con: carnd cloch cach fir da muintir. Adnacht ina sesam ocus a sceith ara mbelaib in cach dumu."

> "His mound was raised by Mac Con [King of Érainn], and a cairn of stones for each one of his men. They were buried standing with their shields before them, each man in his cairn."[58]

While this does not refer to the burial of kings, the manner in which these warriors were buried is very similar to that of Óengus. O'Brien argues that this motif is in fact based on the early medieval English practice of burying warriors on the borders of territories fully armed and that they believed pagan burials with weapons was a likely form of burial in pre-Christian Ireland, although

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[55] Tírechán, *Collectanea*, 12, ed. and transl. Ludwig Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 17 August 2020).
[56] O'Brien, "Early Medieval Sentinel Warrior Burials," 323 – 330.
[57] See Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," p. 60; For the translation see Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 901. The text seems to be written strictly from a Cenél nÓengusso perspective because it states that only his descendants were the true Éoganachta.
[58] Gwynn, "De Síl Chonairi Móir," 136 – 137, 141; see also Ralph O'Connor, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel: Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga* (Oxford, 2013), p. 36.

the closest written texts on upright burials are in fact from British and Welsh sources.[59] O'Brien identified several burials, mostly within what was Mercian territory, with the burial of isolated warriors near probable boundaries, buried with arms and armour.[60] This is a compelling comparison, although O'Brien herself notes that these English warriors were not buried upright. Furthermore, the similarities between these potential warrior burials along boundaries and boundary *fertae* is more striking, especially since this motif of the upright burials in the Irish tradition also shares aspects with boundary *fertae*, particularly with the purpose to protect the lands although these sentinel warrior burials do not seem to be located along boundary lines. Moreover, the early examples from Tírechán and in *CCCL* are about kings rather than strictly warriors. The warrior characteristics of these kings are stressed in the texts, but perhaps their kingly natures marked them apart with these strange burial motifs. It may also be worth noting that Óengus has been frequently depicted as being the ancestor of the "true" Eoganachta, unlike Loíguire mac Néill whose descendants did not hold any particular power.[61] Moreover, it is interesting that Loíguire mac Néill who according to Tírechán remained pagan was buried in this manner while Óengus mac Nad Froích may have been converted to Christianity by Patrick.[62] Although the depiction of Óengus in *CCCL* seems to imply he was not Christian, it is curious that the negative depiction of Loíguire would include a similar burial rite as the text promoting Cenél nÓengusso.

Regardless of the origins of the motif, it is clear that early Irish writers believed in the importance of burial and the location of burial, especially for powerful individuals like kings. They clearly speak to a belief in the ancestors' ability to protect the territories accorded to their people and descendants. This is further exemplified by various references to *fertae* throughout the hagiographical and saga texts.

Previous discussions of the burial of kings have focussed on ecclesiastical burial. O'Brien states that before the shift to ecclesiastical burials of secular individuals in the late seventh and

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[59] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 168; O'Brien, "Sentinel Warrior Burials," 323, 325; see also Bhreathnach, "Temoria: Caput Scotorum?" 86, and she states that Óengus was a pagan king.
[60] O'Brien, "Sentinel Warrior Burials," 326 – 329.
[61] Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 905 – 906; Byrne, "*Dercu*: the feminine of *mocu*," 46 – 47; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 536; while Loíguire is said to have had a son, Lugaid, his historicity has been questioned. See Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 461 – 464.
[62] Tírechán, *Collectanea*, 51, ed. and transl. Ludwig Bieler, https://www.confessio.org (Accessed 17 August 2020). The text does not mention Óengus by name, only the "sons of Nad Froích".

early eighth century, burials at ecclesiastical sites were "restricted to kings, clerics, and patrons."[63] The evidence for burials of kings at ecclesiastical sites is problematic. Records of burials at Clonmacnoise are largely contained within the *Registry of Clonmacnoise*, which survives only in a seventeenth-century English translation but may ultimately date to the eleventh century and was subsequently revised throughout the later medieval period, and it enumerates Irish kings and lords who paid Clonmacnoise in land grants for the privilege to be buried there.[64] Catherine Swift has examined the grave-slabs at Clonmacnoise along with the documentary evidence and argues that there is a clear tradition of the burial at kings from the tenth century onwards and while there are accounts of burials of seventh-century kings, these are not contemporary.[65] Annal entries that contain legendary accounts of the burials of Diarmait mac Cerbaill and his grandson Diarmait mac Áedo Sláine were, according to Annette Kehnel, likely late insertions into the *Annals of Tigernach* and the other Clonmacnoise set of annals written during Clann Cholmáin's alliance beginning with Flann Sinna mac Máel Sechnaill.[66] Perhaps the only genuine early burial at Clonmacnoise was that of Guare Aidne mac Colmáin of the Uí Fiachrach Aidhne in Connacht, whose burial at Clonmacnoise was recorded in the *Annals of Tigernach*, as unlike the entries about Diarmait mac Cerbaill and Diarmait mac Áedo Sláine, this entry does not appear particularly didactic.[67] His death is recorded in the other annals and there is no reference to his burial at Clonmacnoise, so perhaps that too was a later insertion.[68]

There are scattered references to ecclesiastical burials of kings elsewhere. Another reference is to Domnall Midi, who according to the *Annals of the Four Masters* was buried at Durrow although the historicity of this entry is suspect as it is not mentioned in the entry for his death in the *Annals of Ulster*.[69] Sharpe and later Maldonado and Campbell have pointed to the later tradition

[63] O'Brien, "From Burial among the Ancestors to Burial Among the Saints," p. 278.
[64] Annette Kehnel, *The Church and Lands of St Ciarán: Change and Continuity in an Irish Monastic Foundation (6th to 16th Century)* (Münster, 1997), pp. 202 – 209.
[65] Catherine Swift, "Sculptors and the Customers: A Study of Clonmacnoise Grave-Slabs," in Heather A. King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise Studies. Volume 2: Seminar Papers 1998* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 105 – 123, here pp. 106 – 107.
[66] Annette Kehnel, "The Lands of St Ciarán," in Heather King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise Studies: Vol 1. Seminar Papers 1994* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 11 – 17, here p. 14; Annette Kehnel, *The Church and Lands of St Ciarán: Change and Continuity in an Irish Monastic Foundation (6th to 16th Century)* (Münster, 1997), pp. 10, 18 – 19, 22 – 23; *ATig* s.a. 563.4, 649.2; The *Annals of Tigernach*, the *Chronicum Scotorum*, and the *Annals of Roscrea* have been dubbed the "Clonmacnoise Group" because they focus on concerns with Clonmacnoise. See Mc Carthy, *The Irish Annals*, pp. 10 – 11.
[67] *ATig* s.a. 663.1.
[68] *AI* s.a. 663.1; *AU* s.a. 663.1; *AFM* s.a. 662.6.
[69] *AU* s.a. 763.1

of Iona's burial of kings, both those who retired to ecclesiastical life and secular kings.[70] There is also later evidence that relates that two kings from Adomnán's time were buried at Iona. In the tenth century *Betha Adamnáin*, there is an anecdote about the Pictish king Bridei fili Bili whose body was brought to Iona.[71] The *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham relates that Ecgfrið of Northumbria's body was brough to Iona after he was killed in battle, and while it does not seem embellished, it is impossible to verify the historicity of this account.[72] Certainly, it was not unusual for royalty to entire clerical life, or to have direct family members who entered the church, who may have otherwise been eligible for rule. Sharpe notes that there is no evidence for kings being buried on Iona during St Columba's time, but there is a passage on a prophecy from Columba that relates about the sons of two laymen:

> "Alio in tempore duo quidam plebei ad sanctum in Ioua commorantem insula deuenient. Quorum unus Meldanus nomine de filio suo qui praesens erat sanctum interrogat, quid ei esset futurum. Cui sanctus sic profatur: 'Nonne sabbati dies hodierna est? Filius tuus sexta feria in fine morietur septimanae; octauaque die, hoc est sabbato, huc sepelietur.'
>
> Alter proinde plebeus nominee Glasdercus et ipse de filio quem ibidem secum habuit nihilominus interrogans talem sancti audit responsionem: 'Filius tuus Ernanus secundum uerbum sancti de pueris ambobus suis plene temporibus sunt expleta."
>
> "Once, two laymen came to the saint when he was living in Iona. One of them, named Meldán, asked the saint what lay in store for his son, who was present at the time. This is what the saint told him: 'Surely

[70] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 277 n. 100; Ewan Campbell and Adrián Maldonado, "A New Jerusalem 'At the Ends of the Earth': Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey 1956 – 63," *The Antiquaries Journal* 100 (2020): 1 – 53, here 55, 64 – 65.

[71] Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain, ed. and transl., *Betha Adamnáin: The Irish Life of Adamnán*, Irish Texts Society 54 (London, 1988) p. 56; Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 278 n. 100.

[72] Jacob Bettenham, ed., *Symeonis monachi Dunhelmensis libellus de exordio atque procursu Dunhelmensis ecclesiæ. Cui præmittitur Reverendi Viri Thomæ Rud erudita disquisitio, in qua probatur non Turgotum, sed Symeonem fuisse verum hujus Libelli Auctorem. E codice MS. perantiquo in Bibliotheca publica Episcoporum Dunhelmensium descripsit ediditque Thomas Bedford. Accedunt, praeter alia, Ex eodem Codice historiæ Dunhelmensium episcoporum continuatio: et libellus, De injusta vexatione Willelmi I. episcopi, nunc primùm editus*. (London, 1732), I.9; Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 278 n. 100, p. 352 n. 350.

> today is Saturday? At the end of seven days, on Friday, your son will die, and one week today, on the Saturday, he will be buried in this place.'
>
> Then the other layman, named Glasderc, likewise asked the saint about his son who was there with him, and he had this for answer: 'Your son Ernán will live to see his grandsons, and after a long life will be buried in this island.' Both of these prophecies were fulfilled, each in its appointed time, as the saint had foretold."[73]

Sharpe argues that this passage demonstrates that laymen as well as ecclesiastics were accepted for burial on Iona, and thus it is very possible that kings who did not enter the ecclesiastical life were buried there as well.[74] Determining if individuals at an ecclesiastical site were kings through archaeological means is incredibly difficult as it is highly unlikely any of them would be buried with grave goods. As it stands, scholars can only speculate regarding the early medieval burial of kings at ecclesiastical sites.

The textual evidence provides insight into attitudes towards burial in early medieval Ireland. While I concede that it is very likely that kings were buried at ecclesiastical sites, especially those who had political ties with powerful foundations, it is unlikely that royal individuals were not also buried within boundary *fertae* especially considering O'Brien's argument that they were used to demonstrate a claim on the land. Ecclesiastical burial may have become more commonplace in the late seventh and early eighth century, but kings may well have been buried in both boundary *fertae* and at ecclesiastical sites, as well as perhaps simply ancestral cemeteries. Unfortunately, the evidence for what constituted a kingly burial remains elusive. In the texts, we have no indication of whether a royal burial was significantly different than the burial of any other secular person, although it is clear that the location of burial was highly significant. The use of burial to lay claim to territory or as a retrospective claim by a king's descendants demonstrate that burial sites were important for establishing or claiming political and ancestral control over territory.

While the *fertae* discussed in the texts cannot be linked definitively with excavated burials, several of these types of burials exist that allow scholars to compare in form and function with the

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[73] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae* I.16 (Anderson & Anderson (ed. and transl.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, pp. 40 – 41; Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 123 – 124).

[74] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 277 n. 100.

textual material. It is not possible to analyse all of the currently uncovered *fertae*, but there are a few key examples that are worth analysing with respect to the written evidence and for comparable purposes with the early medieval English burials below.

The textual analysis provides context for the excavated burial sites in early medieval Ireland. It is not possible to cover all potentially high-status burials in Ireland, so this will focus on a few key sites that may provide insight into how kings were buried. Moreover, the burials discussed here may be considered exceptional due to the nature of their location, aspects of burial, and grave goods. The reason for this is that exceptional burials may be indicative of the high status of the individuals buried.

4.3 Collierstown 1, Co. Meath

The first burial is located in in the Townland of Collierstown along the M3 motorway in Meath and along the east bank of the Gabhra River. It is located in between the Hill of Tara and Skreen in the Gabhra valley, an area that is rich with archaeologically significant sites dating from the Neolithic to the early medieval.[75] It was excavated from September 2006 to April 2007 by Robert O'Hara ahead of the M3 road scheme, whose site reports and subsequent MA dissertation have been very useful for this analysis.[76] The site has been highlighted by O'Brien as a significant burial for the early medieval period, as it is both a boundary *fert* and likely a familial cemetery that was built around a "founder", who will be discussed below.[77]

The site contains sixty-one articulated skeletons, fifty-five of which are adults, with eighteen female remains, nineteen male remains, and eighteen more that were unidentified with 6 children and infants although O'Hara states that the children and infants "did not feature among the cemetery population until late in the burial sequence, suggesting they were deliberately excluded."[78] The burials are contained within four groups associated with successive ditches, and the site itself has six phases of activity from the late Iron Age/early medieval to the modern period.[79]

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[75] Robert O'Hara, "Medieval Britain and Ireland – Fieldwork Highlights in 2007: From Pagan to Christian in an Early-Medieval Cemetery," *Medieval Archaeology* 52:1 (2008): 367.

[76] Robert O'Hara, "Archaeological excavation report, E3068 Collierstown 1, County Meath," Unpublished archaeological report prepared by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd. for Meath County Council National Roads Design Office (NRDO) and the National Roads Authority (NRA) (2009), pp. ii – iii; O'Hara, "From Pagan to Christian in an Early-Medieval Cemetery," 367 – 373; Robert O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery at Collierstown 1, Co. Meath," unpublished M.A dissertation (University College Dublin, 2010).

[77] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 91, 96.

[78] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 6.

[79] O'Hara, "E3068 Collierstown 1, County Meath," p. iii.

The earliest burial was a "foundation" burial of a female adult whose remains date to the fifth or sixth century AD, who was buried under a possible mound, after which there were a series of burials inserted into the mound which were not radiocarbon dated but based on stratigraphy and probable sequence were likely inserted after the primary burial and before a second series placed around the mound dating slightly later than the primary burial.[80] O'Hara notes that the second series of burials seemed to be placed in such a manner as to avoid the previous burials.[81] The initial primary burial is highly significant, particularly with her interment near the Gabhra River which O'Brien describes as "sacred".[82] The river may have been a natural boundary and thus its placement along the banks suggests this is a boundary *fertae*.[83] The strontium and oxygen isotopes suggest the woman was a local, and with the subsequent burials in and around her burial mound indicate that she was likely a person of importance and perhaps the founding member of a family in the area.[84] O'Brien states that this burial is an early medieval imitative *fert* in which a mound was constructed in a similar fashion to prehistoric mounds, often built in areas with other prehistoric monuments, but that it was also "founder" burial around which an secular familial burial eventually rose around.[85]

Within this grave, there were remains of "charcoal, a fragment of burnt pig bone and burnt vegetation."[86] O'Hara proposes that these were ritual deposits and perhaps ritual feasting at the location, or perhaps an offering to the woman.[87] Moreover, pigs were an important feasting animal and while was not valued as highly as cattle they were raised only for consumption, which seems to be reflected in the saga texts *Fled Bricrend* and *Scéla Muicce Meicc Da Thó* that concern the *curad-mír* or the "champion's portion."[88] O'Brien remarks that when the "champion's portion" is given to the dead, it is known as *dantmír*.[89] According to the *Senchas Mór*, it was a crime to take away the

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[80] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 7 – 8, 11 – 12; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 91, 96.
[81] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 11 – 12.
[82] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 91 n. 127.
[83] "Collierstown 1," *Mapping Death*, https://www.mappingdeathdb.ie (Accessed 20 August 2020); O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 66.
[84] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 96, 179.
[85] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 82, 91, 96.
[86] Jacqueline Cahill Watson, Christopher Standish and Elizabeth O'Brien, "Investigating Mobility and Migration in the later Irish Iron Age," in *Death and Burial in Early Medieval Ireland in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations*, ed. Christian Corlett and Michael Potterton (Dublin, 2010), pp. 127 – 149, here p. 140.
[87] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval Cemetery," p. 27; O'Brien states this was likely high-status feasting. See O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 127.
[88] Ní Chatháin, "Swineherds, Seers, and Druids," 201; See above, section 3.3.
[89] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 123; eDIL s.v. dantmír, dil.ie/14622.

dant mír from a dead person.[90] The commentary notes that this is related to the *curad-mír* and Cú Chulainn which according to the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* may be an attempt to understand a "pagan" custom that was obscure by the time of composition, although there may be considerably more nuance to this.[91] For example, excavations at Clonmacnoise in the 1990s by Heather King, recently published by O'Brien, demonstrate the use of the *dantmír* in ecclesiastical burials.[92] At the lowest level under the ninth-century Cross of the Scriptures, there were six male burials dating from the seventh to the tenth centuries in dug graves around a posthole that contains the remains of a wooden cross that predates the stone cross.[93] Each of these burials contains a cut of meat, indicating a funeral feast.[94] One particularly significant find was that one of the cuts of meat was from a horse, and given the dietary restrictions against the consumption of horse meat discussed in the previous chapter, this may indicate not only nuance with regards to burial practice even after the shift to ecclesiastical burial but the textual sources on "pagan" behaviour was not necessarily a widespread view.[95] O'Brien suggests that these burials could be the remains of the abbots of Clonmacnoise but it is equally possible they are the remains of kings with special permission to be buried there. Regardless of who these individuals are, it is clear that they were high status and entitled to special burial rites.

The charcoal in the primary burial and the charred grains in later graves at Collierstown may be related to a practice seen in burials from early Anglian cemeteries such as Spong Hill, Norfolk and Balcombe Pit, Sussex, among several others, which O'Brien and O'Hara suggest may be a kind of ritual purification.[96] O'Brien points to the late-seventh century *Penitential of Theodore*, which states: "Qui ardere facit grana ubi mortuus est homo pro sanitate uiuentium et domus V annos peniteat (He who causes grain to be burned where a man has died, for the health of the living and of the house, shall do penance for five years)."[97] O'Brien also states that these prescriptions were

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[90] *CIH* 2.387 = *AL* i 176 – 177.
[91] *CIH* 2.388 = *AL* i 180 – 181 eDIL s.v. dantmír, dil.ie/14622.
[92] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 123 – 125.
[93] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 123 – 125.
[94] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 124 – 125.
[95] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 124 – 125, see section 3.2 above.
[96] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 128; O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 27.
[97] For the edition, see *Iudicia Theodori*, 15.3, available at Michael D. Eliot, *Anglo-Saxon Canon Law*, http://individual.utoronto.ca/michaelelliot/index.html (Accessed 18 August 2020); For a translation, see John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal libri poenitentiales and selections from related documents*, reprint (New York, 1990), p. 198; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 128; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Literary Insights into the Basis of Some Burial Practices in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in Catherine E. Karkov and Helen Damico (eds), *Aedificia*

repeated in other penitential literature from the ninth and tenth centuries such as the *Scriftboc*.[98] While the prescription here is not against burnt grains being deposited with the body but rather within a house, O'Brien argues that perhaps "burnt grain or charcoal might perform the same function."[99] Moreover, while this practice is not referenced in the Old Irish Penitentials, the similarities of practices between early medieval Ireland and England suggest this was widespread, although perhaps it was not seen as "pagan" in early medieval Ireland, hence the lack of prescription against it. The charcoal (from hazel, cherry, and oak wood) in the primary burial may be a votive deposit, although whether it has the same significance as charred grains as a rite of purification is unknown. The deposition of charcoal within graves may be a continuation of the practice of the deposition of charcoal with Bronze and Iron Age cremations.[100] O'Brien notes that the charcoal in the Collierstown foundation burial may have been hearth scrapings meant to link her with a family unit and may have also been an indicator of high status.[101]

The presence of a woman as the focal burial for a boundary *fertae* and ancestral familial cemetery may be archaeological evidence of what the previous chapter on women in the genealogies suggests: that in the very early medieval period (and perhaps further back into the late Iron Age) dynasties were named after and headed by women. Moreover, while much of the surviving evidence suggests these families were often excluded from kingship, these types of burials may indicate that women ancestors were seen as powerful members of the family that burial nearby would convey prestige. Additionally, if a king's claim to territory was based on the rite of *tellach* and his perceived or real relation to those buried in the boundary *fertae* then these female ancestors played a large role in conveying a king's authority over the land. O'Brien suggests that this

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Nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp. 294 – 295. She also notes charred grains found at Sandy, Bedfordshire, Marston St. Lawrence, Northamptonshire, Andover, Hampshire, Burghfield, Berkshire, and states that there are many other examples not listed.

[98] "Swa hwylc man swa corn bærne on þære stowe þære man dead þaere lyfigendum mannum to hæle and on his huse fæste winter." For the edition, see Benjamin Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, vol. 2 (1840), p. 156; For translations of some excerpts of the text, see McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 246; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 128; O'Brien, "Literary Insights into the Basis of Some Burial Practices," pp. 294 – 295; O'Brien calls it the *Confessional of Ecgbert* based on McNeill and Gamer here, but it is more commonly known as the *Scriftboc* now; For more on this text and its date and composition, see Stefan Jurasinski, *The Old English Penitentials and Anglo-Saxon Law* (New York, 2015), pp. 38 – 39, 41 – 42, 44 – 47, 51, but especially 52 – 85.

[99] O'Brien, "Literary Insights into the Basis of Some Burial Practices," pp. 294 – 295.

[100] O'Hara notes the similarities to a late Iron Age/Early Medieval female burial at Ballygarraun West, Co. Galway. See O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 27; Cahill, Standish, O'Brien, "Investigating Mobility and Migration," pp. 137 – 138.; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 130.

[101] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 130.

woman may have been a relative of a king which would have also afforded her high status, but that ultimately she was (along with other similar female foundation burials) to be considered an ancestor.[102] While we cannot know for certain if the memory of this woman was carried long in the traditions of the people who lived here, but her importance was clearly very significant for others to be buried around her.

The burial place clearly held continued significance through to the sixth century, although the previous barrow was levelled, and the site was remodelled of three circular segmented ditches that were meant to enclose the third series of burials.[103] O'Hara notes that the first ditch-cutting has no associated artefacts, but subsequent re-cutting of the ditches were accompanied with a series of significant finds such as Cyprio-Syrian Bii-ware and Phocaean Red Slip Ware (PRSW) from Asia Minor, charred grains and animal bones, and iron and copper-alloy objects.[104] Amanda Kelly has highlighted the significance of Bii-ware and PSRW found in at this site, noting that evidence of these types of sherds found elsewhere in Ireland have been at probable royal sites and that the location of Collierstown 1 along the Gabhra River would have made it a focal point of trade especially with its proximity to Tara.[105] Other examples of PRSW in Ireland have been limited, with a rim sherd found at the Garranes ring fort, Co. Cork, Clogher, Co. Tyrone, and the Mount Offaly Cemetery at Cabinteely, Co. Dublin.[106] Bii ware has been located at even more sites, including the aforementioned locations with PRSW as well as the cemetery at Colp West, Co. Meath, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, and several others across Ireland.[107] In addition, PRSW and Bii ware finds at Iron Age and early medieval hillforts and fortified settlements in Britain like Dinas Powys, Wales and Tintagel, Cornwall, and Dunbarton Rock, Scotland (only Bii ware).[108] Kelly states that these types of pottery are examples of high-status commodities that upon wider aggregate analysis demonstrate that wide-scale trade in the late Iron Age and early medieval period point to a demand for luxury goods amongst an elite.[109] Thus, while these finds may not appear at first glance to match the richly furnished burials like Sutton Hoo but it clearly indicates that the individuals buried here and those

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[102] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, pp. 190, 195.
[103] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 13
[104] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 13 – 15.
[105] Amanda Kelly, "The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware (PRSW) Form 3 and Bii ware (LR1 amphorae) on sites in Ireland – an analysis within a broader framework," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 110C (2010): 44 – 53.
[106] Kelly, "The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware," 40, 44 – 49, 50 – 52.
[107] Kelly, "The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware," 58 – 62.
[108] Kelly, "The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware," 40, 44 n. 5, 71.
[109] Kelly, "The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware," 53 – 54.

administering to the burials were of high status. As Kelly states, the proximity to the Hill of Tara cannot be overstated.[110]

Moreover, these goods suggest further evidence for ritual feasting at the site, especially with finds of more charred animal bone and vegetation.[111] The charred grains found within this phase may be related to the potential rite of purification mentioned above, but these grains were not found within a burial context but within the ditch re-cutting and may then be instead linked to the ritual feasting done at the site. The ritual feasting done at burial sites may be linked with the votive depositions of food and plant matter (foodstuffs or otherwise). There are parallels with the nine-day Roman festival of Parentalia, which Ovid related involved offerings of food to the dead, ending with the festival of *Feralia*.[112] The festival of *Lemuria*, which took place in May, was a rite that was meant to purge and appease malevolent ancestor spirits from the home, which included tossing black beans over one's shoulder.[113] These early Irish feasting rituals and votive food deposits may be similar, both as a purification or protective rite for the living but also for the dead, as a way to appease their spirits.[114] The continued return of people to a burial site demonstrates a societal need for remembrance and honouring the dead. O'Brien has also pointed to the possible legal evidence in the tract *Di Dliguid Riath ocus Somaíne* of this type of grave feasting, as a lord's base client was obligated to dig his lord's gravemound, pay a levy, and attend a commemorative feast and if the client fails to do so must pay a fine to the lord's heirs.[115] Clearly there was a wide respect for the dead and memorialisation through feasting at their graves is a way of acknowledging their memory and continued role in the community.

There is potential for further ritual activity at Collierstown 1, as O' Hara suggests that the ironworking at the site may indicate ritual meaning as blacksmiths within the sagas have had supernatural associations.[116] Brian Dolan has examined the ritual roles of ironworkers in the Iron Age and has noted that evidence from other potential smithing sites have very limited evidence,

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[110] Kelly, 'The discovery of Phocaean Red Slip Ware," 52 – 53.
[111] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 13 – 15.
[112] Ovid, *Fasti*. II. 533 – 570 (*Ovid, in Six Volumes. Volume 5: Fasti*, ed. and transl. James George Frazer, 2nd ed (London: 1989), pp. 94 – 99); Fanny Dolanksy, "Honouring the Family Dead on the Parentalia: Ceremony, Spectacle, and Memory," *Phoenix* 65:1/2 (2011): 128, 131 n. 22.
[113] Ovid, *Fasti*, V. 419 – 492 (*Fasti*, ed. and transl. Frazer, pp. 290 – 297).
[114] Bernadette Filotas, "Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature (500 – 1000)," (PhD Thesis, Université de Montréal, 2000), p. 461.
[115] Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, p. 30; O'Brien, "Literary Insights into the Basis of Some Burial Practices," pp. 295 – 296.
[116] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early medieval cemetery," p. 14.

often small pieces of iron slag and thus very similar to the iron slag found in Collierstown 1.[117] There is also evidence of ironworking and deposits of metal items have been found at Tara and another possible royal site, Dún Ailinne (mod. Knockaulin), Co. Kildare.[118] Dolan notes that iron was in fact a rare material in Iron Age Ireland and thus was likely a prestige material, but iron supply was not limited and thus larger-scale iron goods production and thus the supply of iron objects was not linked to supply of raw iron but rather a tight control over iron working or an inability to make more.[119] Roseanne Schot, in discussing the metalworking at Tara, notes that it is important to acknowledge the symbolisms of metalworking alongside the industry of metalworking.[120] Fergus Kelly notes that blacksmiths may have had supernatural associations as the makers of weapons of death, and points to an eighth-century hymn that offers protections "fri brichtu ban ⁊ gobann ⁊ druad (against women and smiths and druids)."[121] The association with of ironworking in particular with the life/death cycle and agricultural practices may also explain the deposition of iron objects in graves and the presence of metalworking at cemeteries.[122] While the ritual nature of metalworking at these sites is speculative, it is interesting that metalworking would be commenced at a boundary *fert* as a location also of probable ritual feasting but no other contemporary settlement features. Thus, the comparable metalworking at royal sites like Tara as well as potential ritual significance further indicates that Collierstown 1 was the burial ground of high-status people, possibly those of royal status.

The association of the pottery, which was not interred in any grave but were deposited with the same stage of activity, implies that the third series of burials were also an elite group, which O'Hara argues is further evidenced by the fact all burials were of adults.[123] This is also supported by

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[117] Brian Dolan, "Making iron in the Irish midlands: the social and symbolic role of Iron Age ironworkers," *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 25 (2016): 31 – 48, here 40. Such sites include Monganstown, Newton 1, and Cherryville Site 12 which include limited iron slag remains. Ballydavis 1, another site, is a very large archaeological complex including a hilltop enclosure and burials associated with ring-ditches.

[118] Dolan, "Making iron in the Irish midlands," 41; for a discussion of the metalworking and objects found at Tara, see Roseanne Schot, "Forging Life Amid the Dead: Crafting and Kingship at Iron Age Tara," in *Discovery Programme Reports 9: A Research Miscellany* (Dublin, 2018), pp. 107 – 128.

[119] Dolan, "Making iron in the Irish midlands," 43.

[120] Schot, "Crafting and Kingship at Iron Age Tara," p. 118.

[121] "Patrick's Hymn," in Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (eds), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scolia, Prose, and Verse*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 357; Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, p. 62; James Doherty has tentatively dated this hymn to the early eighth century based on linguistic and comparative textual evidence. See James Doherty, "A Linguistic Analysis of the Old Irish Hymns in the *Liber Hymnorum*," (PhD Thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2008), pp. 366 – 377.

[122] Schot, "Crafting and Kingship at Iron Age Tara," p. 119.

[123] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 7 – 8, 15 – 16.

the find of a whalebone sword hilt, found along with some of the pottery finds, which would have been an incredibly rare object due to the value of whalebone.[124] These burials were more organized than the previous ones but were responsible for truncating them causing disarticulation of the skeletal remains, although these remains were reinterred into the original grave, charnel pits, or grave linings.[125] One of the male burials had an unusually large grave, and the extra space may have been for the deposit of organic items like food, flowers, and clothing.[126] Two of the graves were reused, where other individuals were interred within pre-existing graves.[127] The reuse of graves was, according to Bernadette Filotas, highly unacceptable by the Church, although the evidence for this is from Frankish sources.[128] While there may not have been prescriptions against this act in Ireland, the act of the double burial may have been either as simple as a way to save space or possibly a desire for the deceased to be interred with someone of particularly important rank.

The fourth series of burials marks another shift within this burial site, although O'Hara states that this group of burials "pose more questions than they potentially answer."[129] While it may be a possible extension of the previous ring-ditch, with the interment of infant burials and the broad radiocarbon dates ranging from the seventh to the ninth century it is unclear what we may infer from this small group of burials with a clear demographic shift.[130] It may be that the site shifted to a settlement and family cemetery with limited burials continuing into the ninth century, as there is some evidence for possible domestic activity.[131] It may be that this site lost significance as a boundary *fert* in the seventh century but that it maintained importance within the hinterlands of Tara along the Gabhra River, prompting people to create a settlement instead. This suggests that an incorporation of the old burial site into the new settlement was an active attempt to maintain a link with the past.[132]

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[124] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 14, 31; Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp. 284 – 285; see also a reference to an ivory- or tusk-hilted sword in *Indarba na nDessi*. See Meyer (ed.), *Expulsion of the Dessi*, pp. 131 – 132. Meyer translates *det* as "tusk", but the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* indicates this may mean whale ivory. See *eDIL* s.v. 1 det, http://dil.ie/15797.
[125] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 15.
[126] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 28.
[127] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 15.
[128] Filotas, "Pagan Survivals," p. 470.
[129] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 15.
[130] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 16.
[131] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," pp. 18 – 20.
[132] O'Hara, "An Iron Age and Early Medieval cemetery," p. 22.

The identities of the people buried at Collierstown 1 remains unknown, but they were evidently high-status individuals whose burial within close proximity to Tara in the fifth to seventh centuries may indicate a link to the Southern Uí Néill kindreds and were attempting to assert their power with these burials along an important river and potential trade route when they were establishing their power in the region. Thus, while this burial cannot definitively be classed as "royal", the location of the burial site to a site of kingship in a highly contested region may be an example of an assertion of power through landscape and memory. In addition, the female founder burial also indicates that women were seen as important ancestors worthy of being buried in boundary *fert* as well as to be the focal point of an ancestral secular cemetery in early medieval Ireland.

We may likely never know if the people living in the settlement had tangible ties to those buried there in the past, but the widespread folklore of the landscape within medieval Ireland and the proximity to Tara and other ancient sites may have made this an attractive place to contrive a connection for a group of people. Sagas and texts like the *Dindshenchas* demonstrate an interest from the literate sphere in early medieval Ireland to explain and establish the significance of ancient sites across Ireland. The next burial that I will discuss further illustrates the need to manufacture a relationship between the old and the new.

4.4 Knowth

Knowth is one of the most significant Neolithic passage tomb complexes in Ireland, located in Meath and part of the wider Brú na Bóinne group of passage tombs of Newgrange and Dowth.[133] The site was initially excavated in the late 1960s by George Eogan but work on the site continued for decades until the 2000s, with extensive publications detailing the archaeology and history of the site over several decades of research.[134] Although there have been useful contributions from F.J. Byrne and

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[133] George Eogan, "A Decade of Excavations at Knowth, Co. Meath," *Irish University Review* 3:1 (1973): 66 – 68.

[134] The Royal Irish Academy published six volumes on the archaeology and history of the site. See George Eogan, ed., *Excavations at Knowth 1: Smaller Passage Tombs, Neolithic occupation and Beaker activity* (Dublin, 1984); George Eogan and Helen Roche (eds), *Excavations at Knowth 2: Settlement and Ritual Sites of the Fourth and Fifth Millennia BC* (Dublin, 1997); Finbar McCormic and Emily Murphy (eds) *Excavations at Knowth 3: Knowth and the Zooarchaeology of Early Christian Ireland* (Dublin, 2007); Francis J. Byrne, William Jenkins, Gillian Kennedy, Catherine Swift (eds), *Excavations at Knowth 4: Historical Knowth and Its Hinterland* (Dublin, 2008); George Eogan (ed.), *Excavations at Knowth 5: The Archaeology of Knowth in the First and Second Millennia AD* (Dublin, 2012); George Eogan and Kerri Cleary, *Excavations at Knowth 6: The Passage Tomb Archaeology and the Great Mound at Knowth* (Dublin, 2017); For other articles on the excavations and history, see George Eogan and F.J. Byrne, "Excavations at Knowth, Co. Meath, 1962 - 1965," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 66 (1967/1968): 299 – 400; Eogan, "A Decade of

Catherine Swift to our understanding of early medieval Knowth, a fuller examination of the early medieval burials with respect to kingship is still needed.

Knowth lies in a territory that was once known as the Kingdom of Brega, Knowth was considered a seat of kingship for the Kingdom of Northern Brega by the late eighth century, although usage prior to 800 is only to for one king, Gormgal mac Éladaig, an obscure individual who may have been either of the Gailenga or of Síl nÁedo Sláine.[135] Knowth is a considerably different site to Collierstown 1 because it was already ancient by the early medieval period and thus it falls under the category of reused prehistoric burial *fertae*.[136] The site was largely unaltered from the Neolithic until the Iron Age, where burials recommenced circa 100 BC until circa 300 AD.[137] While these burials are not the focus of this thesis, they were likely high status burials with relatively rich grave goods buried around a site that may have had religious significance for the population.[138] Burials did not straddle the line between the late Iron Age and early medieval period as they did in Collierstown, but rather there was another break in the burial record until the seventh or eighth century with fourteen burials dating from the seventh to ninth centuries AD. They were all placed around the main mound, with seven inserted into the smaller passage tombs that surround the main mound, two were interred in pits, one was in a pit within a medieval ditch, with another that was placed into a pit that was cut into the mound of Passage Tomb 2.[139] None were buried with grave goods and the youngest burial was around seventeen, and the remains that could be sexed seemed to be a relatively even distribution of males and females.[140] O'Brien states that most of these burials conform with practices of the seventh and eighth century Ireland, that they were "supine extended, west-east, inhumation, usually, but not always, wrapped in a shroud or winding

Excavations at Knowth, Co. Meath," 66 – 79; George Eogan, "Report on the Excavations of Some Passage Graves, Unprotected Inhumation Burials and a Settlement Site at Knowth, Co. Meath," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 74 (1974): 11 – 112; George Eogan, "Early Christian Knowth and the Kingdom of Brega," *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 4 (2010): 12 – 25.

[135] Eogan and Byrne, "Excavations at Knowth," 392 – 393; F.J. Byrne and Pádraig Francis, "Two Lives of Saint Patrick: 'Vita Secunda' and 'Vita Quarta'," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 124 (1994): 14; Catherine Swift and Francis J Byrne, "The Early History of Knowth," in *Historical Knowth and Its Hinterland*, pp. 13 – 15.

[136] O'Brien, *Mapping Death*, p. 71.

[137] Eogan, *Excavations at Knowth 5*, p. 11.

[138] Eogan, *Excavations at Knowth 5*, pp. 43 – 44.

[139] Eogan, *Excavations at Knowth 5*, pp. 46 – 48.

[140] Eogan, *Excavations at Knowth 5*, pp. 46 – 48.

sheet and laid into an unprotected dug grave or lintel grave."[141] There were two that do not fit this model, the first known as Burial 14 (dating to the eighth or ninth century) was that of a male placed in the early medieval double-ditched enclosure dug around the main mound, the body was possibly decapitated and O'Brien suggests that it was buried in a "furtive manner," and thus was not a formal burial.[142] The strontium and oxygen isotopes indicate he was from Eastern Scotland, possibly from Pictland and thus not entitled to a formal burial, and may have been decapitated in battle.[143] Byrne, Swift, and O'Brien point to one of the ogham inscriptions in the Eastern tomb that records the Pictish name of Talorc, indicating a possible Pictish presence at Knowth.[144] Swift notes that there was a Síl nÁedo Sláine king named Talorc mac Cellaig (d. 888), who was a king of Southern Brega[145] Byrne argues that this ogham is possibly earlier from c. 700 and Swift also states that the incomprehensibility of the ogham at Knowth indicates that the transcription used for these stones differs from the late eighth and ninth century classical ogham stones.[146] Burial 18 was another strange burial, hastily buried in a medieval ditch, whom O'Brien suggests was possibly another outsider.[147] The interment of two potential outsiders within what was likely a highly significant site both politically and culturally is odd. It is difficult to say if they were buried by companions who perhaps wished to give them as dignified a burial as they could or if they were buried by a hostile community that did not see a need to bury them formally. It may be similar to the burials of criminals at Sutton Hoo, which will be discussed below, which Martin Carver has argued is a deliberate display of power by a local king but the existence of only two of these burials makes that highly unlikely.

O'Brien suggests that these burials would have undoubtedly been Christian in this period, but that evidently burial among the ancestors, in this case very possibly contrived, was still significant.[148] She notes that the political turbulence between the Síl nÁedo Sláine subjugating the Gailenga in this region may have led to these burials as either the local group or an incoming group

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[141] Elizabeth O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials – Proto-Historic and Historic Period," in *Excavations at Knowth 5*, p. 65.
[142] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 67.
[143] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 67.
[144] Francis John Byrne, "The Inscriptions in the Main Passage Tomb at Knowth," in *Excavations at Knowth 4*, pp. 90, 95, 99 – 102, 114 – 115, 118 – 119; Catherine Swift, "Commentary: The Knowth Oghams in Context," in *Excavations at Knowth 4*, pp. 122 - 123 O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 67.
[145] Swift, "The Knowth Oghams in Context," p. 123.
[146] Byrne, "The Inscriptions in the Main Passage Tomb," pp. 118 – 119; Swift, "The Knowth Oghams in Context," pp. 126 – 127.
[147] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 67.
[148] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 70.

wanted to assert their power through the insertion of their dead into what was a highly significant location.[149] The medieval enclosure around the mound covering Passage Tomb 1 was likely dug in the seventh or eighth century, perhaps by the Síl nÁedo Sláine who may have moved their original settlement at Slane to Knowth, as Slane was an early ecclesiastical site and perhaps became unsuitable for a royal settlement.[150] O'Brien notes that this movement may have been for several reasons, such as Ecgfrið of Northumbria's attack on Brega in 684, which may have necessitated a need for a fortified site at Knowth.[151] It may also have been due to the split of Brega into the northern and southern kingdoms after the intra-dynastic Battle at Imlech Píc circa 688 between members of Síl nÁedo Sláine: the victor was Niall mac Cernaig whose descendants would be kings of Southern Brega while those who were defeated were Congalach mac Conaing (ancestor of the Uí Chonaing), Dub Dá Inber, king of Ard Ciannachtae, and Uarchride ua Osséni, king of the Conailli.[152] It is also possible that Knowth had ancient traditions attached to it and there was a desire to establish a permanent link with the ancestors that went beyond burials.[153] It is quite possible that these factors all informed the use of the site in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

The proximity to Tara is another factor that needs to be considered here. Tara also lay within Brega but its status as having its own kingship meant that it was not formally attached to the Kingdom of Brega even as the Uí Néill dominated the region. The Síl nÁedo Sláine may have desired to have a similar type of site to Tara, one that has a command of the landscape with a definitive link to the ancestors with a close proximity to a major river. O'Brien notes that the Boyne may have been the dividing boundary between Northern and Southern Brega.[154] Their control over Knowth came after the loss of their control of Tara c. 728 with the death of the last Síl nÁedo Sláine King of

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[149] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 70
[150] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," pp. 71 – 72.
[151] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 72; For the sources on this attack, see *AU*, s.a. 685.2; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV. 26 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 266; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Sherley-Price, pp. 254); for a discussion of this attack and the historical context, see David A.E. Pelteret, "The Northumbrian Attack on Brega in A.D. 684," in Alexander James Langlands and Ryan Lavelle (eds), *The Land of the English Kin: Studies in Wessex and Anglo-Saxon England in Honour of Professor Barbara Yorke* (Leiden, 2020), pp. 214 – 230.
[152] *AU*, s.a. 688.4; T.M. Charles-Edwards, "The Uí Néill 695 – 743: The Rise and Fall of Dynasties," *Peritia* 16 (2002): 403; O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 72.
[153] O'Brien, "Knowth Secondary Burials," p. 72.
[154] O'Brien, "An Assessment of Some Burial Rites," 266; Niamh Carty and Patrick Gleeson, "Kingship, violence and *Loch da Gabhor*: royal landscapes and the production of authority in early medieval Brega," *Ríocht na Midhe* 24 (2013):29 – 72, here 45; Catherine Swift notes on Ptolemy's map that the Boyne was a boundary between the *Voluntii* and the *Eblani*, but the historicity of Ptolemy's map is highly debatable. See Swift, "The Early History of Knowth," p. 5.

Tara, Cináed mac Írgalaig.[155] The only other Síl nÁedo Sláine King of Tara after this point were Máel Mithig mac Flannacáin and his son Congalach mac Maíle Mithig in the tenth century, known in the genealogies as Congalach Cnogba.[156]

Thus, Knowth was evidently a politically important site beginning in the seventh century that was very likely tied to the political fortunes of the Southern Uí Néill, but especially the Síl nÁedo Sláine branch and their subjugation of the other peoples in the area, namely the Gailenga and other Cíannachta groups. The antiquity of Knowth as a burial site and the interment of people around the mounds suggests a desire to create a semblance of continuity and to contrive a relationship between those buried at Knowth in prehistory and an early medieval population group expressing their power in the landscape. In addition, the creation of a fortified settlement at Knowth further indicates that this was a politically important location in the landscape, and therefore the association of the burials with a fortified settlement, similar perhaps to Cashel and its associated cemetery, indicates this was very likely a burial site for the Síl nÁedo Sláine.

4.5 Iona

Scottish burials have not received the same level of discussion as they have elsewhere in Britain and in Ireland. Adrián Maldonado has produced the most up-to-date research on burial across Scotland, but it is clear that more analysis is required, particularly of burials in what was Dál Riatan-controlled territory.[157] Maldonado has argued that attempting to locate specific ethnic boundaries within burial as well as associated burial practices may elide several other reasons for regional differences in burial practices, so to assign specific types of burial to Dál Riata or the Picts is undeterminable.[158] There have been several barriers to burial archaeology in Scotland with poor preservation of the

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[155] *AU s.a.* 728.1; Carty and Gleeson, "Kingship, violence and *Loch da Gabhor*," 45.

[156] *AU* s.a. 918.7, 939.5. Congalach, according to Byrne, was known as Congalach Cnogba, although I cannot find any specific reference to this epithet in the annals except for an entry in *AFM*, s.a. 964.12: "Ferghal ua Ruairc, rí Connacht, do mharbhaidh lá Domhnall mac Conghalaich, tighearna Breacch, & Cnoghba." Byrne does not cite which text his information is from. See Eogan and Byrne, "Excavations at Knowth," 383. This epithet seems to be solely from the genealogies. See TCD MS 1298 col. 25b.

[157] Adrián Maldonado Ramírez, *Christianity and burial in late Iron Age Scotland*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2011); Adrián Maldonado, "Burial in Early Medieval Scotland: New Questions," *Medieval Archaeology* 57:1 (2013): 1 – 34; Adrián Maldonado, "Materialising the Afterlife: the long cist in early medieval Scotland," in *Creating Material Worlds: The Uses of Identity in Archaeology* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 39 – 62; Adrián Maldonado, "Early Medieval burial in European Context: log coffins in Scotland," in *Scotland in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Alice E. Blackwell (Leiden, 2019), pp. 117 – 133; There are few earlier studies, but see Audrey Henshall, "A Long Cist Cemetery at Parkburn Sand Pit, Lasswade, Midlothian," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 89 (1956): 252 – 283.

[158] Maldonado, *Christianity and burial in late Iron Age Scotland*, pp. 116 – 122, 130 – 138; Maldonado, "Burial in Early Medieval Scotland," 3, 7.

burial record due to acidic soils and little scholarly attention to what material has been uncovered.[159] The excavation data for those sites that have been excavated in the south-west of Scotland that would likely have been under Dál Riatan control have had few studies examining them, although there has been a great deal of research on the burials at Iona recently, both reassessing the older excavations by Charles Thomas and with new excavations by the Iona Research Group.[160] While the excavation reports on Iona are freely accessible, and Maldonado and Campbell have begun publications on the significant finds including the burials that were uncovered, there remains a need for thorough comparisons between the burials on Iona to those in Ireland and England.

There were several burial grounds on Iona, which may all contain early medieval burials. There is a landing site on the island called "Martyrs' Bay," which had stone cist burials with one returning an early medieval date of the mid-seventh to mid-tenth century AD.[161] This site is connected via a paved route, which was named the "Street of the Dead" that antiquarians referenced, to the other burial sites on Iona at the chapels of St Ronan, St Oran, and St Columba.[162] The Chapel of St Ronan is a medieval church that was built over an earlier medieval stone and clay church, which itself lies over a burial ground that seems to have been a women and children-only burial site in the later medieval period but the early burials have not been sexed or dated.[163] St Oran's chapel dates to the twelfth century but may be built on an earlier church, and has an associated burial ground.[164] As previously discussed above, there are annalistic entries to the retirement of kings to Iona in the ninth century, who would have presumably been buried there as well as later sources mentioning the burial of Pictish and Northumbrian kings.[165] The excavations by Charles Thomas uncovered burials in the *Reilig Odhráin* (Burial Place of Oran), named after a

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[159] Maldonado, "Burial in Early Medieval Scotland," 2 – 3, 12.
[160] Ewan Campbell and Adrián Maldonado, "Russell Trust Excavations on Iona led by Charles Thomas, 1956 – 1963. Data Structure Report for Historic Environment Scotland, March 2016," *Iona Research Group,* https://ionaresearchgroup.arts.gla.ac.uk/index.php/publications/ (Accessed 30 Aug 2020); Ewan Campbell & Cathy McIver, "Excavations at Iona Abbey 2017: Data Structure Report," available at *Iona Research Group,* https://ionaresearchgroup.arts.gla.ac.uk/index.php/publications/ (Accessed 30 Aug 2020); Ewan Campbell & Cathy McIver, "Excavations at Iona Abbey 2018: Data Structure Report," available at *Iona Research Group,* https://ionaresearchgroup.arts.gla.ac.uk/index.php/publications/ (Accessed 30 Aug 2020); Campbell and Maldonado, "A New Jerusalem 'At the Ends of the Earth'," 1 – 53; *Iona Research Group*, available at https://ionaresearchgroup.arts.gla.ac.uk/ (Accessed 30 Aug 2020).
[161] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 23.
[162] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 20 – 23.
[163] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 23, 33.
[164] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 23.
[165] See section 4.2 above.

follower of Columba, who arrived with him to Iona.[166] The twelfth-century Middle Irish *Betha Coluim Chille* relates that when they arrived at Iona, Columba said that someone should "go down into the soil to consecrate it," which Odrán volunteered to do, at which point he died and was then buried.[167] However, the earliest reference to *Reilig Odhráin* is from the Dean Munro in 1549, referring to it as an enclosed burial space, and it seems to have been medieval in date.[168] There were late medieval burials found in 1976 by St Columba's Chapel, with two burials in log coffins from the ninth and tenth century.[169] Lastly, there were burials within the abbey's cloister that date to the sixth or seventh century.[170]

Determining the "secular" nature of these burials is difficult given their ecclesiastical contexts. Campbell and Maldonado note that *Reilig Odhrán* has been traditionally thought of as a secular kingly burial, as stated above, but there is nothing to distinguish a "royal" burial from that of a cleric. There are several burial monuments within the enclosure, which are largely associated with ecclesiastics but there are later inscribed burial monuments to kings elsewhere.[171] There is a seventh-century stone (dated based on the inscription style) with the inscription *Lapis Echodi* that Campbell and Maldonado have suggested may refer to Eochaid Buide, king of Dál Riata.[172] According to Campbell and Maldonado, the burials at Martyrs' Bay were secular, which would be more likely given their distance from the monastic buildings.[173] Nevertheless, Iona represents one of the difficulties with identifying "high status" or royal burials without accompanying material like the imported pottery in Collierstown 1 or ancient sites like Knowth. The possible high-status burials at Clonmacnoise discussed above do provide a parallel of possible early royal burial at important

[166] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 23.
[167] "Betha Colum Chille Incipit. On the Life of St Columba," in Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Three Middle-Irish Homilies on The Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit and Columba* (Calcutta, 1877), pp. 118 – 119.
[168] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 9.
[169] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 31; Mark Redknap, "Excavation at Iona Abbey, 1976," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 108 (1976-7): 228 – 253, here 245 – 247. In Redknap's report, the chapel is called St Columba's Shrine.
[170] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 18.
[171] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 32; Swift has noted the similarities between the later inscribed Clonmacnoise stones and those at Iona and the Inner Hebrides, see Swift, "A Study of Clonmacnoise Grave Slabs," pp. 111 – 115.
[172] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 33; "Funerary Monuments, Crosses and other Carved Stones," in *Argyll Volume 4: Iona. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* (1982), pp. 182 – 183.
[173] Campbell and Maldonado, "Interpreting Charles Thomas's Excavations at Iona Abbey, 1956 – 63," 32.

ecclesiastical sites but the textual evidence is problematic as references to the ecclesiastical burial of kings is not contemporary with the burials themselves.

It is clear that Iona was a prestigious ecclesiastical site, and burial at a place associated with a famous saint would certainly have been attractive to powerful kings who cultivated relationships with powerful ecclesiastical sites, run by abbots who were powerful in their own right like Columba or Adomnán. In addition, Sharpe notes that if kings were being ordained at Iona, the monastery may have also become a preeminent site for royal burial, that would then link inauguration and burial within a strictly ecclesiastical framework.[174] Elsewhere, Tomás Ó Carragáin has discussed that the Church in Ireland "was anxious to usurp the secondary social functions that such burial grounds played, especially those that were sites of fairs or *óenacha*.[175] Óenach Tailtiu was said to have also been the burial site of the Ulaid in the tenth- or eleventh-century text *Senchas na Relec*, or the "History of Burial Sites," although this is likely an ahistorical legend.[176] Nevertheless, Iona represents the possibility of the creation of a new type of site that was used for inauguration and burial without older pre-Christian associations, perhaps representing an attempt to create new traditions linked with a preeminent saint and his successors, adding to the political strength and relationships between Iona and royal dynasties in Ireland and Britain.

Royal burial in early medieval Ireland presents several challenges of interpretation. The textual evidence suggests that kings and their families were buried in both *fertae* and ecclesiastical sites, but linking the burial sites mentioned in the text within the physical landscape is problematic, and textual references to the burials of kings at sites that we can locate such as Iona are not contemporary. The late written evidence may not correspond with the excavated remains and in fact may represent folklore or later legends. Nevertheless, it is clear that regardless of who was

[174] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, transl. Sharpe, p. 277 n. 100.
[175] Tomás Ó Carragáin, "The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 133 (2003): 149.
[176] For the text, see John O'Donovan, ed. and trans., "Senchas na relec in so," in George Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical architecture of Ireland, anterior to the Anglo-Norman invasion; comprising an essay on the origin and uses of the round towers of Ireland, which obtained the gold medal and prize of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1845), pp. 97 – 101; For a discussion of the text, see Kelly Kilpatrick, *The Historical Interpretation of Early Medieval Insular Place-Names*, Unpublished DPhil Thesis (Oxford, 2012), pp. 306 – 308; see also Catherine Swift, "*Óenach Tailten*, the Blackwater Valley and the Uí Néill kings of Tara," in *Seanchas: studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology*, pp. 109 – 120, here p. 115; There have been no burials located around Teltown, although there are some post-medieval Churches which may have incorporated early medieval burials, but this has not yet been explored. See Paul Gosling, "Teltown, Co. Meath: Máire MacNeill's 'principal old road' and the topography of Óenach Tailten," *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 25 (2016): 67 – 87, here 71.

buried in boundary *fertae* or ecclesiastical cemeteries, the memory (created or historical) of kings was used for political means for defining boundaries and land claims. This indicates that kings and their families were very likely buried at sites like the ones discussed. The relationship between the location of boundary *fertae* and ecclesiastical cemeteries is important, for choosing to be buried near or at culturally and politically important sites such as Tara, Knowth, and Iona signifies an effort to tie an individual and their family to the landscape and to establish themselves in the local memory. The continued visitation to these sites with feasting and subsequent burials and settlements also indicates the importance that these places held in the collective memory of the peoples who lived in the surrounds.

4.6 Early Medieval English Burials

Interest in early medieval English burials has been considerably more widespread among both the scholarly community and the public than early medieval Irish burials, which has likely been engendered by the especially notable ship-burials at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, originally in the Kingdom of East Anglia, that contains the richest and most extravagant early medieval burial found within England to date. Unlike the early medieval burials in Ireland, Sutton Hoo and other burial mounds have captured the public attention due to the richness and complexity of the burials and the grave-goods, but also because of the general fascination with the "pagan" nature of these types of burials. In a sense, the pageantry of the burial space has been revived and modified for the modern audience as we not only behold the burials in a new context that is removed from the original but also within our attempts to understand the burials themselves. Why were burials like Sutton Hoo so incredibly elaborate and furnished, and what does it tell us about the individuals buried and the community that buried them? What can these burials tell us about kingship within early medieval England, and how did these burials differ from those in Ireland? This section hopes to examine how kingship was displayed through the examination of attitudes towards burial and death in texts before discussing two case studies, the Sutton Hoo ship-burial and the Prittlewell Princely Burial. These two burials will be analysed to understand the differences between depictions of burials in texts as well as how potential royal burials differed in early medieval England to early medieval Ireland.

There have been several publications on burial in early medieval England that tend to have a heavy focus on the archaeology of burial practices and attitudes towards specific rites, with

several monographs, articles, and collections of papers.[177] There have been some key studies on the interplay between ideology and burial. Sarah Semple has discussed the attitude towards prehistoric monuments in early medieval England.[178] Nick Stoodley and Helena Hamerow have analysed the role of gender and status within burials.[179] There have been several important articles on the impact of Christianity on burial rites from Duncan Sayer, Samantha Leggett, Audrey Meaney, and Helen Geake.[180] This is only a brief overview of some key works on early medieval English burials, but it is clear that the field has a rich historiographical tradition. Nevertheless, one aspect that seems to have had few discussions is the role of kingship in these burials. Furthermore, there have been thorough discussions on Sutton Hoo and the role of kingship in that specific burial, which will be discussed below, but there has yet to be a synthesis of the different elements of burial rites and how they intersect with kingship. In addition, a comparison of burial rites with those in Ireland may reveal other aspects that have yet to be explored.

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[177] Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (eds), *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales* (Abingdon, 2002); Sally Crawford, "Votive deposition, religion and the Anglo-Saxon furnished burial rite," *World Archaeology* 36:1 (2004): 87 – 102; Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006); Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Woodbridge, 2007); Sarah Semple, ed., *Early Medieval Mortuary Practices*, Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 14 (Oxford, 2007); Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford, 2009); Jo Buckley and Annia Cherryson, *Burial in Later Anglo-Saxon England, c. 650 – 1100* (Oxford, 2010); Duncan Sayer, "Investigating the Social Aspects of Early Medieval Mortuary Practice," *History Compass* 1 1/2 (2013): 147 – 162.

[178] Sarah Semple, "A fear of the past: The place of the prehistoric burial mound in the ideology of middle and later Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 30:1 (1998): 109 – 126; Sarah Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual, and Rulership in the Landscape* (Oxford, 2013); For some other discussions on this topic, see Hilda R. Ellis Davidson, "The Hill of the Dragon: Anglo-Saxon Burial Mounds in Literature and Archaeology," *Folklore* 61:4 (1950): 169 – 185; Sam Lucy, "The Significance of Mortuary Ritual in the Political Manipulation of the Landscape," *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 11:1 (1992): 93 – 105; Howard Williams, "Ancient landscapes and the dead: the reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites," *Medieval Archaeology* 41 (1997): 1 – 32; Howard Williams, "Monuments and the past in early Anglo-Saxon England," *World Archaeology* 30 (1998): 90 – 108.

[179] Nick Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite* (Oxford, 1999); Helena Hamerow, "A Conversion-Period Burial in an Ancient Landscape: A High-Status Female Grave near the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire/Warwickshire," in Alexander James Langlands and Ryan Lavelle (eds), *The Land of the English Kin: Studies in Wessex and Anglo-Saxon England in Honour of Professor Barbara Yorke* (Leiden, 2020), pp. 231 – 244; Helena Hamerow, "Furnished female burial in seventh-century England: gender and sacral authority in the Conversion Period," *Early Medieval Europe* 24 (2016): 423 – 447.

[180] Duncan Sayer, "Christian Burial Practice in the Early Middle Ages: Rethinking the Anglo-Saxon Funerary Sphere," *History Compass* 1 1/2 (2013): 133 – 146; Samantha Leggett, "The Power of Place: Colonization of the Anglo-Saxon Landscape by Royal and Religious Ideologies," *Journal of Literary Onomastics* 6:1 (2017): 76 – 94; Audrey Meaney, "Anglo-Saxon Pagan and Early Christian Attitudes to the Dead," in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300 – 1300* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 229 – 242; Helen Geake, "The Control of Burial Practice in middle Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Cross Goes North*, pp. 259 - 270

4.7 Burials in Text

The attitudes towards burial in early medieval English texts are less apparent than in the Irish material as there are fewer literary texts to rely upon from the ninth century and earlier. Moreover, there are few studies of the existing evidence. Karl Heinrich Krüger assembled lists of all recorded church burials for the English, Frankish, and Langobardic kings up to the mid-eighth century, but there have been few considerations of this evidence since.[181] Martin Biddle mentions briefly in his study of the burial of saints and ecclesiastics that the study of the burial of high-status secular individuals, that is, kings, their families, and other nobles is needed but does not explore this aspect.[182] Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis wrote an article on the ecclesiastical burial of English kings in 2010, also noting the lack of focus on this area of royal burial, as she states that scholarship tends to focus on secular burial grounds like Sutton Hoo.[183] Deliyannis's article is very useful for identifying the references to Christian burial of kings as well as situating within the wider context of royal burial in early medieval Europe. Nonetheless, it remains necessary to discuss the significance of these types of burials for the legitimisation of kingship in early medieval England.

The earliest references to Christian burial of kings are in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which if Bede's account is accurate could be as early as the first half of the seventh century. His first account is regarding the foundation of a monastery near Canterbury, that would eventually become St Augustine's Abbey:

> "Fecit autem et monasterium non longe ab ipsa ciuitate ad orientem, in quo, eius hortatu, Aedilberet ecclesiam beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli a fundamentis construxit, ac diuresis donis ditauit, in qua et ipsius Augustini, et omnium episcoporum Doruuernensium simul et regum Cantiae poni corpora possent."

[181] Karl Heinrich Krüger, *Köningsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden bis zur mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts. Ein Historischer Katalog* (Munich, 1971). This is useful for identifying some of the key sites and sources on burial, but some of the listed churches do not seem to have any recorded royal burials but rather were the burial sites of saints, such as Lastingham.

[182] Martin Biddle, "Archaeology, architecture, and the cult of saints in Anglo-Saxon England," in L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris (eds), *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on history, architecture, and archaeology in honour of Dr H.M. Taylor* (London, 1986), p. 13. He only mentions, briefly, the burial of Æthelbald of Mercia in 757 at Repton, see p. 22.

[183] Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, "Church Burial in Anglo-Saxon England: The Prerogative of Kings," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995): 96 – 119.

> "[Augustine] also built a monastery a short distance to the east of the city, where at his suggestion King [Æ]thelbert erected from the foundations a church dedicated to the blesses Apostles Peter and Paul, enriching it with many gifts. It was here that the bodies of Augustine and all the Archbishops of Canterbury and of the Kings of Kent were to rest. The church was not consecrated by Augustine himself, however, but by Lawrence his successor."[184]

It is hard to know if this account is accurate for all of the burials of the Kings of Kent until Bede's time, but certainly it would make sense that while the Church tried to exert control over Kent that the burial of these kings alongside the archbishops would have been a strategic political move. The monastery and church did not have associated saintly burial at the church but perhaps the close ties that Augustine established with Æthelbert prompted this tradition. Bede states later that Æthelbert and his wife Bertha were both buried in the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul.[185] There is a later tradition related by Goscelin of Canterbury that several Kings of Kent were buried in a church dedicated the St Mary built at the monastery by Eadbald son of Æthelbert.[186] This seems to differ from the supposed ecclesiastical burials at Iona, which (if the sources are accurate) were not restricted to the families of the founders but rather kings from surrounding regions or those who retired to a monastic life there.

Bede also related of the burial of Edwin of Deira's head after he was killed in battle by King Cadwalla:

> "Adlatum est autem caput Aeduini regis Eburacum, et inlatum postea in ecclesiam beati apostoli Petri, quam ipse coepit, sed successor eius Osuald perfecit, ut supra docuimus, positum est in porticu sancti papae Gregorii, a cuius ipse discipulis uerbum uitae susceperat."

[184] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.33 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, I, p. 70; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 96).
[185] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 90; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 111).
[186] Goscelin of Canterbury, *Historia translationis s. Augustini*, 2.II.9 (AASS Mai. VI, 3rd ed. (1688), pp. 430 – 431); Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.6 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 93; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 114.).

> "The head of King Edwin was carried to York and subsequently placed in the church of the blessed Apostle Peter, which he had begun to build, but which his successor Oswald completed, as I have related above. It rested in the porch dedicated to the holy Pope Gregory, from whose disciples he had received the Word of life."[187]

This example of a head burial may have been simply because no more of his remains could be recovered from the battlefield, but it does speak to some Irish parallels highlighted by Imhoff.[188] While she does not reference Edwin's head burial, she highlights two Christian texts that the head was the primary body part.[189] Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*:

> "Prima pars corporis caput; datumque illi hoc nomen eo quod sensus omnes et nervi inde initium capiant, atque ex eo omnis vigendi causa oriatur. Ibi enim omnes sensus apparent. Unde ipsius animae, quae consulit corpori, quodammodo personam gerit."

> "The primary part of the body is the head, and it was given this name because from there all senses and nerves originate, and every source of activity arises from it. Whence it plays the role, so to speak, of the soul itself, which watches over the body."[190]

This is echoed in the Emperor Justinian I's *Digest* from the sixth century, which quoted a late second- or early third-century AD jurist Paulus on the burial of the head:

> "Cum in diverisis locis sepultum est, uterque quidem locus religiosus non fit, quia una sepultura plura sepulchra efficere non potest: mihi autem videtur illum religiosum esse, ubi quod est principale conditum est, id est caput, cuius imago fit, inde cognoscimur."

[187] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.2 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 125; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 140 – 141).
[188] Imhoff, "Burial and the status of the head," 69 – 94.
[189] Imhoff, "Burial and the status of the head," 81 – 82.
[190] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.I.25 (*Haec pagina telaris liber est operis Etymologiarum sive Originum Isidori Hispalensis*, vol. II ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), available at *LacusCurtius*, https://bit.ly/IsidoreWPT (Accessed 7 September 2020); Stephen A. Barney, et. al., transl., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 232).

> "When a burial has been performed in more than one place, the places are not both made religious, because one burial cannot produce more than one tomb. In my opinion, the place which is religious is the one where the most important part of us is buried, that is, the head from which likenesses are made, by which we are recognized.[191]

Thus, these texts indicate that it was commonly believed that the soul resided in the head, and thus the burial of the head absent the rest of the body was sufficient. Bede notes later that Oswiu, his wife Eanfled, Edwin (the father of Eanfled), and Oswiu's daughter Aelffled and other nobles were buried at Whitby.[192] Thus, it seems that his remains were divided after his death. Edwin was not the only king to have a separate head burial from the rest of his remains, as Oswald of Northumbria's head was translated to Lindisfarne while his hands and arms were interred in Bamburgh, after Oswiu recovered from the battlefield where they had been placed on stakes.[193] The rest of his remains seem to have been recovered earlier and were interred in Lindsey:

> "Est monasterium nobile in prouncia Lindissi, nomine Beardaneu, quod eadem regina cum uiro suo Aedelredo multum diligebat, uenerabatur, excolebat, in quo desirdabat honoranda patrui sui ossa recondere. […] Lota igitur ossa intulerunt in thecam, quam in hoc praeparaurerant, atque in ecclesia iuxta honorem congruum posuerunt; et ut regia uiri sancti persona memoriam haberet aeternam, uexillum eius super tumbam auro et purpura conpositum adposuerunt."

> "In the province of Lindsey there is a noble monastery called Beardaneu (Bardney Abbey, Lincolnshire) which was greatly loved, favoured, and enriched by the queen [Osthryd of the Mercians] and her husband Ethelred. She wished that the honoured bones of her uncle should be reinterred there. […] Accordingly the bones were washed and laid in a casket made for the purpose, which as placed in

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[191] Justinian, *Digest*, XI.7.44 (Theodore Mommsen, Paul Krueger, and Alan Watson (eds and transl) *The Digest of Justinian* (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 355).
[192] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.24 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 179; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 184).
[193] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.13 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 151 – 152; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 162).

> the church with fitting honour. And to furnish a lasting memorial of the royal saint, they hung the king's banner of purple and gold over his tomb."[194]

Oswald likely received special mention from Bede as Oswald was venerated as a saint and thus his burial is not necessarily indicative of royal burial but rather the burial of a royal saint. But it is important to note that Bede highlights Oswald's status as both king and saint here. Thus, his burial here is exceptional. The burial of his body without his head, arms, and hands is presented here as the primary burial by Bede, which seems to be a reversal of Edwin's head burial that was more thoroughly described whereas the burial of the rest of his remains at Whitby was not afforded as much narrative.

The only other church burial in the *HE* is that of Sebbi, King of the East Saxons, who was interred in St Paul's, London, but he had entered the religious life toward the end of his days.[195] The narrative stresses the sanctity of Sebbi, rather than his regal nature, and thus his burial may have been influenced by his entering the Church. This burial parallels those Irish kings like Cellach mac Ragallach (d. 705.3), king of the Connachta, who entered the religious life and were thus likely buried in ecclesiastical cemeteries.[196]

The final records of the burial of kings before the mid-ninth century are in the *ASC* which relates that Æthelbald of Mercia was buried at Repton in 757.[197] As previously discussed, Repton holds one of the few depictions of a king that may have been Æthelbald.[198] It is also possible that Merewalh (d. late seventh century?), who was a son of Penda and the sub-king of the Magonsætan in Mercia may have been buried at Repton, but the evidence for this is from the late tenth or early eleventh century and thus is difficult to verify if this is a legend or has historical basis.[199]

Bede provides the majority of historical knowledge on the burial of kings, but as it has been demonstrated he only provides information regarding kings that Bede regarded highly and those who were buried within ecclesiastical sites. Bede's narrative may suggest that royal burial in

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[194] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.11 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 148; *Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 160;).
[195] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV.11 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 225 – 227; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 222 – 223).
[196] *AU* s.a. 705.3.
[197] *ASC* s.a. 757.
[198] Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, "The Repton Stone," 287 – 290.
[199] Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, "The Repton Stone," p. 235 n. 8.

churches was not unusual, but it is important to recognize that these kings and their families had close ties to the Church. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bede only recounted the church burials of kings and excluded secular burial. Thus, it is important to assess the archaeological evidence for non-ecclesiastical burials.

Bede remains our only historical source for burial in early medieval England, but there is the possibility that secular burial rites were contained in the Old English poem *Beowulf*. As discussed in the genealogy chapter, the dating of Beowulf has not been agreed upon by scholars although it is possible that it dates to at least the eighth century and possibly draws upon older oral traditions.[200] Near the beginning of the poem is a description of the burial of the king Scyld Scefing, whose body was set in a ship where "þær wæs madma fela / of feorwegum frætra gelæded (there was much of treasures from distant ways, of decorated weapons, brought forth)" with "hildewæpenum ⁊ heaðowædum (war-weapons and battle-dress)".[201] The mourners then "leton holm beran / gefon on garsecg (allowed the sea to carry, / gave to the spear-man sea)", meaning the ship was sent out instead of buried.[202] It is difficult to take this as a representation of a real burial practice because Beowulf was a deliberate construction of a heroic past written in a Christian milieu. However, this may be a highly stylised depiction of real burial rites: the burial of a king or a prince within a ship and with a rich provision of grave-goods. Perhaps in a more realistic depiction of a secular royal burial, Beowulf himself is described as being buried in a barrow with "beg ⁊ siglu (bracelets and brooches)."[203] As we will see with the discussion of the archaeological evidence for royal or elite burials below, *Beowulf* does have some parallels with the Sutton Hoo ship-burial.

4.8 Sutton Hoo

Sutton Hoo is the name of a cemetery in Suffolk, East Anglia, that contains several mound burials, cremations, and inhumations that date to the sixth and seventh centuries AD.[204] The first excavations were undertaken in 1938 by Basil Brown and C.W. Phillips who were hired by Edith

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[200] See section 2.8 above.

[201] *Beowulf*, lines 36 – 37, 39 (*Electronic Beowulf*, ed. and transl. Kevin Kiernan, available at https://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ (Accessed 2 March 2021)).

[202] *Beowulf*, lines 48 – 47 (*Electronic Beowulf*, ed. and transl. Kiernan, available at https://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ (Accessed 2 March 2021)).

[203] *Beowulf*, line 3165 (*Electronic Beowulf*, ed. and transl. Kiernan, available at https://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ (Accessed 2 March 2021)).

[204] For a description of the site and overview of the initial finds and excavation, see R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Handbook* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 15 – 18; Martin Carver, "Five Campaigns: The exploration of Sutton Hoo," in Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground and its context* (London, 2005), pp. 3 – 12.

Pretty to investigate the mounds near her property, which focussed on the Mound 1 ship-burial.[205] The site generated a great deal of interest within the first two decades of the first excavation, with several publications on the finds and discussions of the historical context.[206] The second major excavations took place of the Mound 1 ship-burial in 1965 to 1974 and were headed by Rupert L. Bruce-Mitford who published dozens of books and articles on the finds.[207] A third series of enquiry occurred from 1983 to 2001 with the Sutton Hoo Research Project, headed by Martin Carver, who has also published several books and articles on Sutton Hoo and barrow mounds.[208] Since the excavations ended, there have also been several useful examinations of the finds and their implications for early medieval East Anglian society such as religion, cultural interactions, and expressions of power.[209] Sutton Hoo was an incredible find and has expanded our knowledge on

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[205] C.W. Phillips, "The Excavation of the Sutton Hoo Ship-burial," *The Antiquaries Journal* 20:2 (1940): 149 – 202.

[206] There were several publications dating to soon after the initial excavation until the 1950s. See T.D. Kendrick, Ernst Kitzinger and Derek Allen, "The Sutton Hoo Finds," *The British Museum Quarterly* 13:4 (1939): ii, 11 – 136; C.W. Philips, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. I. The Excavation," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 6 – 27; T.D. Kendrick, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. II. The Gold Ornaments," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 28 – 30; T.D. Kendrick, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. III. The Large Hanging Bowl," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 30 – 34; T.D. Kendrick, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. The Archaeology of the Jewellery," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 34 – 39; Ernst Kitzinger, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. V. The Silver," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 40 – 63; O.G.S. Crawford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. VI. The Coins: A Summary," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 64 – 68; W.F. Grimes, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. VII. The Salvaging of the Finds," *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 69 – 75; H. Munro Chadwick, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. VIII. Who Was He?" *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 76 – 87; T.D. Kendrick, "Saxon Art at Sutton Hoo," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 77:453 (1940): 174 – 175, 178 – 183; Raymond Lantier, "La Tombe Royale de Sutton Hoo," *Revue Archéologique*, 6:17 (1941): 46 – 57; T.C. Lethbridge, "Sutton Hoo," *Archaeology* 1:1 (1948): 8 – 12; R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Recent theories and some comments on general interpretation," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History* 25:1 (1950): 1 – 78; R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," *Scientific American* 184:4 (1951): 24 – 31; For a comprehensive list of publications up to the 1950s, see Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Chronological Bibliography," *Speculum* 29:1 (1954): 116 – 124; Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Chronological Bibliography," *Speculum* 33:4 (1958): 515 – 522.

[207] Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Handbook*; R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, "Sutton Hoo Exavations, 1965 – 7," *Antiquity* 42 (1968): 36 – 39; Rupert Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Helmet: A Reconstruction," *The British Museum Quarterly* 36:3/4 (1972): 120 – 130; Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 1. Excavations, Background, The Ship, Dating and Inventory* (London, 1975); Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 2. Arms, Armour and Regalia* (London, 1978); Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 3. Late Roman and Byzantine silver, hanging-bowls, drinking vessels, cauldrons and other containers, textiles, the lyre, pottery bottle and other items*, 2 parts (London, 1983).

[208] Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo: The Burial Ground of Kings* (London, 1998); Martin Carver, "Why that? Why there? Why then? The Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality," in Helena Hamerow and Arthur MacGregor (eds), *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 1 – 22; Carver, *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*.

[209] Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells (eds), *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo* (Minneapolis, 1992); Michael Parker Pearson, Robert Van Der Noort and Alex Woolf, "Three men and a boat: Sutton Hoo and the East Saxon Kingdom," *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993): 27 – 50; Andres Siegfried Dobat, "The king and his cult: the axe-hammer from Sutton Hoo and its implications for the concept of sacral

early English burials, but also provides context for the Kingdom of East Anglia, which is not well-represented in the source material. However, the burial is also highly exceptional. While richly furnished burials have been found elsewhere, like the Taplow Barrow, Buckinghamshire, the Snape Cemetery, Suffolk and the Prittlewell Burial, Essex (which will be discussed below) none have the same level of richness nor have they been as extensively studied and published on.[210] Thus, Sutton Hoo should not be regarded as a baseline of early medieval Anglian furnished burials. Nevertheless, due to its exceptionality, it can inform us of the interrelationship between expressions of kingship within the landscape and how it served as a complex marker of status, power, and belief in a period of religious conversion.

The majority of the publications, as previously stated, have focused largely on the burial in Mound 1, which was one of two ship burials found at the site. It is necessary to examine the site as a palimpsest as it was continuously reused throughout the early medieval period and that the ideological ramifications of power do not begin and end with the ship-burials. It is not possible within the confines of this thesis to summarise the entirety of the finds from Sutton Hoo, and the breadth of publications on the finds have extensively situated the material culture. Thus, with reference to the excavations, we will discuss the burial rites and certain significant finds such as regalia, as well as situating the burials within the landscape and their historical context.

In total, there are fifty three burials, but only sixteen of these that make up what Carver describes as the "princely burial ground".[211] These are the cremations and furnished burials, which include two ship burials, six cremations, two inhumations, and one horse burial. There are other burials at the site which do not have an identifiable mound, but perhaps once were covered that include three inhumations and two cremations. There are also two groups of inhumations of

leadership in early medieval Europe," *Antiquity* 80 (2006): 880 – 893; Howard Williams, "The sense of being seen: Ocular effects at Sutton Hoo," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11:1 (2011): 99 – 121; Jason Urbanus, "The Ongoing Tale of Sutton Hoo," *Archaeology* 67:6 (2014): 48 – 51; Georgina Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Fresh Insights from Assemblage Theory," *Parergon* 36:1 (2019): 1 – 29.

[210] Joseph Stevens, "On the Remains Found in an Anglo-Saxon Tumulus at Taplow, Bucks.," *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 40 (1884): 61 – 71; William Filmer-Sankey, "Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery – the Current State of Knowledge" in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 39 – 51; Lyn Blackmore, Ian Blair, Sue Hirst & Christopher Scull, *The Prittlewell Princely Burial: excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003* (London, 2019); For brief overviews of these burials, see Helen Geake, "The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England, c. 600 – c. 850 A.D.," Unpublished PhD thesis, vol. 2 (University of York, 1995), pp. 492, 506, 573 – 574.

[211] Martin Carver and Christopher Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, p. 283.

executed individuals, as well as a displaced skull that was perhaps from a mound that was unexcavated but robbed.[212] It is an extensive site, and while most of the mounds were robbed in the seventeenth (and some robbed again in the nineteenth century), the ship-burial in Mound 1 luckily survived attempted looting.[213] Most of the other mounds were heavily disturbed by looting and thus excavators have attempted to reconstruct the burials and have attempted to survey the extent of the damage.[214] For example, for several of the cremation burials, they have not survived intact although the evidence of cremation remains from the burnt human bones.[215]

Carver and Christopher Fern has established a tentative chronological scheme of the early medieval history of the site, which they note is particularly difficult because of the damage of the looting, difficulty with clearly defined stratigraphic sequences, and the deterioration of the remains and wood used in for the burial chamber structures.[216] Thus, relying on comparative evidence from the grave goods, similar burial rites elsewhere in England and Scandinavia, and radiocarbon evidence, the approximate chronological scheme will be summarized.

The earliest burials were likely the cremation burials, dating to approximately the late sixth or early seventh century.[217] However, there is no singular cremation rite that was used at Sutton Hoo.[218] The cremated remains of Burial 13 were not contained in an urn unlike the cremation of Burial 14 which were contained in a simple pot.[219] Carver and Fern suggest that these cremations were perhaps those in servitude to those in a mound burial given its close association with Burial 56 which may have been under a mound, as well as considering that Burial 13 was shallowly buried and subsequently disturbed through ploughing while Burial 14's associated pot was poorly made.[220] The cremated remains were also accompanied with the cremated remains of a horse and a throwing

[212] Carver, "The exploration of Sutton Hoo," p. 11. Carver has a comprehensive chart of all burials and their associated finds.
[213] Carver, "The exploration of Sutton Hoo," p. 11
[214] For a survey of the cremation burials and their excavations, interpretations, and extent of the damage, see Carver, "Cremation burials: Mounds 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 18, and Burials 13 and 14," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 67 – 106; for the furnished burials, see Carver, "Furnished Inhumations: Mound 14 and 17, and Burials 12, 15, 16 and 56," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 107 – 151 for the furnished burials; for the two ship-burials see Carver, "Ship-Burials: Mound 2, with a reconsideration of Mound 1," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 153 – 199.
[215] Carver, "Cremation burials," pp. 105 – 106.
[216] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 283.
[217] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 284 – 289, 308.
[218] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 284 – 289, 307, 310, 312 – 313.
[219] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 284 – 283.
[220] Carver, "Cremation burials," p. 105; Carver, "Furnished inhumations," p. 137.

axe, which may indicate that these were the cremated remains of a warrior.[221] The cremations in Mounds 4, 5, 6, 7, and 18 were possibly contained within bronze bowls, and while the cremations themselves are not intact, the survival of the cremated bone along with fragments of copper-alloy bowls with adhered textile pieces suggest that the remains were placed in bronze bowls, which were then covered with cloth and buried.[222] They all represented single individuals except for Mound 4, which contained the cremated remains of a man and woman.[223] Later execution burials were located in quarry pits around Mound 5, dating from about the eighth to the eleventh centuries.[224] Mound 18 is the sparsest of these burials as it was disturbed heavily through robbing and ploughing, with only the fragments of bone, the copper-alloy bowl, and a bone comb.[225] The cremation in Mound 3 seems to have been placed on a wooden tray, but there is a possibility this is a fragment of a boat, and the remains may have been inside an urn, as there were sherds from a decorated pottery urn.[226] These cremations all had associated animal bones and small grave goods like gaming pieces, combs, pins, and possibly weapons and implements.[227]

The presence of animal bones belonging to a range of animals, namely sheep/goats, pigs, dogs, red deer, cattle, and horses within the cremated remains suggests that these cremations were high-status.[228] Cremations of large valuable animals like cattle and horses would have required larger or more pyres and more fuel, which in turn would create a larger spectacle; this use of both animal and natural resources speaks to the wealth and effort involved in these burials.[229] There does not seem to be evidence of animal butchery with the exception of knife marks on some pig bones in Mound 7, and the osteological analysis suggests that the full body of these animals were cremated.[230] Julie L. Bond and Fay L. Worley have noted that horse remains in cremation are often

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[221] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 288.
[222] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 285
[223] Carver, "Cremation burials," p. 71. The remains in Mound 4 were excluded from the osteological analysis in Angela Evans et al., "Seventh-century assemblages," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 201 – 282, as they were analysed previously by N.-G. Gejvall, "Appendix B: Identification of cremated bone fragments from Sutton Hoo (1938) Mounds 3 and 4," in *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 1.*, pp. 136 – 136.
[224] Carver, "Execution burials of the eighth to eleventh centuries," in *Sutton Hoo: A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 334 – 349.
[225] Carver, "Cremation burials," pp. 101 – 104.
[226] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 287.
[227] Carver, "Cremation burials," pp. 71, 75, 91, 100, 104; for a comprehensive catalogue of the finds with some illustrations, see Evans et al., "Seventh-century assemblages," pp. 204 – 210.
[228] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 287 – 288, 289.
[229] Evans et al., "Seventh Century Assemblages," p. 279.
[230] Evans et al., "Seventh Century Assemblages," p. 279.

equated to horse burials in inhumation, which are often assumed to be "warrior burials", but horse cremations are present with both male and female burials.[231] They also point to infant and juvenile cremations with horses, suggesting then that horse cremations were linked to status and wealth.[232] Thus, when we account for the amount of resources required for a cremation that would also include animals and the subsequent interment within a mound suggests that these cremations were of high-status individuals.

The next burials in the tentative chronological scheme are three inhumations: the horse burial within Mound 17, and the ship-burials in Mound 1 and 2.[233] Mound 17 contains the burial of a man in a pit offset from the centre of the mound while (presumably) his horse was buried in a separate pit opposite on the other side of the mound to the north.[234] It is one of the few mounds that escaped looting, as the robber pit was dug directly in the centre of the mound and the nature of the locations of the burials in the mound thus prevented discovery.[235] The burial has been dated, based on the typological ranges of the grave goods (namely the horse bridle, discussed below) and radiocarbon dating to circa 600.[236] The man, whose remains were well-preserved relative to the rest of the Sutton Hoo burials, was buried in a coffin with iron clasps, and was accompanied by several grave goods: a wooden tub, a bronze bowl, animal remains and vegetation within a (possible) sack, a cauldron and a small pot within it, a comb, a harness and bridle, two spearheads, a sword, a shield, and a leather pouch containing a buckle, several garnets, and glass, plus several other items.[237] The horse was buried unaccompanied and was in relatively good condition.[238] According to Evans, the grave-goods stand apart as they do not include gaming pieces or drinking vessels, but the decoration on the bridle and the garnet cloisonné on the scabbard and sword belt suggest this individual was

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[231] Julie M. Bond and Fay L. Worley, "Companions in Death: The Roles of Animals in Anglo-Saxon and Viking Cremation Rituals in Britain," in Rebecca Gowland and Christopher Knüsel (eds), *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 93 – 94; For an earlier discussion, see J. M. Bond, "Burnt Offerings: Animal Bone in Anglo-Saxon Cremations," *World Archaeology* 28:1 (1996): 76 – 88, here 83 – 84.
[232] Bond and Worley, "Companions in Death," p. 94.
[233] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 308.
[234] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 298.
[235] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 116 – 118.
[236] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 301, 308. The radiocarbon dates are a range of 596 – 660 AD, but due to the grave goods being from the late sixth to early seventh century, an early seventh century date is more likely.
[237] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 128 – 135; Evans et al., "Seventh-century assemblages," pp. 243 – 249.
[238] Carver, "Furnished inhumations, p. 135.

a high-status warrior.[239] As stated above, horse burials have been interpreted as a specific male burial rite and these men are seen as warriors.[240] Contextually, there are few of these types of burials in England, but records of remains of horses and riding equipment has been found in burials across the country, but there are only six that include human remains, a horse, and the harness and weapons including Mound 17.[241] These burials have been deemed high-status, not only because of the burial rites but considering the grave goods and being buried under a mound in particular.[242] Whether or not this burial signals a "princely" burial is unclear. The wealth of the grave goods does not match the extent of those in Mound 1 but are still considered high-status, and as it will be discussed the wealth contained in Mound 1 is not necessarily the base-line for royal burials.

The Mound 1 and Mound 2 burials, especially the former, are the most famous and defining burials of Sutton Hoo. As stated above, Mound 1 has received the most attention, which is understandable because of the survival of the material artefacts and the remains of the ship located within. In addition, the mound was not looted, although there was an attempt but the pit dug by the robbers missed the chamber.[243] The burial has been radiocarbon dated to the seventh century.[244] The burial in Mound 1 involved the burial of a 27 metre long ship in a trench with a chamber built over the middle, with the remains of a man in the centre-west part of the chamber laying west-east.[245] The planks of the ship have not survived but the lines were still visible by the rivets and the darkened sand that preserved the lines of the wooden body of the ship.[246] The remains of the chamber were rotting planks of wood and iron that had collapsed over the centre of the ship.[247]

Initially, no remains were located within the burial as the body had decayed entirely and thus there was an initial belief that this mound was a cenotaph (empty burial).[248] Hayo Vierck has

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[239] Evans et al., "Seventh Century Assemblages," pp. 202, 215, see pp. 216 – 229, 232 – 233, 237, 239, for illustrations of the artefacts and the colour plates at pp. xxxviii – xxxix for photos of some of the garnet cloisonné, gold, and harness and bridle.
[240] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 299 – 300.
[241] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 299 – 300.
[242] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 300
[243] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 177.
[244] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 308.
[245] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 177, 182
[246] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 181.
[247] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 183.
[248] Bruce-Mitford, "The Cenotaph Problem," in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Volume 1*, pp. 488 – 493.

argued that cremated human remains were placed upon the Byzantine silver dish, but the nature of the possible remains have not been determined to be human or animal.[249] If this were the case, then it would be a very high-status burial, but as Carver notes, the presence of the other remains found within Mound 1 may detract from this hypothesis.[250] There was a suggestion after Phillips' excavations, when they had failed to uncover human remains, that this was a cenotaph (empty burial).[251] That has since been revised, as there was phosphate analysis that suggested a body had decayed in the acidic soils beyond any survival, and in addition the placement of the "personal adornments" suggested they were placed on a body.[252] This was further strengthened by Carver's excavations that demonstrated the extreme decay of the human remains in the other mounds where the bodies had essentially turned to sand, sometimes with bones still within the "sand body jacket."[253] These sandy remains were tested for chemical signatures against the sand in Mound 2 (discussed further below) where there were levels of minerals that suggested human remains.[254] They also did an experiment over several years to see how quickly organic matter and metal objects would decay, and concluded that it would take seven years for a body to turn to sand, with still some rigid bone, and thus within the acidic soil of the site it was determined that bodies decayed very quickly.[255] Bruce-Mitford and his team notes that the conditions of the grave itself also impact the survivability of remains as evidently several graves at Sutton Hoo still preserved bone and state that it was likely the burial was waterlogged and this contributed to the total decay through "maximum chemical and micro-organic attack."[256] Combined with the phosphate analysis undertaken by Bruce-Mitford's team which uncovered high phosphate levels in the supposed "body-space", especially upon the sword which would have been laid near the body indicate this was most likely not a cenotaph.[257]

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[249] Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: A Handbook*, pp. 34 – 35; Hayo Vierck, "Redwalds Asche," *Offa* 29 (1972): 20 – 49; Bruce-Mitford, "The Cenotaph Problem," in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 1*, pp. 522 – 528, 542; Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 284, 287.
[250] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 287.
[251] Bruce-Mitford, "The Cenotaph Problem," pp. 488 – 493.
[252] P.V. Hill, "The Treasure Trove Inquest," in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: Volume 1*, p. 723. This was the opinion of one of the excavators, Stuart Piggott to the coroner.
[253] Carver, "Fieldwork and analysis (1986 – 2001): Conditions, techniques, and results of excavation," in Carver, *A seventh-century princely burial ground*," pp. 47 – 48.
[254] Carver, "Fieldwork and analysis," pp. 49 – 51.
[255] Carver, "Fieldwork and analysis," pp. 51 – 53.
[256] Bruce-Mitford, "The Cenotaph Problem," pp. 507 – 508.
[257] Bruce-Mitford, "The Cenotaph Problem," pp. 529 – 543.

A shield, iron stand, a stone "sceptre" (at times referred to as a whetstone) with a bronze stag top, and multiple bowls and buckets were on the west end, cauldrons and other feasting equipment were laid on the opposite east end, and personal adornments and items were in the centre.[258] The personal adornments are especially significant: a finely-made helmet with decorative interlace and designs depicting warriors, a gold buckle, gold and garnet shoulder-clasps, a purse with a gold frame and gold and garnet decoration, a baldric with gold and garnet connectors, an otter fur cap, leather garments with silver and gold, leather shoes, a mail-coat, and cloaks made of fine cloth.[259] These alone suggests a very high status individual, and combined with the large number of weapons, such as several spears and angons (a type of javelin), a sword, knives, and an axe-hammer, along with the variety and richness of the feasting equipment and other items, it is clear this was a person of elevated rank and status.[260] Several scholars have focussed on individual items as evidence for kingship. Interpretations of these items is highly subjective and speculative, such as Enright's thesis that the sceptre was made within a "Celtic" cultural milieu rather than an Anglian one.[261] Andres Dobat argues that the axe-hammer uncovered in the burial is a symbol of "traditional pagan leadership" based on the theory it was used for animal sacrifice.[262] Other scholars have focussed on the personal adornments and helmet, highlighting that these objects indicate that this was a high-status individual with cultural ties to Scandinavia, the Continent, and Byzantium.[263] These objects have been used to interpret how the individual interred in Mound 1 was making an

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[258] For a description and list of the grave-goods, see Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 177, 186 – 187; for the initial outline of the burial with the grave goods in situ, see Phillips, "Sutton Hoo ship-burial," pl. 37; for updating drawings of the chamber and the stratigraphy of the finds, see Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 182, 188, 195 – 196.
[259] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 186 – 187, 189 – 191.
[260] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 186 – 187.
[261] Michael J. Enright, "The Sutton Hoo whetstone sceptre: a study in iconography and cultural milieu," *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983): 119 – 134. Enright expanded on his 1983 article in a more recent monograph. See Michael J. Enright, *The Sutton Hoo Sceptre and the Roots of Celtic Kingship Theory* (Dublin, 2006); For responses to his theories, see Nicholas Higham, "Review of *The Sutton Hoo Sceptre and the Roots of Celtic Kingship Theory* by Michael J. Enright," *American History Review* 112:2 (2007): 565 – 566; Alex Woolf, "Review of *The Sutton Hoo Sceptre and the Roots of Celtic Kingship Theory* by Michael J. Enright," *English Historical Review* 123:505 (2008): 1508 – 1510; for an earlier discussion of the sceptre, see Sidney L. Cohen, "The Sutton Hoo Whetstone," *Speculum* 41:3 (1966): 466 – 470.
[262] Dobat, "The axe-hammer from Sutton Hoo," 887 – 890.
[263] Bruce-Mitford, "The Sutton Hoo Helmet," 120 – 130; Carola Hicks, "The birds on the Sutton Hoo purse," *Anglo-Saxon England* 15 (1986): 153 – 165; Noël Adams, "Rethinking the Sutton Hoo Shoulder Clasps and Armour," in Chris Entwhistle and Noël Adams (eds), *'Intelligible Beauty': Recent Research on Byzantine Jewellery* (London, 2010), pp. 83 – 112; Neil Price and Paul Mortimer, "An Eye for Odin? Divine Role-Playing in the Age of Sutton Hoo," *European Journal of Archaeology* 17:3 (2014): 517 – 538; there have been other discussions of specific objects in the burial, like the silver spoons with the engravings "Paul" and "Saul". See R. E. Kaske, "The Silver Spoons of Sutton Hoo," *Speculum* 42:4 (1967): 670 – 672; D.A. Sherlock, "Saul, Paul and the Silver Spoons from Sutton Hoo," *Speculum* 47:1 (1972): 91 – 95.

ideological statement, such as Neil Price and Paul Mortimer's argument that the Sutton Hoo helmet was representative of a war-leader's relationship with Odin.[264] The ideological elements of the helmet's construction cannot be definitively tied to Odin/Woden because the iconography of the helmet is based upon later interpretations of the deity.[265] As discussed in the inauguration chapter, the helmet was possibly a piece of royal headgear but the evidence of the use of helms as royal objects remains tenuous. Moreover, any interpretation of the helmet from a specifically religious "pagan" perspective depends entirely on textual evidence that is not found in contemporary texts. In contrast, William Filmer-Sankey has argued that the entirety of the burial goods were meant to depict the individual as a "Roman Emperor", which is based on the Byzantine/Byzantine-inspired objects.[266] These perspectives tend to reduce objects to singular and static portrayals of ethnic identity and status and do not consider the variable nature of elite identities during a period of religious conversion.

As stated above, *Beowulf* contains certain parallels in the Scyld Scefing burial episode: the burial of a king in a ship with weapons, armour, and other riches. Beowulf's own burial in a mound with gold conjures the same comparison. Much of the discussion about *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo has revolved around the problems of dating *Beowulf* on the basis of archaeology: descriptions of "pagan" burial rites that are similar to Sutton Hoo then are used to indicate an early date for Beowulf because it must have been contemporary with furnished inhumations and ship burials.[267] As for the impact that *Beowulf* has had on the Mound 1 ship-burial is that it has influenced scholarly perceptions of the burial as "pagan" and "Scandinavian" in character and distinctly royal, while in reality the material cultures of Sutton Hoo Mound 1 are much more broad and speak to wide connections across the early medieval world.[268] *Beowulf* contains descriptions of royal burials that are remarkably similar and thus provide textual evidence for these types of secular burials. However, it provides little else for our study: the poem is not set in England nor does it describe the

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[264] Price and Mortimer, "Divine Role-Playing in the Age of Sutton Hoo," 533.
[265] Price and Mortimer, "Divine Role-Playing in the Age of Sutton Hoo," 532 – 534.
[266] William Filmer-Sankey, "The 'Roman Emperor' in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 149 (1996): 1 – 9.
[267] Roberta Frank, "*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple," in Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells (eds), *Voyage to the Other World* (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 47 – 67, here 52 – 54.
[268] Frank, "*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo," pp. 56 – 58.

burials of legendary ancestors of English kings (although the poem does reference legendary kings like Offa of Angeln, as discussed in the genealogy chapter above).[269]

Speaking on late Antique burials in Gaul, Frans Theuws and Monica Alkemade have noted that the traditional approach of assigning grave goods simple indicators of wealth and status obscures the dynamic nature of graves and grave goods, and state that we cannot simply look at these items as passive objects:

> "…they had a metaphorical significance which was essential to the proper fulfilment of the ritual [of burial], and which can be outlined as follows. The objects used in rituals and events connected with the display of martial values, feasting, and body-display were an intrinsic part of the position a person inhabited in his/her network, at a specific point in time and place. Therefore, these objects were not reflections, but rather constituents of his/her being. They were the valorized parts of the different stages in life during which the person developed him/herself as a full member of society."[270]

Grave-goods and the burial rite are not static representations of singular identity of individuals but rather occupy a dynamic space in society that is relational to a person's life and the varying interplay of status and identity, and that they do not necessarily mean the same thing to each person. The items are used to "confirm" the royal nature of the burial, but much of these interpretations rely on interpretations of similar objects in different cultural contexts. That is not to say that the whetstone sceptre or the helmet were not ideological statements on sacral rulership, but caution is important for interpretations that rely on ideologies from other societies.

In addition, while comparing the grave-goods with similar objects found in Scandinavia, the Continent, and Byzantium can be useful for understanding the wider context and trade connections between early medieval elites, this can present an interpretive issue where the burial is seen as replicating or copying motifs from elsewhere. This removes these objects from the East Anglian context they were found in by reducing the grave and the individual as aping "Scandinavian",

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[269] See section 2.7 above.

[270] Frans Theuws and Monica Alkemade, "A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword Depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul," in Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (eds), *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 401 – 476, here p. 416.

"Celtic", or "Roman" rulership motifs. While it is important to highlight how rulers did reuse and reinterpret kingship models and motifs, it is also necessary to situate them within their immediate cultural and political context. Moreover, we must examine the burial as a whole in order to understand how the construction of a ship-burial in the early seventh century in East Anglia can have a range of politico-cultural meanings.[271] This is not to say that this burial does not contain the remains of a king, but it is important to review the evidence and arguments without preconceived ideas regarding the "royal" nature of the stone sceptre or the *romanitas* of including Byzantine objects as grave goods, which will be discussed below.

Mound 2 is very similar to Mound 1; it was also a ship-burial although it differed in construction. The reconstruction of the mound was completed during the third series of excavations in the 1980s and 1990s, and it was discovered that a central burial chamber was constructed in a pit, within which the remains were interred with grave-goods.[272] A ship was placed over top of the chamber with the evidence for this being the existence of a support beam over the chamber, the possible profile of the keel, and the ship-rivets that appeared to not be in situ as they were not aligned with a ship form.[273] A mound was then constructed over the ship, which eventually forced the vessel to collapse into the chamber below.[274] Carver notes a comparable example of a ship-burial in this fashion from the tenth-century in the Viking port Hedeby, Germany and while there are a few hundred years between the two burials the parallel lends more credibility to this burial rite.[275] The mound was robbed in the sixteenth century, and the looters removed most of the grave-goods, although a few have remained.[276] Those that survive do tell us a lot about the mound and its relationship to Mound 1. Surviving finds include the tip of a sword blade, a possible fragment of a scramasax (a long knife) silver gilt foil from a drinking horn, and a silver gilt bird-head terminal, a silver buckle and other silver items, some fragments of a shield, evidence of tubs, cauldrons, bowls, knives, and evidence of blue glass jars suggest this was a high-status burial.[277] The sword blade is made in the same pattern as the sword in Mound 1, the shield may also be of similar style to that in Mound 1, and the silver-gilt foil from the drinking horn was made from the same die as those in

[271] Carver, "The Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality," pp. 2 – 5.
[272] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 153 – 164.
[273] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 166 – 169.
[274] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 169.
[275] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 169.
[276] Carver, "Ship-burials," pp. 153, 160.
[277] Evans et al., "Seventh Century Assemblages," pp. 256 – 258.

Mound 1, which all point to strong links with Mound 1.[278] As for the human remains, they had completely disappeared like those in Mound 1, but the chemical analysis of the soil reflect the presence of human remains.[279] The lack of surviving grave-goods presents interpretive problems when comparing it to Mound 1, but it is clear these two burials were closely linked and perhaps were of individuals related to one another.

The other five inhumations at Sutton Hoo, burials 12, 15, 16, Mound 14, and burial 56 have all been tentatively dated to the mid-to-late-seventh century.[280] This series contains the only child burial at the site: burial 12 contained the remains of a (likely) male child who was buried in a coffin, and found with a small buckle, a pin, and a spear and whose inhumation was covered with a small mound.[281] Burial 15 contained the remains of a young adult placed on what may have been a piece of boat, with a leather belt and bronze buckle, with a knife, and there was no evidence of a mound.[282] Burial 16 was possibly the remains of a young woman, who was interred with a pin, a glass bead, a leather bag, a knife, and a châtelaine and may have been a bed burial but this is inconclusive.[283] Mound 14 likely contained the burial of a woman, who may have been buried on a bed within a chamber, whose grave-goods suggest a high-status person: a châtelaine with several items made of or containing silver: a silver-framed pouch, dress fittings, a drinking vessel, a bowl, and embroidered textiles.[284] This mound was robbed, but with what goods survive this indicates this woman was of high-status.[285] Burial 56, mentioned above is the burial of a skull in a pit, alongside bronze fragments and a bead, and was radiocarbon dated to the seventh to ninth centuries.[286] The interpretation of this burial is difficult because there are no other remains, and thus there are two theories. It may have been an execution burial as the radiocarbon dating aligns with the earlier execution burials at Sutton Hoo, or it may have been an inhumation mound burial that was robbed.[287] These later burials suggest that the site was still used for high-status burial after

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[278] Evans et al., "Seventh Century Assemblages," p. 256.
[279] Carver, "Ship-burials," p. 166.
[280] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 308.
[281] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 140.
[282] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 140 – 143.
[283] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," p. 143.
[284] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," p. 107.
[285] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 113 – 114.
[286] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," p. 114.
[287] Carver, "Furnished inhumations," pp. 144 – 145.

the ship-burials, but high-status burials cease after the seventh century when the site becomes a site for execution burials.[288]

Due to the particular richness of Mound 1, scholars have speculated on the identity of the individual buried in Mound 1 soon after the initial excavations. H.M. Chadwick initially suggested that this was King Rædwald of East Anglia, although it is worth stating that Chadwick did not assume it was the burial of a king on the basis of the burial itself (but he did state it was royal).[289] This theory was repeated by Bruce-Mitford, who built upon Chadwick's argument.[290] It is important to acknowledge that Bede provides the earliest evidence for Rædwald and his report on his character has clearly influenced scholarly interpretations of the Mound 1 ship-burial. His argument was largely based on Bede's identification of the Deben estuary as under East Anglian control and that the East Anglian royal residence was at Rendlesham, four miles north of the barrows, and the dating of the Merovingian coins found in the grave and thus the most likely candidate is Rædwald.[291] Another element of the links between Sutton Hoo and Rædwaldd is based on his alleged apostasy, as told by Bede:

> "Et quidam pater eius Reduald iamdudum in Cantia sacramentis Christianae fidei inbutus est, sed frustra; nam rediens domum ab uxore sua et quibusdam peruersis doctoribus seductus est, atque a sinceritate fidei deprauatus habuit posteriora peiora prioribus; ita ut in morem antiqorum Samaritanorum et Christo seruire uideretur et diis, quibus antea seruibat; atque in eodem fano et altare haberet ad sacrificium Christi, et arulam ad uictimas daemoniorum. Quod uidelicet fanum rex eiusdem prouinciae Alduulf, qui nostra aetate fuit, usque ad suum tempus perdurasse, et se in pueritia uidisse testabatur."

[288] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 307.
[289] H.M. Chadwick, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial VIII: Who Was He?" *Antiquity* 14:53 (1940): 76 – 87.
[290] Bruce-Mitford, "Who Was He?" in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Volume 1*, pp. 683 – 717.
[291] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.22 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 174; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 180); Chadwick, "Who Was He?" 77 – 78, 82 – 85, 87; for a discussion of the archaeological work done at Rendlesham that indicated a large elite settlement, see Christopher Scull, Faye Minter, & Judith Plouviez, "Social and economic complexity in early medieval England: a central place complex of the East Anglian kingdom at Rendlesham, Suffolk," *Antiquity* 90:354 (2016): 1594 – 1612.

> "…R[æ]dwald had in fact long before this received Christian baptism in Kent, but to no good purpose; for on his return home his wife and certain perverse advisers persuaded him to apostatize from the true Faith. So his last state was worse than the first: for, like the ancient Samaritans, he tried to serve both Christ and the ancient gods, and he had in the same shrine an altar for the holy Sacrifice of Christ side by side with a small altar in which victims were offered to devils. Aldwulf, king of that province, who lived into our own times, testifies that this shrine was still standing in his day and that he had seen it when a boy."[292]

This references Rædwald's earlier conversion to Christianity and apostasy and thus his "paganism" informs the interpretation of the ship-burial as a non-Christian burial. Combined with Bede's comment that Rædwald held *imperium* over the lands south of the Humber, the assumption that the richness of the grave could only be that of a powerful non-Christian East Anglian king in the early seventh century naturally has led to associating it with Rædwald.[293] As Pitt has noted, East Anglia was a powerful kingdom until circa 625 with the death of Rædwald, whom Bede describes as holding *imperium* over the lands south of the Humber.[294] Is it possible that it was another East Anglian king? We have already discussed the East Anglian kings in the genealogies and Bede above, but we know there was a power struggle after Rædwald's death.[295] The two kings who followed Rædwald, Eorpwald and his (possibly half) brother Sigbert may also be candidates for Sutton Hoo.[296] It may have also been Eorpwald's slayer Ricbert, and while Bede is unclear if Ricbert was king, he states that East Anglia reverted to paganism for three years until Sigbert became king.[297] It would have been a strong display of power to bury oneself in Sutton Hoo as a usurper as a method of declaring legitimacy through a display of wealth and power in that manner.

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[292] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).

[293] For the passage on the kings who held *imperium* or overkingship in early medieval England, see Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 89; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 111).

[294] Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," 7 – 8.

[295] See section 2.8 above. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, pp. 115 – 116; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 132 – 133).

[296] See section 2.8 above.

[297] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.15 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 116; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 133).

Bruce-Mitford was confident that this burial was royal because of the richness of the grave-goods and that this burial surpassed that of the known royal burial of the Frankish king Childeric I (d. 481/2), and that the presence of the sceptre must indicate this is a royal burial.[298] The theory that this was Rædwald's grave has been an enduring one, although it has been challenged.[299] The specific date of the Merovingian coins found within the burial cast difficulties on the dating of Mound 1 as well as uncertainty about the borders of East Anglia, with the suggestion that perhaps the burial could be assigned to the Kingdom of the East Saxons.[300] The problems with the coinage relate to their dating to either the 620s (and Rædwald died circa 625) or the 610s.[301] An earlier mint date for the coins only opens up the possibility that the burial may be earlier rather than ruling out that it was in the 620s or even slightly later as some of the coins were minted as early as the 570s and were not necessarily considered currency but rather treasure.[302] There is also the possibility that Sutton Hoo lay in on a territorial periphery between East Anglia and Essex and possibly was under the control of Essex at the time.[303] Carver notes that in the seventh century, material culture becomes less tied to locality but burial rites under mounds aligns more with practice in East Anglia than elsewhere in Essex.[304] Ultimately Parker Pearson et al. argue that Sutton Hoo housed the remains of a Christian East Saxon king buried by "pagan" descendants, and have suggested it was possibly King Sæberht of Essex.[305] Georgina Pitt rejects religious interpretations of the burial and instead argues that this was a display of personal power within East Anglian politics, *contra* Carver who has maintained that Sutton Hoo was a deliberate challenge to the Christianising influence of Francia.[306]

Unfortunately, we will never definitively answer these questions, but it is worth pointing out that the burial may represent several layers of politico-religious expression that cannot simply be reduced to one or the other. Carver explains that ship-burials are not a traditional burial form in

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[298] Bruce-Mitford, "Who Was He?" pp. 685 – 687, 688 – 690
[299] Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," 7 – 10.
[300] For a brief summary of the debate, see James Campbell, "The Impact of the Sutton Hoo Discovery on the Study of Anglo-Saxon History," in *Voyage to the Other World*, pp. 79 – 102, here pp. 80 – 85; Parker Pearson et al., "Three men and a boat," 27 – 50.
[301] Parker Pearson et al., "Three men and a boat," 28 – 31.
[302] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 9, 11
[303] Parker Pearson et al., "Three men and a boat," 39 – 41.
[304] Carver, "Sutton Hoo in Context," in Carver, *A seventh-century princely burial ground*, pp. 497 – 499.
[305] Parker Pearson et al., "The men and a boat," 45 – 50.
[306] Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," 2 – 7, 29; Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," pp. 312 – 313.

early medieval England but are a newer burial rite, and thus no matter the reasoning behind the power dynamics it displays, it is not one of maintaining a "pagan" burial rite.[307] Thus, we must look at Sutton Hoo from the perspective as an elite burial ground during a period when there would have been a conscious need to display one's power and wealth. It was a grandiose display of power and this is an important aspect to consider when determining if this was in fact a royal burial. Moreover, it is not necessarily important to attempt to link the burial with one specific person however tempting it may be. With that being said, I agree with Carver and Pitt that we must consider this burial within the context of early seventh century East Anglia.

The implications of the burials here have garnered several interpretations regarding the religious affiliation of the individuals. Sutton Hoo is frequently interpreted within a religious framework as being either "pagan" or Christian.[308] This has been highlighted by the silver spoons found within the burial with the inscribed names "PAVLOS" and "SAVLOS" referring to St Paul, and there was a suggestion by D.A. Sherlock that these were eucharistic or baptismal spoons.[309] Parker Pearson et al. have argued that these were a reference to St Paul's in London and belonged to King Sæberht of the East Saxons and thus evidence for the Christian identity of the interred individual.[310] While there may be evidence for baptismal spoons in early medieval Europe, the assumption that these had ties to a specific church is tenuous as all they demonstrate is that they were constructed with the legend of St Paul in mind. They may well have been gifts, seen as valuable treasure. We must also remember that their placement next to where the individual's head lay may indicate they held personal significance to them but we must also remember that a dead person does not necessarily have agency over how they are buried and what they are buried with. The mourners made a deliberate choice to lay the goods in the positions they did and their closeness to the remains may not reflect the dead individual's personal connection to them.[311] Using grave-goods to

[307] Carver and Fern, "The seventh-century burial rites and their sequence," p. 312.
[308] Chadwick, "Who Was He?" 84 – 87; Bruce-Mitford, "Who Was He?" pp. 712 – 717; Parker Pearson et al., "The men and a boat," 47 – 50; Carver, "Sutton Hoo in context," pp. 502 – 503; Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," 2.
[309] Kaske, "The Silver Spoons of Sutton Hoo," 670 – 672; Sherlock, "Saul, Paul, and the Silver Spoons from Sutton Hoo,"
[310] Parker Pearson et al., "Three men and a boat," 48 – 49.
[311] Sam Lucy, "Burial Practices in Early Medieval Eastern Britain: Constructing Local Identities, Deconstructing Ethnicity," in Lucy and Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, pp. 76 – 77.

interpret religious affiliation is highly problematic for this reason.[312] Attempting to determine the religious affiliation of the buried person or the mourners is ultimately unhelpful with burials like Sutton Hoo. What is important is that "secular" burials like Sutton Hoo reflect a world with different and competing layers of identities during a time of religious conversion. These burials should not be viewed as simple dichotomies reflecting these identities but rather that individuals can hold conflicting identities over time, and this may be seen within a burial that is then combined with choices from mourners.

The suggestion from Parker Pearson et al. that Sutton Hoo was in a peripheral area presents a comparative framework with Collierstown 1 and Knowth. This was a burial close to a royal settlement but near a natural river boundary that would have also been a trade route into East Anglia and was visible from the river.[313] Another potential area of comparison is the possibility this was a dynastic burial ground. While Sutton Hoo was not in use for very long, this may have represented not only an isolated elite burial site but one that was reserved for members of a specific family, not dissimilar to boundary *fertae*. It is also possible that the people buried at Sutton Hoo were not related but there was a deliberate attempt to associate themselves with this particular burial space. We can also see a marked difference in how elite burials were created in early medieval Ireland versus early medieval England. In Ireland, location and proximity to ancestors was a paramount consideration, with repeated visits to sites for feasting. Although the remains in Collierstown 1 and Knowth were not interred with feasting equipment like that in the Mound 1 burial, there is a clear association between status and feasting. Including feasting equipment with individuals may suggest a ritualised act of feasting with the dead or feasting in the afterlife, a comparison made earlier with the Roman rite of Parentalia. These locations were peripheral to royal settlements and locations but were places of ritualised activity where mourners maintained an active relationship with the dead and the burial spaces. Even if grave-goods were sparse (as is the case with the Irish burials), non-ecclesiastical burials had a relationship with areas that were both peripheral and visible, located along natural boundaries like rivers and/or sited near or on top of prehistoric monuments. The Sutton Hoo burials represent an elite burial ground where the representations of power were evident within the burial rites, the display of rich grave-goods, and

[312] D.M. Hadley, "Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw, c. 650 – 1100," *Northern History* 36:2 (2000): 199 – 216, here 210; David Petts, *Pagan and Christian: Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 2011), pp. 99 – 105.
[313] Pitt, "The Enigmatic Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial," 15 – 16.

the prominent location near a large river. We will see from the Prittlewell Princely Burial that while elite (and possibly royal) burials do share many similarities, there was evidently a wide range of elite burial practices in early medieval England.

4.9 Prittlewell Princely Burial

The Prittlewell princely burial presents a unique comparative perspective for Sutton Hoo, as it is a recently excavated "royal" burial from Essex and thus is geographically close to Sutton Hoo while also presenting opportunities to examine differences between burial rites among neighbouring early medieval English kingdoms roughly in the same period (late-sixth to early-seventh centuries). Moreover, the Prittlewell burial offers another perspective in the difficulties with assigning discrete identities based on grave-goods while also providing a wider view on "royal" burials in early medieval England.

As this site was only recently excavated, there are only a few publications, but a thorough survey of the burial and the grave goods found within, as well as the historical context and discussion of the site was published in 2019.[314] The excavation was undertaken in 2003 by the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), although other burials were known in the Prittlewell area from 1923 when roadworks were undertaken in the area, with more burials uncovered in 1930 and 1931.[315] The Prittlewell Princely Burial was uncovered when new roadworks were being built, but archaeological evaluations were necessary ahead of time due to the known remains that had already been uncovered.[316] The remains uncovered in the 1930s would suggest it was a high-status burial site with access to weapons, jewellery, and imported luxury goods, and has been dated to the sixth century.[317] It was positioned over 50 metres away from the cemetery, although from finds found elsewhere in the vicinity the full extent of the cemetery could have been very large.[318] It is difficult to assign this site an ethnic or even regional identity, as there seem to be links to Kentish material culture with the bracteate-style brooches, but the saucer-type brooches and weapon styles

[314] Lyn Blackmore, et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003* (London, 2019); for an earlier discussion of the site based on the findings before they were fully published, see Leslie Webster, "The Prittlewell (Essex) burial: a comparison with other Anglo-Saxon princely graves," in Titus A.S.M. Panhuysen and Babette Ludowici (eds), *Transformations in North-Western Europe (AD 300 – 1000). Proceedings of the 60th Sachsensymposion 19. – 23. September 2009 Maastricht. Neue Studien zur Sachsenforshung Band 3* (Stuttgart, 2011), pp. 266 – 272.

[315] Blackmore et al., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 48 – 49. For a discussion of these burials and a summation of the grave-goods and interpretations, see pp. 49 – 89.

[316] Blackmore et al., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," p. 48.

[317] Blackmore et al., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," pp. 85 – 89.

[318] Blackmore et al., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," p. 72.

indicates styles local to the area.[319] This highlights the problem of assigning identities based on material culture, as brooch styles for women's costumes could be explained as a result of trade or cultural contacts rather than assuming an Anglian or Kentish identity for a burial in Essex.

The princely burial is a chambered burial that was underneath a mound which had slowly eroded away over time.[320] Despite the decay of the artefacts, especially the organic matter and the body which completely dissolved in the acidic soil, the collapse of part of the chamber, and the corrosion of the metal artefacts, many items found were in situ.[321] Although the body completely decayed, several tooth fragments were located and confirmed to be human and may include a fragment of a premolar tooth.[322] The teeth indicated some wear, so the individual may have been an older juvenile or an adult but neither can be definitively determined.[323] The erosion of the mound may have saved it from detection and thus looting as it did not stand out in the landscape like the mounds at Sutton Hoo.[324] The chamber may have remained intact for several hundred years, as when it did collapse it seems to have shattered several iron objects that had completely mineralized, a process that takes hundreds of years to undergo.[325] The individual was placed in a coffin, which did not survive but the iron brackets and nails with some preserved wood plus some faint traces of the lid give us some estimate of its size, and it seems that it was much larger than an average coffin.[326] The grave-goods are numerous. A pristine gold belt buckle, copper-alloy shoe buckles, gold braid, gold-foil crosses, and two gold coins from the Continent were found directly with the body although the placement of the coins is unknown; they may have been held in the hand.[327] The gold belt buckle seems comparable in shape to the one found in Sutton Hoo except it has no decoration; it is plain and flat, but made of high gold content.[328] The Prittlewell investigators have argued that the belt buckle was commissioned quickly for the burial as it was only meant to be burial dress,

[319] Blackmore et al., "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery," p. 87 – 89.
[320] Ian Blair, "The chamber grave," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 90 – 92.
[321] Ian Blair, "The chamber grave," p. 92.
[322] Blackmore et al., "Appendices," pp. 459 – 460.
[323] Blackmore et al., "Appendices," p. 460.
[324] Ian Blair, "The chamber grave," p. 100.
[325] Ian Blair, "The chamber grave," p. 101; David Starley, "Ferrous technology," in *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 418 – 425.
[326] Ian Blair, "The chamber grave," pp. 104 – 112.
[327] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 125 – 151.
[328] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp 125 – 126; Webster, "The Prittlewell (Essex) burial," p. 267.

especially as the clasp mechanisms and rivets would not have held up to wear.[329] The rarity of solid gold objects in burials and the apparent creation of such an object to be buried with this individual does suggest that this was a man of wealth and status.[330] There was evidently a decision made (likely by the individual's family/mourners) that a gold belt buckle was a necessary item for this burial. This is in contrast to the belt buckle at Sutton Hoo, which does show some damage and repair to the buckle mechanisms, indicating that it was worn.[331] In addition, the investment of wealth into an object that was never worn and was for the construction of the burial tableau suggests that the individual was worthy of such an object and that whoever arranged the burial too was wealthy.

The gold-foil crosses were also an unusual find; they are in a Latin cross form (with a longer lower limb and axe shape head and arms), found in the probable head area and thus it is suggested they were placed over the eyes of the buried individual.[332] There are no English or Frankish parallels, but similar gold-foil crosses have been located in late-sixth century Lombard Italy, Alemannia, and Bavaria.[333] Simon Burnell notes that the Continental examples were perforated, suggesting they were mounted on textiles, did not appear in pairs, and the Latin cross forms were rare.[334] The axe shape arms and head are equally interesting: the axe shape was also seen on several fittings and mounds in Mound 17 at Sutton Hoo.[335] Angela Evans notes that these axe-shaped mounts are common in East Anglia, which Burnell argues that this may indicate an East Anglian location of manufacture for the gold-foil crosses.[336] These gold-foil crosses then have been interpreted as unique objects that suggest a Christian milieu in the region, and more significantly an early Christian burial tradition before the move away from furnished burials.[337] Moreover, the investigators have noted these can only be interpreted as symbols of Christian belief, specifically that the buried individual must have been Christian (probably a convert).[338] It is entirely possible that he was Christian, but it is once again important to note that the placement of the foils was a choice made by the mourners and inferences about the religious identity of a buried person is layered with the religious identities of the mourners as well. Nevertheless, the inclusion of Christian iconography in

[329] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 126 - 127
[330] Blackmore, Scull and Hirst, "Belief, economy and society," pp. 305 – 306.
[331] Bruce-Mitford, "The Gold Jewellery," in Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Volume 2*, p. 565.
[332] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 138.
[333] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 138.
[334] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 138 – 139.
[335] Evans, "Seventh-century assemblages," pp. 224 – 235,
[336] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 141.
[337] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 145 – 146.
[338] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 146.

a furnished burial represents that the dichotomy between "pagan" furnished burial and Christian unfurnished burials is far too simplistic for the late sixth and early seventh centuries. The investigators themselves state that the crosses would not have been an overly visible or important part of the burial, as the body was placed in a coffin and the importance of these objects cannot be determined.[339]

The burial chamber contained several other items aside from those found directly associated with the body space. There was a maple-wood painted box that contained personal items, like a silver spoon, an antler comb, a cylindrical container, a firesteel, a wooden disc, and a knife.[340] There were several feasting vessels and prestige tableware found within the chamber: a bronze ornamental hanging bowl, a copper-alloy flagon and basin from the east Mediterranean, two cauldrons, blue and green glass beakers, drinking horns, four drinking bottles with decorative fittings, two buckets, a tub, bowl, and chest.[341] These items are unusual because of the range of items, which are usually fewer in number and more selectively-chosen in other richly furnished high-status male inhumation burials.[342]

The feasting equipment is interesting when compared with the construction of the burial chamber itself. Martin G. Comey suggests that the empty centre of the chamber, with a floor mat and drinking vessels to one side suggests a ritual drinking and feasting space within the chamber itself.[343] He also notes that the Sutton Hoo Mound 1 maple wood drinking flasks are similar to those found in the Prittlewell burial, and these were drinking vessels of late-sixth and early-seventh English elites.[344] What is different is that the feasting equipment in Sutton Hoo is placed against one of the chamber walls in a peripheral position, while they have a more prominent position in the Prittlewell burial, as while they were along the wall they were directly adjacent to the central area

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[339] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy, and society," pp. 336 – 337.
[340] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 151 – 168.
[341] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 168 – 215.
[342] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," p. 305.
[343] Martin G. Comey, "The Wooden Drinking Vessels in the Sutton Hoo Assemblage: Materials, Morphology, and Usage," in Michael D.J. Bintley and Michael G. Shapland (eds), *Trees and Timber in the Anglo-Saxon World* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 107 – 121, here p. 118.
[344] Comey, "The Wooden Drinking Vessels in the Sutton Hoo Assemblage," p. 115.

of the burial chamber.[345] This indicates a variation in burial practice while maintaining the association with feasting with the dead.

There was also an iron folding-stool, an iron stand, a lamp, a lyre, gaming pieces and board, and a scythe blade.[346] The folding stool has had interesting implications for status, as it is similar to the *sella curulis*, a folding stool used by high-ranking Roman officials and eventually clergy by the fourth century AD.[347] In the context of the early medieval period, this stool is unique within England but aligns with Continental evidence, where similar stools were found in high-status burials.[348] The Prittlewell investigators have noted that *stol*, the OE word for "stool" was used exclusively in a royal context in Old English poetry.[349] They also point to the rare depictions of seated kings on early medieval English coins, which Gannon has suggested appear similar to the aforementioned *sella curulis*.[350] It is also worth referring back to the entry from the *ASC* about Earwulf of Northumbria who was "elevated to his king-stool" when he was inaugurated.[351] At the time of Gannon's analysis, she was unaware of the discovery of the folding stool in the Prittlewell burial, but it may be very possible this was a king-stool and therefore an expression of authority and rule.[352] Similar to Sutton Hoo, it is difficult to interpret single objects as direct evidence for representations of authority, especially without corresponding contemporary evidence from England. Nevertheless, the textual, linguistic, and numismatic evidence allows scholars to make more informed conclusions about the Prittlewell stool, and it is very possible this was a royal stool.

There were also several weapons found: a sword, shield, and two spears, and an arrow.[353] Weapons are typical for elite male burials in this period and evidently accord with Sutton Hoo and other "princely" burials like Taplow.[354] The inclusion of the single arrow has been interpreted as a marker of age as arrows are usually associated with children or adolescents and thus along with the

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[345] Comey, "The Wooden Drinking Vessels in the Sutton Hoo Assemblage," p. 118; for a reconstruction of the burial chamber, see Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell Princely Burial*, p. 309.
[346] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 215 – 255.
[347] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 218.
[348] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 219 – 220.
[349] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 220.
[350] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, pp. 98 – 101.
[351] See section 3.5 above; *ASC* s.a. 795.
[352] Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, p. 99.
[353] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 255 – 264.
[354] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 263.

tooth fragments may indicate this was the burial of a young man.[355] It is possible that the individual in Prittlewell did not have the same authority or martial role in society like that in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo, but it is also possible that those who buried him chose to emphasise other characteristics or aspects of his status over and above martial qualities.[356] There were also several textiles found, such as fabrics that were laid over the coffin, possible garments, and cushion coverings for the stool.[357] The textiles did not survive well and thus provide difficulty when comparing for quality with textiles from Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo and other burials with textiles like Broomfield and Taplow, but as an aggregate do demonstrate a variety of textures and cloth types.[358] Thus, the visual aspect of the burial with the textile variety may be an indicator of the wealth and trade contacts.[359] Overall, while the wealth of the assemblage of grave-goods is not as great as those mound in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo, they do indicate this person was of high-status.[360] The question of the royal nature of this burial is debatable; the lack of emphasis on martial identity may not indicate a lesser status but rather differing ideals on the display of rulership or association with royal rule. It is entirely possible that this person was not royal but rather was only a member of the elite, but the gold belt buckle and the feasting equipment do indicate someone of very high status and trade connections. Moreover, if the folding stool is an object that indicates authority, then it may be that this burial wished to emphasise a royal identity that was less martial in character, perhaps influenced through Christian contacts with Francia and Kent.

There have been attempts to situate Prittlewell within the context of the Kingdom of the East Saxons, although with considerably more caution than has been applied to Sutton Hoo and Rædwald.[361] The history of the Kingdom of the East Saxons is not as extensive as elsewhere, but Bede does provide the majority of our information on their history. The earliest king mentioned in Bede is Sæberht, where Bede implies the king converted to Christianity in AD 604.[362] Bede relates that Sæberht was the nephew of Æthelbert of Kent through the latter's sister Ricula, but that the

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[355] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 263.
[356] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 263 – 264.
[357] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 264 – 273.
[358] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," pp. 271 – 272.
[359] Blackmore et al., "The artefacts in the chamber," p. 272.
[360] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 305 – 306.
[361] Hirst and Scull et al., "Contexts: settlement, society and polity c AD 580 – 630," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, pp. 341 – 348.
[362] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.3 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 85; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, pp. 107 – 108.

Kingdom of the East Saxons was under the control of Kent at this time.[363] Bede does not reference Sæberht's father, but in the Saxon genealogies in British Library MS Add. 23211, f. 1v from the late ninth century, his father is named Sledd and the genealogies trace back to the god Seaxneat.[364] While these genealogies date to the late ninth century, it is possible they date to the sixth century, perhaps concurrent with the association of the Anglian kings with Woden during the construction of identities that link back to the Continent, but we cannot rule out a later invention of their genealogy. Barbara Yorke argues that Sledd is the earliest historical king of the East Saxons, and if he was married to Ricula then that would place him in the late sixth century.[365] Thus, if this individual was associated with the royal elite in Essex in the late sixth or early seventh century, they may well have been related to Sledd. Blackmore et al. note that it is not possible to determine the identity of the buried individual and that assuming power and authority based on the few "princely" burials that we have is problematic.[366] Despite these reservations, Blackmore et al. posit that this may have been Seaxa, the brother of Sæberht (also recorded in the East Saxon genealogies) on the basis that this burial does not compare with Sutton Hoo or Taplow in terms of wealth and thus cannot have been the burial of someone of commensurate power.[367] Yorke notes that it is not unusual that the East Saxon kings would be asserting their descent from the god Seaxnat while also adopting Christian practice as accommodation of the two beliefs was not uncommon among the early medieval English elites.[368] Moreover, if this was the burial of a young adult then it is unlikely to be Sledd or Saeberht. Nevertheless, as stated with the Sutton Hoo mounds, it is impossible to make direct associations between wealth and status. Sutton Hoo was extremely wealthy, but it may be a fallacy to assume that burials that were not as wealthy are therefore placed lower on a rulership hierarchy. Prittlewell does not contain the same level of gold, weapons, and personal effects. It is unique in the feasting provisions and items such as the folding stool. Expressions of power through burial were likely have varied across regions and using Sutton Hoo as a baseline for regional power identities versus other less-wealthy burials like Prittlewell may obscure our interpretations.

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[363] Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.3 (Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, I, p. 85; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. Sherley-Price, p. 108.

[364] Barbara Yorke, "The kingdom of the East Saxons," *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985): 3 – 4; For the date of the MS, see David Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex," *Peritia* 4 (1985): 25,

[365] Hirst and Scull et al., "Contexts: settlement, society and polity," pp. 341 – 342.

[366] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," pp. 339 – 340.

[367] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," pp. 339 – 340.

[368] Blackmore et al., "Belief, economy and society," p. 342, 347.

As discussed above, location of burial was of chief importance for Irish burials and a probable element of the Sutton Hoo burials also. Can this same model be applied to Prittlewell? It is not within view of a river, although it is just north of the Thames estuary.[369] It is also close to Prittle Brook, a small watercourse that is a tributary of the River Roach to the north, around which was evidence of early medieval settlement and craft activity.[370] The creek does not mark a territorial boundary, and so the burial lies within a territory rather than at the edge.[371] As for its proximity to potential secular royal sites, none to my knowledge have been identified near to Prittlewell, although the investigators have noted that the existence of Prittlewell may indicate a royal settlement in the area.[372] Without more investigation in the area, it is impossible to make inferences about the importance of the Prittlewell burial in the landscape.

4.10 Conclusion

Burials occupy a complicated space in the expression of power and authority in early medieval Ireland and England. In Ireland, it is difficult to initially pinpoint elite or royal burials within a traditional framework of English or Continental archaeology that relies on burial goods and historical records. The textual evidence on *fertae* and the discovery of burials that fit into this model have highlighted that power and authority is emphasised through the location of burial and the prestige of being buried next to ones' ancestors. Even with ecclesiastical burials like Iona or possibly Clonmacnoise, the prestige was based on burial near saints. Grave-goods were not a priority and are very rare, although the ritualised feasting at sites like Collierstown 1, as evidenced by pottery finds, indicates an elite group revisiting these burial sites. In addition, proximity to royal sites like Tara and Knowth demonstrate a probable need by kings and their families to exert their claim on the landscape. The textual evidence from England on burial is limited to descriptions of ecclesiastical burials in Bede's *Historia Eccelesiastica*, which cannot be verified with archaeological evidence. Bede's emphasis upon the association of kings with prominent ecclesiastical foundations like the Kentish family and Canterbury indicate a possible early trend of royal ecclesiastical burial. Moreover, if his account of the Northumbrian kings and their family burials at Whitby is accurate then this is an early example of an ecclesiastical and dynastic burial ground. However, the lack of textual evidence problematises our knowledge of early medieval burial practices as no extant

[369] Blackmore et al., "Introduction," in Blackmore et al., *The Prittlewell princely burial*, p. 1 – 3.
[370] Blackmore et al., "Introduction," pp. 6, 12.
[371] Blackmore et al., "Introduction," pp. 14 – 15; Hirst and Scull et al., "Contexts: settlement, society and polity," p. 361, fig. 277.
[372] Hirst and Scull et al., "Contexts: settlement, society, and polity," pp. 354 – 355.

contemporary accounts of secular mound burials exist outside of the description of the burial of Scyld Scefing in *Beowulf*. Moreover, it is difficult to determine an elite ecclesiastical burial from the early medieval period, and thus discussions of elite burials have largely focussed on wealthy secular burials like the Sutton Hoo ship-burial. Sutton Hoo was a secular cemetery for East Anglian elites and may have contained burials of royal individuals from the early seventh century, particularly the ship-burials. The provision of grave-goods in Mound 1 has led scholars to interpret that burial as a very powerful king, perhaps Rædwald of East Anglia. This thesis does not make a claim for specific individual identities, but it is highly probable that because of the investment and display of wealth and possible symbols of authority in the burial that this was in fact a king. In addition, Sutton Hoo may represent similar burial constructions to Irish burials with a prominent burial location near a river as well as proximity to a royal settlement. Nevertheless, Sutton Hoo presents an interpretative problem where other possible royal burials are measured against it and this may be a fallacy. Burials like Prittlewell, with a less exaggerated martial character but with a display of feasting equipment and items like the folding stool are not necessarily lower in status because the provision of grave-goods does not contain as much gold as Sutton Hoo. Rather, it may demonstrate a variation in the display of royal identities in burial in the late sixth and early seventh centuries.

Were burials used for expressions of sacral royal power in the landscape in early medieval Ireland and England? The answer to this question is ambiguous because of the limitations of archaeology and text. It is easier to link the early medieval Irish burials to the concept of sacral kingship because of the extensive sources that we have on *fertae* and the idea that the buried ancestors protected the land, as well as the connection with *tellach* and inauguration rites. Certainly, in the Irish evidence there are references to the burial of legendary kings in *fertae*, and with *fertae* near sites like Tara and Knowth that were both sacral and highly politicized sites, any burials near or even on those locations suggests any burials would have had close ties with ruling kindreds in the area as well as being protectors of those specific landscapes. These burials did not need grave-goods as demonstrations of status; rather, burials at boundaries to contested and sacralised landscapes by royal people or those who aspired to that status created ties to the prehistoric past. In other words, they either contrived an idea of tradition or strengthened historic ties through a visual representation of a claim on the landscape. Royal burials at ecclesiastical sites like Iona, if they existed, would have been deliberate expressions of Christian sacral kingship as they reaffirm ties between kings and God. Like *fertae*, burial at ecclesiastical sites reinforces ties between

a king and the saints and the prestige of this closeness elevates kings and their families' status as having in indelible relationship with God that average people do not.

It is ironic then that even with all the grave-goods from Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, as well as the other "princely" burials, interpretations of sacral kingship are more difficult for the early medieval English burials. The historical textual evidence for early medieval English burial is solely ecclesiastical, but the deliberate ties between kings, their families, and the Church does indicate an early Christian sacral kingship in early medieval England. The prestige of burial in ecclesiastical sites where kings were close to God and the saints, especially during conversion efforts and before widespread ecclesiastical burials for laypeople, likely further influenced the concept of a king's sacral status. His elevation to a role that sets him apart from society through inauguration rites is then reinforced through his special burial through a method that is not open to the average person, or even other elites. This thinking may have also been behind the displays of wealth and power (as different as they may have been) at Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell. What sets these burials apart from other elites was specific unique goods that seem to be rare or unknown elsewhere. We cannot definitively identify kings in early medieval English burials because of the complexities of material cultures and expressions of identity. It appears highly probable that the burials discussed in this chapter represent, if not kings then at least those who were related to kings or members of families that wished to make a statement about claims to territory. Sutton Hoo also was in a prominent location and close to a royal settlement, and thus it is hard to imagine such burials would not have been for the highest elites or those who wished to make a claim to kingship. The specific ideologies behind these burials are difficult to piece together, and scholars have attempted to understand expressions of kingship through specific grave-goods. While I have shown caution in assuming that items like the Sutton Hoo helmet have specific links to Woden, it does not mean they do not have ideological statements. It is entirely probable that unique objects like the whetstone sceptre are representations of the divine right to rule, but as stated before, the limitations of archaeology prevent any hard answers. Nevertheless, the people interred in Sutton Hoo, especially the ship-burials, and the Prittlewell burial, were clearly highly valued and elevated members of society. Creation of elaborate burials with burial mounds that create a permanent monument in the landscape not only creates a claim on the territory but contributes to the collective memories of the local society. We cannot say for certain how long it was remembered who was buried in these places, but it is entirely possible that these places were remembered as burial places for kings and were to be respected and feared.

Chapter 5: Conclusion – Legitimisation of Kings

Our early medieval sources are dominated by stories of elites, of kings, clerics, and heroes of the distant past. And yet, even though a large majority of our historical sources are written from elite perspectives on elite culture, understanding the ideological underpinnings of these societies is a difficult task. It must be pieced together from a variety of sources of different typologies: historical narratives, annalistic literature, saga texts, hagiographies, genealogies, material cultures, and landscape studies. This thesis has demonstrated through analysis of the wide ranging textual and archaeological evidence how the ideology of sacral kingship was negotiated and modified through legendary ancestors in the genealogies, inauguration rituals, and burials in early medieval Ireland and England.

The examination of the genealogies in Chapter 2 highlighted significant factors that relate to the legitimacy of kings in early medieval Ireland and England. Genealogies established a fiction of blood ties but were not true markers of biological descent. Rather, they were complex political documents that were used to emphasise the legitimacy of dynasties to rule over others. Through a discussion of the Uí Néill and the myths surrounding Níall Noígíallach, it is evident that genealogical ties to powerful legendary ancestors were contrived to legitimise the rule of kings in early medieval Ireland. In addition, the genealogies were constantly modified to suit the needs of dominant powers, with ancestors changed and altered to explain the origins of sub-dynasties. Moreover, while it is difficult to assess the origins of legendary figures like Niall, it is clear that legendary figures embodied kingly ideals that conferred prestige onto their descendants. Exploration of the Uí Brigte family of the Déisi Muman has demonstrated the role that female eponymous ancestors played in power structures of kingship in early medieval Ireland. Past scholarship of this genealogy dismissed it as a genealogical construct of a cult of St Brigit, claiming that this Brigit of the Uí Brigte was only a double of St Brigit. Through a review of the evidence for this claim, and a systemic discussion of women named Brigit in the texts, it was demonstrated that women named Brigit cannot be relegated to simply doubles of Brigit. Rather, it flattens the potential to understand onomastics of women's names in early medieval Ireland and the role of secular women in the genealogies. F.J. Byrne's past analysis of the *dercu* gentilic laid the foundation for this discussion, and his claim that descent from foreign women excluded kindreds from kingship may explain why the Uí Brigte are relatively unknown and never seem to have been rivals to lead the Déisi Muman. Thus, while the Uí Brigte are attached to the other Déisi lines, it is not simply descent from male figures that determine

legitimacy, but that the right mother/female ancestor was an important aspect also. The significance of women and their own descent may have played a role in early medieval England with the marriage of Offa to Cynethryð, whose own possible descent from Penda may have not only further legitimised Offa's rule as someone who was only connected to the main Mercian line from several generations back. Moreover, this would have further legitimised Ecgfrið's rule as a descendant of Penda through his mother. In addition, we can see that marriage ties between kingdoms likely resulted in changes to genealogies where certain lines share the same ancestor, like the Mercian and Bernician lines. This also demonstrates that genealogies were often conflicting documents that did not show record of true descent. The patrilineage of Brigit of the Déisi is also a good example of how these genealogies can be altered, as there were evidently two different traditions regarding who her father was.

How do genealogies enhance or demonstrate the sacrality of kings? In the Anglian genealogies, descent from Woden, a pre-Christian deity, likely imparted a sacrality to kings pre-Conversion: kings were set apart from everyone else, including other elites, because of their descent from a deity. The extent to which this was emphasised after kings converted is difficult to say. Bede's statement that Woden was a man may not have been a prevailing opinion. However, even if Woden was euhemerised, Bede's emphasis on lineage clearly indicates that kings were still placed above others by virtue of their descent. His focus was on Christian kings, and he was careful to write more on the lineage of kings who were held up as models of Christian kingship, like Æthebert of Kent, or Oswald of Northumbria. It is difficult to say how this model applies to the Uí Brigte; Edel Bhreathnach may be correct that Brigit was meant to be a deity, but there is no specific evidence to support this outside of her name, and, as we have seen, there are other secular women named Brigit. It does present an interesting possibility, and it is more likely than her being a possible double of St Brigit. Even though genealogies are constructed documents, and not true records of descent, they are not so hypothetical as to state a virgin saint as having sons, who were then eponymous ancestors of their own lines. Inheritors of Brigit and other saints are more straightforward, a record of the women who inherit her role as abbess at Kildare. If Brigit of the Déisi was a facet of a euhemerised deity, then that is a less problematic depiction of a woman with sons. Moreover, this highlights why we cannot view these documents as either survivals of pre-Christian tradition or Christian-influenced documents. Evidently, they draw on both traditions: pre-Christian deities and legendary figures from the distant past but employed by Christians and written in a schematic framework meant to evoke the genealogy of Jesus. The organisation of genealogies into generations

of thirteen or fourteen on account of the fact that Jesus' genealogy was arranged into groups of thirteen or fourteen (known as tesseradecads) demonstrates the influence of Christianity and Biblical learning on the creation of the written genealogies. The fact that ancestry was so important for kings, particularly in establishing some kind of continuity to previous powerful kings but especially legendary ancestors like Niall or Woden demonstrates that genealogies were key to legitimising kingship in early medieval Ireland and England.

Kings not simply become kings when the previous king dies. Chapter 3 explores the inauguration rites used to install kings. One major problem that arises is the historicity of inauguration rites as described in the texts. The textual evidence for early medieval Ireland is based on saga texts and hagiographies, texts which have often been dismissed out of an assumption that they are far too embellished and filled with supernatural elements, such that they cannot be used to understand historical events. This thesis has demonstrated that through a comparison of other rites with T.M. Charles-Edwards' significant work on the rite of *tellach* that it is highly probable that historical inauguration rites occurred at Tara and Cashel. Questions of the historicity of rites at Iona and Dunadd are more tenuous. It is very possible that Columba ordained Áedán mac Gabráin. But was it on Iona, at a site not associated with kingship or at Dunadd, where Elizabeth Fitzpatrick argues could be an example of an inauguration site? Unfortunately, inauguration rites leave little physical evidence in the landscape and we can only speculate as to the real role that Iona played with the inaugurations of the Dál Riata. What is even more unlikely is for the Dál Riata to have no inauguration rites at all, as we have seen it is an important aspect of legitimising kingship. The historicity of inaugurations is also a problem for early medieval England due to a near absence of evidence. There are only two records of inaugurations in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for Ecgfrið son of Offa of Mercia and Eardwulf of Northumbria. There were likely dynastic struggles after Offa's death, and Eardwulf may not have been linked to the main ruling line of Northumbria, and so the innovation or elaboration of inauguration rituals was necessary. It is unlikely that these inaugurations were the only ones to be held, but rather they were unique for other reasons and why they were recorded in the *ASC*: Ecgfrið was consecrated before Offa died while Eadwulf was perhaps not of royal lineage and like Pippin, King of the Franks, he needed to demonstrate his rule with an inauguration involving Archbishop Eanbald and other important ecclesiastics. Despite the lack of direct textual evidence of inauguration rituals, indirect references may be located, such as diadems on coinage. As diadems were symbols of rule in Byzantium, their appearance on coinage may indicate that kings received them upon becoming king: this would most certainly have been at

an inauguration ceremony. Assembly sites, like inauguration sites in Ireland and possibly assembly locations there also, may have been used for inaugurations: the evidence of a theatre at Yeavering is tantalising as we know this was a royal settlement. This is not definitive proof, but if we were to identify a secular inauguration site in England, Yeavering is a good candidate. What is notable is that Bede says nothing about how kings were made kings: did he disapprove of inauguration rituals or how they were undertaken? It is also possible he did not believe they were necessary for kingship, or perhaps they were so normalised there was no reason to discuss them. It is highly unlikely for Ecgfrið or Eardwulf to be the first examples of inauguration rituals in early medieval England, and the recording of those events was tied to the circumstances around their succession. Moreover, because they were used for kings whose claim to their position was weak, this establishes that inauguration rituals were useful and necessary tools to legitimise a king. Involvement of the Church through ordainment and clergy would have strengthened their claims further, as it would be an outward demonstration of the ties between the king and God. Inauguration rites that emphasised the mystic and sacral qualities of kings, where it is demonstrated their ties with the landscape and God (or gods) that elevates them above all other people in society. The created fiction of these rites as depicted in the saga texts is that not just anyone can undertake them: only the rightful claimant, the one destined to rule, was permitted. The sacral nature of the king is revealed through a successful completion of the rite, to be seen by other members of society. This is, of course, a fiction. Kings like Dauí Iarlathe in Munster may have seized the kingship but because his line was excluded from the Kingship of Cashel, the texts highlight that his rule was an aberration. As we have seen, kings do lay claim to land without "proper" ancestry or ties to previous kings. The narrative that these inauguration rites can establish after the act was that they were destined to rule. Thus, they are useful tools for all kings: those succeeding based on their descent, kings with weak claims, or usurpers. The act confirms their rule and the mythos of the act itself reinforces the truth of their kingship.

The final section explored the possibilities of royal burial. This is the most difficult area, methodologically speaking, because while there are textual references to royal burial in both early medieval Ireland and England, we have no definitive evidence of those burials. What burials have been uncovered, like those at Collierstown, Knowth, Sutton Hoo, and Prittlewell, may well be the burials of royal people. As the definition of king encompasses a wide number of individuals from local sub-kings to powerful overlords, there is a problem of separating king from non-royal nobles. Certain aspects of these burials may indicate they were of higher status than other elites. In Ireland,

burial near Tara or directly at Knowth, both sites of kingship, would have been a definitive statement of claim to the land. These were both boundary *fertae*, and thus burials in these places were establishing ancestral power as well as contriving a relationship to the distant past, both to ancestors (real or imagined) and the ancient landscape. There was also a possible gendered aspect to these boundary *ferta*: like the female eponymous ancestors, the woman in the central burial at Collierstown was seen as an important ancestor. This may provide the key to women in the genealogies: they could be seen as significant founding members of a family and were honoured as such, but later developments in kinship and kingship structures perhaps relegated them to a lower status. In this sense they are tied to the genealogies: like the genealogical texts, they are not true depictions of familial relationships, but it is important to demonstrate or create a link in order to provide oneself and one's family a legitimate claim. As inauguration rites in early medieval Ireland likely hinged upon *tellach* and passing over the boundary *fertae*, both the construction of new boundary *fertae*, and inserting one's dead into pre-existing monuments that along the borders of the land that you lay claim to, was necessary for claiming kingship and rule over the land. This may have been an aspect in early medieval England as well, as Sutton Hoo may have been situated along a boundary, although this is still debated as the borders between East Anglia and Essex are still contested. Markers of elite status can also take the shape of continued ritual at those sites, like Collierstown, through ritual feasting. Feasting was a significant aspect of early medieval English burials as well, with the inclusion of feasting equipment in both the Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell burials. The feasting element was prioritised in the Prittlewell burial, perhaps to emphasise the interred individual's wealth and contacts with trade across Europe. While the Sutton Hoo burial contained feasting equipment, there was more emphasis placed on the warrior identity of the man in Mound 1, demonstrating that there likely was a variation in how royal identity was depicted in death. Therefore, while problems remain with comparing textual evidence and archaeological evidence of burials, it was important for kings to be buried properly and on their land that they ruled over. Their visible presence in the landscape, represented by burial mounds, was then important for both real and manufactured descendants to claim their land. It was a deliberate demonstration of power in the landscape.

Through the analysis, there is one thread that is constantly reinforced: ancestry and descent was a cornerstone of legitimacy of sacral kingship. As we have seen, succession did not occur from father to son, nor are kings from unbroken lines from deities and legendary heroes. Descent was carefully constructed and established through genealogies and burial, while inauguration rites were

meant for the “rightful” king, but what established right was often descent, even if it was fabricated. Where descent was missing and no claims could be made, then inaugurations still demonstrated that the king was “meant to” rule. These methods of legitimisation were, in effect, elaborate fictions that upheld the edifices of sacral kingship. There was no inherent reason for why these men were of greater ability to rule, but elite societal structures required this narrative to be constantly upheld and reaffirmed. Ancestry relates to the perspective of tradition as well: maintaining a semblance of continuity even when aspects of kingship are innovated was important for a wider societal acceptance of these methods of legitimisation.

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